

# On Masculinity and Displacement: Discourses of Exclusion in Martin Horváth's *Mohr im Hemd oder wie ich auszog, die Welt zu retten* (2012)

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'What is known as the "European immigration crisis"', Michael A. Peters and Tina Besley write, 'erupted in the mid-2000s, and culminated in 2015 with the worst crisis in immigration, and massive increase of displaced persons seeking asylum in Europe since the end of WWII.'<sup>1</sup> Austrians, like other Europeans, were shaken by the suffering experienced by Middle Eastern and North African refugees. Events such as the sinking of boats carrying migrants in the Mediterranean that resulted in a reported 3,419 casualties in 2014,<sup>2</sup> the death by asphyxiation of 71 refugees who were found in a parked truck near Vienna in August 2015, and the widely distributed photograph in September 2015 of the body of Syrian toddler Alan Kurdi arguably swayed public opinion in favour of the refugees.<sup>3</sup> However, despite the initial genuine *Willkommenskultur* [welcoming culture], pressure against the flow of refugees soon built. In 2015–16, over 130,000 claims for asylum were recorded in Austria (2015: 88,340; 2016: 42,285),<sup>4</sup> alarming politicians who set to work quickly to rebuild a European border regime that had been all but dismantled.<sup>5</sup> Recent research has shown how political actors were able to build on already established cultural and racial discourses from the 1990s and 2000s in their move to gain control over

<sup>1</sup> Michael A. Peters and Tina Besley, 'The Refugee Crisis and the Right to Political Asylum', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 47 (2015), 1367–74 (p. 1369).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Day, 'The Most Lethal Route in the World', *Independent*, 10 December 2014, <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/the-most-lethal-route-in-the-world-3419-migrants-died-crossing-mediterranean-this-year-9916436.html>> [accessed 5 June 2018].

<sup>3</sup> Karl Vick and Simon Shuster, 'Chancellor of the Free World', *time.com*, 3 December 2015 <<http://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2015-angela-merkel/>> [accessed 4 June 2018].

<sup>4</sup> statista, 'Anzahl der Asylanträge in Österreich von 2008 bis 2018', *statista.com* (2018), <<https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/293189/umfrage/asylantraege-in-oesterreich/>> [accessed 4 June 2018].

<sup>5</sup> Paul Scheibelhofer, "'It Won't Work Without Ugly Pictures': Images of Othered Masculinities and the Legitimization of Restrictive Refugee-Politics in Austria', *NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies*, 12.2 (2017), 96–111 (p. 96).

the so-called ‘refugee crisis’: the initial focus on suffering and humanism was shifted to the latent threat emanating from the refugees, used to justify a security response from the Austrian government to ‘protect’ its citizens.<sup>6</sup>

As Paul Scheibelhofer argues convincingly, ‘problematic foreign masculinity’ played a key role in this reframing of public discourse. Be it in Austrian presidential candidate Norbert Hofer’s conception of migrants as ‘zornige junge Männer’ [angry young men],<sup>7</sup> the polarizing remarks by Donald Trump labelling Mexican migrants wholesale as criminals and rapists,<sup>8</sup> or the reactions by the media to attacks against women by men of North African origin during the 2016 New Year’s festivities in Cologne, Germany:<sup>9</sup> male migrants are discursively separated from the larger population of migrants and cast in dichotomous, homogeneous and static terms of gendered otherness: ‘The most important construction is the (young) foreign criminal and violent perpetrator.’<sup>10</sup> Given the contemporary prominence of the topic in the media, it is surprising to note a relative absence of scholarly research into the nexus of migration and masculinity that might challenge such portrayals and instead acknowledge — as Melanie Griffiths suggests — ‘other, sometimes complex or contradictory aspects of male migrants’ identities and lives’.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Oliver Georgi, “Wir müssen an einer Festung Europa bauen”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 28 October 2015, <<http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/fluechtlingskrise/johannamickl-leitner-zu-oesterreichs-plaene-in-fluechtlingskrise-13880650.html>> [accessed 21 November 2017]; examples of recent research include Gabriele Dietze, ‘Ethnosexismus: Sex-Mob-Narrative um die Kölner Sylvesternacht’, *movements: Journal für kritische Migrations- und Grenzregimeforschung*, 2.1 (2016), 1–16 and Paul Scheibelhofer, ‘Repräsentationen fremder Männlichkeit in der “Flüchtlingskrise”’, in *Migration und die Macht der Forschung. Kritische Wissenschaft in der Migrationsgesellschaft*, ed. by Lena Karasz and Josef Wallner (Vienna, 2017), pp. 209–28.

<sup>7</sup> Karin Leitner, “Zornige junge Männer”. Hofer mit Alarmismus auf Frauenwerbe-Tour’, *Der Kurier*, 21 September 2016, <<https://kurier.at/politik/inland/zornige-junge-maenner-hofer-mit-alarmismus-auf-frauenwerbe-tour/222.201560>> [accessed 30 November 2017].

<sup>8</sup> Michelle Ye Hee Lee, ‘Donald Trump’s False Comments Connecting Mexican Immigrants and Crime’, *Washington Post*, 8 July 2015, <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2015/07/08/donald-trumps-false-comments-connecting-mexican-immigrants-and-crime/?utm\\_term=.e8ed30df33fe](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2015/07/08/donald-trumps-false-comments-connecting-mexican-immigrants-and-crime/?utm_term=.e8ed30df33fe)> [accessed 21 October 2017].

<sup>9</sup> Gabriele Dietze, ‘Das “Ereignis Köln”’, *Femina Politica*, 25 (2016), 93–102.

<sup>10</sup> Stefanie Mayer, Itzok Šori and Birgit Sauer, ‘Gendering “the People”: Heteronormativity and “Ethnomasochism” in Populist Imaginary’, in *Populism, Media and Education: Challenging Discrimination in Contemporary Digital Societies*, ed. by Maria Ranieri (New York, 2016), pp. 84–104 (p. 94); see also Melanie Griffiths, “‘Here, Man is Nothing!’: Gender and Policy in an Asylum Context”, *Men and Masculinities*, 18.4 (2015), 468–88 (p. 473).

<sup>11</sup> Griffiths, “‘Here, Man is Nothing!’”, p. 469; see also Julia Gruhlich, ‘Sexualisierung, Kriminalisierung und Ethnisierung — “Schwarze Männlichkeiten” in der Migration’, <[https://www.fk12.tu-dortmund.de/cms/ISO/de/Lehr-und-Forschungsbereiche/soziologie\\_der\\_geschlechterverhaeltnisse/Medienpool/AIM-Gender\\_2017\\_Tagung/Gruhlich.pdf](https://www.fk12.tu-dortmund.de/cms/ISO/de/Lehr-und-Forschungsbereiche/soziologie_der_geschlechterverhaeltnisse/Medienpool/AIM-Gender_2017_Tagung/Gruhlich.pdf)> [accessed 21 October 2017]; Dominic Pasura and Anastasia Christou, ‘Theorizing Black (African) Transnational Masculinities’, *Men and Masculinities*, 21.4 (2018), 521–46.

In contrast, literary texts have long engaged with the gendered experience of migration, a tradition that can be traced back at least as far as the early nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> More recently, literary responses to migration in the German-language context have achieved prominence in the literary marketplace, prompting scholars such as Leslie A. Adelson, Brigid Haines and Boris Previšić to identify Turkish, Eastern and Balkan ‘turns’ respectively in German-language literature.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, works such as Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei hat zwei Türen aus einer kam ich rein aus der anderen ging ich raus* [Life is a Caravanserai: Has Two Doors I Went in One I Came out the Other, 1991] or Feridun Zaimoğlu’s *Kanak Sprak* [Kanak Speak, 1995] must be seen as key interventions in the emergent ‘literature of migration’ in that they highlight the specifically female and male experiences of migration, paving the way, in the Austrian context, for the success of later migration narratives such as Dimitré Dinev’s bestselling *Engelszungen* [Tongues of Angels, 2003], or Vladimir Vertlib’s autofictional novels *Abschiebung* [Deportation, 1985], *Zwischenstationen* [Way Stations, 2005] and *Schimons Schweigen* [Shimon’s Silence, 2012]. The latest indication of the importance that the theme of migration holds for a German-speaking readership can be seen in the treatment of what Stuart Taberner calls ‘present-day transnational reality’ by established autochthonous authors, in works such as Jenny Erpenbeck’s *Gehen, ging, gegangen* [Go, Went, Gone, 2015], Bodo Kirchhoff’s *Widerfahrnis* [Encounter, 2016] or Norbert Gstrein’s *Die kommenden Jahre* [The Coming Years, 2018].<sup>14</sup> Erpenbeck, Kirchhoff and Gstrein focus on specifically male experiences of migration, while exploring questions arising from the power relations among and intersections of language, gender, ethnicity and culture in the context of migration. By acknowledging the ‘diversity, difference, competing meanings, and articulations of masculinities’ that sociologists Anastasia Christou and Dominic Pasura have called for in their own discipline, such transnational literary texts already examine and rupture many of the narrow ethno-sexist assumptions that underpin nativist identity politics.<sup>15</sup>

Martin Horváth (b. 1967) is an Austrian-born musician and author whose novel *Mohr im Hemd oder wie ich auszog, die Welt zu retten* [Moor in a Shirt, or How I Set out to Save the World, 2012] takes such an intersectional approach to

<sup>12</sup> Brent O. Petersen, ‘Peter Schlemihl, the Chamisso Prize, and the Much Longer History of German Migration Narratives’, *German Studies Review*, 41.1 (2018), 81–98.

<sup>13</sup> Leslie A. Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Grammar of Migration* (New York, 2005); Brigid Haines, ‘The Eastern Turn in Contemporary German, Swiss and Austrian Literature’, *Debatte*, 16.2 (2008), 135–49; Boris Previšić, ‘Poetik der Marginalität. Balkan Turn gefällig?’, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik: Von der nationalen zur internationalen Literatur. Transkulturelle deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur im Zeitalter globaler Migration*, 75 (2009), 189–203.

<sup>14</sup> Stuart Taberner, ‘Transnationalism in Contemporary German-Language Fiction by Nonminority Writers’, *Seminar*, 47.5 (2011), 624–45 (p. 624).

<sup>15</sup> Pasura and Christou, ‘Theorizing Black (African) Transnational Masculinities’, p. 7.

the power relations that rule contemporary forms of displacement.<sup>16</sup> Although *Mohr im Hemd* is Horváth's debut, the author has long been occupied with both literature and the experience of displacement as a contributing editor for the literary journal *Buchkultur* (1989–92) and as a researcher for the Leo Baeck Institute, New York for an oral history project on Jewish-Austrian refugees in the United States (1996–2000).<sup>17</sup> In 2005–06 Horváth underwent training as a migration-support volunteer, during which time he collected much of the material for *Mohr im Hemd*. The novel was well received by the press and received an award from the Austrian Ministry for Culture.<sup>18</sup> Subsequently, Horváth was awarded a state scholarship for work on his second novel, scheduled to appear in 2019, which will link his fields of interest by connecting today's refugee situation with that of the National Socialist period.<sup>19</sup> Thus, while Horváth, lacking a personal background of migration, clearly counts among what Taberner terms 'nonminority authors',<sup>20</sup> he does write transnationally, drawing also on his knowledge of the public and political discourse on migration in today's Austria: 'Es liegt auf der Hand. Wir haben uns in Österreich daran gewöhnt, dass Ausländer verunglimpft werden, dass Politiker an die niedersten Instinkte appellieren. Das macht mich zornig. Ich habe meinen Zorn in Worte gegossen' [It is quite obvious. In Austria, we have got used to foreigners being denigrated, to politicians appealing to the basest instincts. That makes me furious. I channelled my fury into words].<sup>21</sup>

Despite this anger, Horváth's novel highlights in an often humorous manner the cross-cutting axes of social and economic inequality associated with race, class, ethnicity, sexuality and age that power hierarchies of difference

<sup>16</sup> Martin Horváth, *Mohr im Hemd oder wie ich auszog, die Welt zu retten* (Munich, 2012). Subsequent in-text references to the novel will use the abbreviation MiH.

<sup>17</sup> See Martin Horváth, Anton Legerer, Judith Pfeifer and Stephan Roth, *Jenseits des Schlusstrichs. Gedenkdienst im Diskurs über Österreichs nationalsozialistischer Vergangenheit* (Vienna, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> See for example Stefan Gmünder, "Ali Idaulambo bringt Licht ins Dunkel", *derStandard.at*, 4 September 2012, <<https://derstandard.at/1345166132968/Martin-Horvath-Ali-Idaulambo-bringt-Licht-ins-Dunkel>> [accessed 19 August 2017]; Andreas Gstettner-Brugger, 'Fiktive Flüchtlingsrealität', *FM4ORF.at*, 26 August 2012, <<http://fm4v3.orf.at/stories/1703644/>> [accessed 5 June 2018]; Hermann Schlösser, 'Horváth, Martin: *Mohr im Hemd oder wie ich auszog, die Welt zu retten*', *Wiener Zeitung*, 9 November 2012, <[https://www.wienerzeitung.at/themen\\_channel/literatur/buecher\\_aktuell/500248\\_Horvath-Martin-Mohr-im-Hemd-oder-Wie-ich-auszog-die-Welt-zu-retten.html](https://www.wienerzeitung.at/themen_channel/literatur/buecher_aktuell/500248_Horvath-Martin-Mohr-im-Hemd-oder-Wie-ich-auszog-die-Welt-zu-retten.html)> [accessed 5 June 2018].

<sup>19</sup> Martin Horváth, 'University of Waterloo Fragen'. Email Communication with Lori Straus, 4 March 2018. I would like to thank all the participants of my graduate seminar on 'Gender, Migration, Generation' at the University of Waterloo for their insightful comments and research work on the author.

<sup>20</sup> Taberner, 'Transnationalism', p. 626.

<sup>21</sup> Marion Kohler, 'Von Weltverbesserern und anderen Narren. Ein Gespräch mit Martin Horváth', Verlagsgruppe Randomhouse, 2012, <[https://www.randomhouse.de/Martin-Horvath-Mohr-im-Hemd-DVA/Interview/aid38376\\_8415.rhd](https://www.randomhouse.de/Martin-Horvath-Mohr-im-Hemd-DVA/Interview/aid38376_8415.rhd)> [accessed 5 June 2018].

in modern, pluralist Austria.<sup>22</sup> *Mohr im Hemd* combines the specificity of the lived experience of its protagonist Ali, an underage black refugee claimant in Vienna, with incisive critique of society's structural racism, sexism and lack of engagement with the lives of refugees beyond economic and security perspectives. In the remainder of this article, I will first demonstrate how the novel's narratorial stance, use of the literary 'Ali' trope and its protagonist's 'promiscuous' multilingualism show up place-bound notions of identity and monolingual bias as key elements of nativist cultural codes of belonging.<sup>23</sup> In a second step, I will examine the intersections of racialized identity, hypertrophic masculinity and patriarchy to demonstrate how the text deconstructs both colonially structured gender identity and its reiteration of patriarchal masculinity as a repetition of (white, European) strategies of control. Finally, I will address the novel's attempt to give voice and visibility to the precarious situation of the refugees, exposing (and opposing) the modes of exclusion 'through which the nation imagines and enforces its own unity', as Judith Butler pointedly observes.<sup>24</sup>

The complexity of the novel's narrative techniques has frequently been commented upon,<sup>25</sup> most recently by Daniela Roth, who highlights its licid modes of narration and blurring of narrative levels and boundaries.<sup>26</sup> Ali, the novel's narrator-protagonist, is '[ein] mit allen literarischen Wassern gewaschener Ich-Erzähler' [a first-person narrator who knows every trick of the literary trade].<sup>27</sup> He is able to glean personal histories from as little as a picture, and observe and report intimate situations that occur in locales inaccessible to a real person, transgressing all conventional limitations of first-person narrative. Ali is a 'Kunstfigur' [art(ificial) figure], Horváth explains in an interview: 'Er changiert einerseits von einem Betroffenen, der selbst ein Flüchtling ist, und andererseits jemand [sic], der einen Blick von außen wirft' [He oscillates between being a victim, who is a refugee himself, to someone who has an outside perspective].<sup>28</sup> Roth, who has presented the most in-depth critical engagement with the novel to date, calls attention to Ali's affinity with the literary figure

<sup>22</sup> See John Solomos and Les Back, *Race, Politics, and Social Change* (London, 1995), p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> Elisabeth Herrmann, Carrie Smith-Prei and Stuart Taberner, *Transnationalism in Contemporary German-Language Literature* (Rochester, NY, 2015), p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Judith Butler, 'Performativity, Precarity and Sexual Politics', *Revista de Antropologia Iberoamericana*, 4 (2009), 1–13 (p. 9).

<sup>25</sup> See for example Gmünder, "Ali Idaulambo bringt Licht ins Dunkel", and Schlößer, 'Horváth, Martin: *Mohr im Hemd oder wie ich auszog, die Welt zu retten*'.

<sup>26</sup> Daniela Roth, 'Migration und Adoleszenz. Die (Un-)Möglichkeit transnationaler Handlungsfreiheit in Alina Bronskys *Scherbenpark* (2008), Steven Uhlys *Adams Fuge* (2011) und Martin Horváths *Mohr im Hemd oder wie ich auszog, die Welt zu retten* (2012)', PhD thesis (University of Waterloo/Universität Mannheim, 2017), p. 251.

<sup>27</sup> Gmünder, 'Ali Idaulambo bringt Licht ins Dunkel', *derStandard.at*, 4 September 2012.

<sup>28</sup> lettra.tv, 'Mohr im Hemd oder wie ich auszog, die Welt zu retten von Martin Horváth', 16 December 2012, <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Im\\_Ks7Um1-s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Im_Ks7Um1-s)> [accessed 19 August 2017].

of the picaro as a device that enables the author to assume a perspective 'from below'. From his position at the margins, he mimics social decorum, pokes fun at others and satirically exposes the soft underbelly of society. However, Roth also articulates the novel's departure from the picaresque model: Horváth's Ali does not tell his curious tales with the wisdom of hindsight that separates the experiencing from the narrating self. Instead, the text is in the present tense and employs quoted interior monologue throughout,<sup>29</sup> conveying the immediacy of experience while simultaneously fulfilling Arjun Appadurai's call to treat 'the present as a historical moment' and produce 'genealogies of the present'.<sup>30</sup> Horváth aims to find the exemplary in the particular and to reveal the power relations that are at work in the historical now, as in the following interior monologue that connects current populist fear-mongering in Austria with slogans from the National Socialist past:

Zwei Mal sind unsere Väter vor Wien gescheitert, wir aber sind gescheitert, unsere Strategie ist geschickter, wir kommen von innen, wir sind schon drinnen, wir haben die Unterwanderstiefel angezogen, wir tragen eine weiße Weste am Leib, doch unsere Seele ist Schwarz wie die Nacht, und unser Herz schlägt nicht für Österreich, nein, und nichts und niemand kann uns aufhalten, heute gehört uns Kärnten und morgen die ganze Welt.

[Twice our forefathers failed to conquer Vienna, but we are smarter, our strategy is more sophisticated, we come from the inside, we are already inside, we have put on our subversion-boots, we wear a white vest on our bodies, but our soul is Black as the night, our hearts do not beat for Austria, no, and nothing and nobody can stop us, today Carinthia belongs to us, tomorrow the entire world.] (MiH 146–47)

Through the perspective of his adolescent protagonist, Horváth connects the refugees' lived experience with historical discourses of exclusion that inform the construction of the Other in today's Austria.

Not much can be known with any certainty about Ali. He may or may not be fifteen years old; he comes from somewhere in Africa; the name 'Ali' has nothing to do with his real identity. He presents it as a moniker of convenience, chosen for its simplicity: 'Ali, das merkt sich einfach jeder, selbst der dümmste Rassist, selbst der kleinkarierteste Spießler kann den Namen aussprechen, ohne dabei über die eigene Zunge zu stolpern' [Ali, a name everyone can remember, even the dumbest racist, even the pettiest philistine can pronounce it without tripping over his own tongue, MiH 10–11]. Yet, as Tom Cheesman demonstrates, as a literary trope 'Ali' exceeds such a label, constituting instead 'a key site of cultural and political struggle' in German-language literature.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Roth, 'Migration und Adoleszenz', pp. 252–53.

<sup>30</sup> Arjun Appadurai, 'Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology', in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, 1996), pp. 48–65 (p. 64).

<sup>31</sup> Tom Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish German Settlement* (Rochester, NY, 2007), p. 145.



Cheesman traces the literary evolution of the 'Ali' trope as an iconic figure suffering from 'a multiply compounded lack of cultural, social, and economic resources', whose

individuality and humanity are denied. [...] He is socially invisible, unless as an object of pity, of racist aggression, or, more rarely, of erotic fascination. When writers take upon themselves the task of re-establishing his humanity on his behalf, they risk patronizing him, and merely confirming his powerlessness.<sup>32</sup>

Horváth's choice of the name 'Ali' for his narrator/protagonist thus evokes a rich tradition of racialized marginalization. Even though Horváth's Ali works against the 'Ali-stereotype', laying claim to both narrative and social agency, the text as a whole, Daniela Roth argues convincingly, ultimately leaves him powerless — and reinscribes him into the dominant paradigm of the subaltern Other that Cheesman identifies.<sup>33</sup>

Employing a tactic from Turkish-German writing, Horváth divides Ali the 'object of others' gazes, discourses, and actions' from Ali the 'speaking and writing subject', in order to pose questions about the politics of representation that frame migrants as the Other and trans-code negative images with new meanings.<sup>34</sup> Horváth's Ali emphasizes his own agency from the beginning, refusing to be identified by his place of origin, which he changes according to the background of his interlocutor. He evades the question 'woher kommst du' [where do you come from] (MiH 10) that, as Thomas Nail notes, insists on the 'primacy of place-bound social membership', and theorizes the migrant implicitly from a position of lack:<sup>35</sup> 'Ist das wirklich so wichtig, gebe ich mit gelangweilter Miene zurück' [Is that really so important, I reply with a bored expression, MiH 10]. Ali simultaneously highlights and casts doubt on origin as a primary mode of identity assignment.

As the narrator of his own story, Ali has an outstanding memory, extensive medical knowledge — especially of trauma psychology (see for example MiH 32, 73–74) — and the ability to speak forty different languages without the hint of an accent (MiH 11). His command of German even exceeds that of his language instructor (MiH 16), enabling him to correct his housemates (MiH 14, 36, 253). Ali's unabashed and highly implausible multilingualism underscores his 'refusal to be fixed and defined', a trait that Elisabeth Herrmann, Carrie Smith-Prei and Stuart Taberner consider a crucial feature of transnational literature.<sup>36</sup> It also challenges what Yasemin Yildiz calls the 'monolingual paradigm' as a basic principle that structures all modern social life, from the formation of

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Roth, 'Migration und Adoleszenz', pp. 255–56.

<sup>34</sup> Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish German Settlement*, p. 145.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Nail, *The Figure of the Migrant* (Stanford, CA, 2015), p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Herrmann and others, *Transnationalism*, p. 8.

individual identity to that of disciplines, institutions and imagined collectives.<sup>37</sup> Yildiz observes how ‘individuals and social formations are imagined to possess one “true” language only, their “mother tongue”, and through this possession to be organically linked to an exclusive, clearly demarcated ethnicity, culture, and nation.’<sup>38</sup> In other words, the monolingual paradigm interweaves a person’s native language in an affective move with concepts of origin, natural kinship and belonging to a national collective, creating fixed notions that conflate origin and identity.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, the multilingual subject appears unrooted; language, origin, family and nation no longer map easily onto a matrix of belonging, as Ali notes laconically: ‘Offensichtlich übersteigt es die Vorstellungskraft europäischer Nationalstaatenhirne, dass in einem Land mehr als eine oder zwei Sprachen gesprochen werden könnten...’ [Obviously, it is beyond the imagination of European nation-state brains that more than one or two languages could be spoken in any one country, MiH 41].

Within the monolingual paradigm, multilingualism comes to be seen as a disavowal of the mother, of natural kinship and belonging to a single national collective: the multilingual subject emerges as untrustworthy.<sup>40</sup> As Butler notes, this also means ‘that those who fail to translate into monolingualism have no chance to assert rights within recognizable codes’.<sup>41</sup> Even a native-born Austrian, such as the figure Hans Pogatschnigg, a social worker in Horváth’s novel, may carry a remnant of this untrustworthiness as his paternal grandparents belonged to the ethnic Slovenian minority of Carinthia whose blood lines were considered ‘volksfremd’ [alien to the people] and whose language is an object of shame (MiH 68). While native speakers of another ‘mother tongue’ can thus still be fixed via their language in an essentialized Otherness, Ali’s perfect command of German calls into question the very category of a fixed identity that the monolingual paradigm works to bestow on its speakers.

Ali possesses not only perfect German, but also superior cultural knowledge, as the first line of his ‘song’ ‘Von Babylon da komm’ ich her’ [From Babylon to you I come] indicates, mimicking the opening of Luther’s beloved Christmas carol ‘Vom Himmel hoch da komm’ ich her’ [From heaven above to earth I come]. Although recently arrived from Africa, he is well versed in what could best be described as all-round *Bildung* [education], including the ‘septem artes liberales’ (MiH 210), expressed through a vast array of intertextual references ranging from Latin (MiH 24, 196), Greek mythology (MiH 65, 151), the Bible (MiH 215, 224), baroque eroticism (MiH 19), the poetry and aesthetic theory of Weimar classicism (MiH 146, 148) to Wilhelm Busch’s *Max and Moritz* (MiH 150). Ali is also able to lace his narrative with National Socialist vernacular (MiH

<sup>37</sup> Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (New York, 2012), p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 13.

<sup>41</sup> Butler, ‘Performativity’, p. 9.



147) and references to popular culture, such as Wolfgang Ambros's 1976 ode to marijuana 'Du schwarzer Afghane' (MiH 76), which often contrast and relativize the high-brow references in satirical manner. Ali's satirical deployment of German-language cultural capital disrupts received knowledge about migrants (in particular young, male migrants) and challenges the privileged social space that autochthonous Austrians can occupy in the monolingual paradigm — whereby the average Austrian may be far less fluent in the linguistic and cultural codes that define the national imaginary of 'Austrianness'. Indeed, Ali's proficiency in the codes of national (high) culture challenges the assumption that migrants could become just 'like us' (if they only tried): that assimilation results in 'sameness'. Ali's easy display of *Bildung* criticizes the assimilationist ideal as a racist idea, demanding that newcomers adopt the values and contents of Western culture while their own cultural capital is erased. This concept of education implicitly positions the Other at a lower stage of civilizatory development. Ali exposes its instrumentalization in the context of migration when he comments: 'Bildung ist das halbe Leben, trichtert man uns ein, ohne Bildung keine Integration, und bildet euch nur nicht ein, ihr wüsstet schon alles' [Education — and you are halfway there, they drum into us, without education no integration, but don't you imagine for a second that you know everything already, MiH 16]. While education is positioned as the entry ticket into the club of natives, Ali's sarcastic play on the words 'bilden' [to learn] and 'einbilden' [to imagine] indicate the unattainability of the promised goal. Much of the satirical impact of the text stems, as in the examples above, from Ali's consummate ability to play on words ('ich habe ihr die Sprache verschlagen' [she was at a loss for words, MiH 58], to reframe colloquial expressions in surprising and often untranslatable contexts ('ansonsten herrscht tote Beamtenhose' [otherwise no bureaucratic activity, MiH 267], and expose political sloganeering through defamiliarization strategies ('Abschiebung für alle' [deportation for everyone, MiH 266])).

Despite his exceptional abilities, Ali presents his case as nothing out of the ordinary. Within the novel's narrated universe, he is a young refugee who has experienced violence and displacement and lives at the 'Leo', a special floor for unaccompanied minors in a Viennese home for refugees. He plays down his own experience in the context of other tales of death, murder, torture and sexual slavery: 'ein bisschen Folter hier, ein bisschen Einschüchterung da, meine Mutter und meine Geschwister hat man umgebracht, mein Vater ist verschollen, ich habe mich aus dem Staub gemacht, keine besonderen Vorkommnisse, nicht der Rede wert, das Übliche eben' [a bit of torture here, a bit of intimidation there, my mother and my siblings were murdered, my father is missing, I made myself scarce, no special incidents, nothing worth mentioning, just the usual, MiH 11]. As shocking as this laconic report may be for Austrian readers, it emphasizes that Ali's own experience simply reflects the violence that many refugees are escaping.

Ali is driven to tell (or to invent) the often-harrowing life-stories of his housemates. He gives testimony for those who are too traumatized to speak for themselves. It is his primary task in the refugee home, his *raison d'être*: 'Ich erzähle, ich berichte, ich lege Zeugnis ab' [I tell, I report, I bear witness, MiH 122, see also 233]. Ali tells of the African orphans Yaguine and Fodé who froze to death in the landing gear bay of a plane carrying them to Europe (MiH 27–28), of Djafar the Tajik whose words were tortured out of him (MiH 29), of Salva who fled the Sudan with his wife and children, only to be asphyxiated by Austrian prison guards (MiH 164–65), of Yaya, the child soldier who was forced under pain of death to rape and murder a girl (MiH 185–88), of Nicoleta who was trafficked from Serbia to Italy as an underage sex slave (MiH 152, 201–08) and of Amal whose mother was forced to sell her into domestic labour (MiH 256–61). Ali's own recurring dreams tell of the rape and murder of his mother and sisters (MiH 180–81, 208, 254). These stories are emblematic of the traumatic experiences that refugees from all over the world undergo; but by giving them names and identifying them as inmates of the Leo, Ali replaces reductive notions of alterity with individual lived experiences.

It is a narratorial constellation that presumes to express the experiences of the 'subaltern' and thus raises the thorny question of the appropriation of voice in a novel that was written by a native-born (white) Austrian and assumes the perspective of a black young refugee. As such, Horváth's Ali could be seen as legitimizing the principle of the 'native informer' as identified by Sharareh Frouzesh, whose 'account is made to stand in for an imagined monolithic and homogeneous Other',<sup>42</sup> suggesting a form of ventriloquism for the author's own progressive causes. Indeed, as mentioned above, Horváth was driven to write his novel out of frustration with the discursive paucity on migration and refugees in politics and the media alike.<sup>43</sup> Yet, as I have demonstrated, the narrator Ali must be considered first and foremost a literary device: too similar are the language and cultural knowledge to that of an educated native Austrian, too obvious the satirical subversion, and too intrusive the narrator who, in the tradition of a Tristram Shandy or Oskar Matzerath, insists on his narrative supremacy: 'ICH bestimme, was hier erzählt wird' [I decide what is being told here, MiH 56, emphasis in original]. The narrator Ali displays his fictional origins and deploys his literary licence so unambiguously that it provides a counter-strategy to the representational practices of realist fiction, rupturing the verisimilitude of the novel's setting in contemporary Austria. Rather than avoiding the dangerous terrain where nation, race, displacement and masculinity converge, Horváth deliberately contests the dominant discourses on belonging and exclusion.

<sup>42</sup> Sharareh Frouzesh, 'The Politics of Appropriation: Writing, Responsibility, and the Specter of the Native Informant', *Yearbook of Comparative Literature*, 57 (2011), 252–68 (p. 253).

<sup>43</sup> lettra.tv, 'Mohr im Hemd oder wie ich auszog, die Welt zu retten von Martin Horváth' (2012), <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Im\\_Ks7Um1-s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Im_Ks7Um1-s)> [accessed 19 August 2017].

Ali himself insists from the very first sentence on the marker that sets him apart from Austrian society, namely his skin-colour, which signifies his essential Otherness: 'Meine Haut is braun. Dunkelbraun. Man könnte auch sagen kaffeebraun' [My skin is brown. Dark brown. One could also say coffee-coloured, MiH 7]. Ali's favourite dessert *Mohr im Hemd* [Moor in a shirt] — chocolate cake doused with chocolate sauce and accompanied by whipped cream — evokes the 'visual archive'<sup>44</sup> of European colonialism that permeated Austrian society despite the empire's lack of its own colonies, as I have argued elsewhere.<sup>45</sup> *Mohr im Hemd* illustrates the crucial function of the scopic drive that, according to Homi Bhabha (referencing Frantz Fanon), sets up a 'discursive form of racial and cultural opposition',<sup>46</sup> by reducing the black body and its alleged nakedness to a sweet distraction to be consumed by the white colonizer. By taking as his title the name of a specifically Austrian dessert, whose racism continues to be found on Austrian restaurant menus, Horváth signals his novel's critical impetus from the very outset. The title also exposes the unacknowledged (and unconscious) structural racism that permeates everyday Austrian society, functioning simultaneously as the central metaphor for the experience of black subjectivity in white Austrian society. By positioning himself self-consciously as the 'Mohr im Hemd', Ali engages with the racist male Other entrenched in the popular Austrian imaginary.

The structural racism of Austrian society becomes apparent when Ali takes some of his new housemates to a Viennese shopping centre where the abundance of goods on offer contrasts starkly with the experience of the young refugees. They wander the aisles under the suspicious gaze of employees and surveillance cameras alike (MiH 92). When Ali suggests to a manager that they might have stolen goods in their trolleys, a security guard is summoned and told to inspect their recent purchases of feminine undergarments. The narrative veers into camp when Ali induces the guard to speak Turkish with him, casting suspicion on the integrity of the guard as well by challenging monolingual attitudes (MiH 93). Ali exhibits the theatricality and exaggeration that Susan Sontag identified as being essential to camp's particular 'sensibility' when he takes his cue from the manager and demonstrates that he is not carrying stolen goods after all by engaging in a striptease which immediately prompts both manager and guard to end the search.<sup>47</sup> Although Sontag claims that camp is fundamentally apolitical, Ali's performance of the exoticized foreign body clearly participates in racial stereotypes of the black male body.

<sup>44</sup> George Steinmetz and Julia Hell, 'The Visual Archive of Colonialism: Germany and Namibia', *Public Culture*, 18.1 (2006), 147–83.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Boehringer, 'Fantasies of White Masculinity in Arthur Schnitzler's "Andreas Thameyers letzter Brief" (1900)', *The German Quarterly*, 84.1 (2011), 80–96.

<sup>46</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994), p. 78.

<sup>47</sup> Susan Sontag, 'Notes on "Camp"', in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York, 2001), pp. 275–92 (p. 275).

The racist reactions that Ali's embodied Otherness prompt are also on display when he is seen observing a conversation between Mira — his social worker and first great love — and her daughter at the Naschmarkt in Vienna, in a scene that again employs satire bordering on camp:

Was machst du da, fragt plötzlich eine Stimme neben mir. Ich drehe mich um, ein weißer Mann starrt mich an. Was du machen, fragt er erneut mit bierschwangeren Worten. [...] Ich sein Moslem, lasse ich ihn wissen. Ja ... was? Das heißt ich planen Anschlag, wie alle Moslems. [...] Aber du ... du bist doch schwarz. Bingobongo, bestätige ich. Aber ... wie kannst du dann Moslem sein? Du meinen, Schwarze machen Handel mit Drogen, Moslem machen Anschlag? Sein Blick erhellt sich. Ja, genau, ganz genau! [...] Schwarzer Moslem noch viel gefährlicher wie weißer Moslem, kläre ich ihn auf. Schwarzer Moslem macht alle tot, mit Drogen oder mit Anschlag, ist ganz egal. Große Besorgnis macht sich auf seinem Gesicht breit.

[What are you doing, a voice suddenly asks next to me. I turn around, a white man stares at me. You: what do, he asks again, in a beery voice. I being Muslim, I let him know. Yeah ... what? That mean I planning attack, as all Muslims. But you ... you're black. Bingobongo, I confirm. But ... then how can you be Muslim? You thinking, blacks deal drugs, Muslims make attack? His eyes light up. Yes, exactly, quite right! Black Muslim even more dangerous than white Muslim, I enlighten him. Black Muslim make everyone dead, with drugs or attack, is all the same. Great concern spreads over his face.] (MiH 63)

I quote this scene at length as it clearly shows the racist coordinates that nativist discourses employ to produce the threatening Other: first of all, race as a visible indicator of Otherness, intimately associated with crime; then Islam, as the non-Christian religion whose followers are all assumed to be terrorists; and finally language, in a form of pidgin-German that takes for granted the foreigner's fundamental inability to speak correctly and produces a hierarchy of belonging. By appropriating the 'highly ungrammatical and largely condescending register that native speakers use when addressing non-native speakers', Ali, whom readers by now know to be accomplished in the German language, highlights the use of language to 'mark foreignness'.<sup>48</sup> The absurdity of the situation can hardly be surpassed when Ali points out to his inebriated interlocutor that by embodying various identifiers of this Otherness, he also presents the greatest danger, for it is the combined criminal potential of migrant Others that will enable them to obliterate the native population. In its grotesque exaggeration, this scene neatly dissects the prevalent linking of dominant racialized discourses of black men with criminality and Middle Eastern men with fundamentalism and security threats.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Mark Roche, 'Variations in Xenolects (Foreigner Talk)', *Sociolinguistica*, 12 (1998), 117–39 (pp. 117–18).

<sup>49</sup> Griffiths, "Here, Man is Nothing!", p. 471.

In hyper-confirming racist prejudice as in the example above, Ali inhabits a 'rebel black masculinity', which bell hooks describes as a form that is 'truly masculine in the sense of going out so far where you're not supposed to go and running toward confrontations rather than away from them'.<sup>50</sup> Ali does this with some glee: he organizes the abduction of Djamala's abusive Austrian schoolmates who torment her from her first day on: 'sie gehöre nicht hierher, man wolle keine Moslems in Österreich, sie solle in den Irak zurückgehen, und außerdem sei sie hässlich' [she didn't belong here, Muslims weren't welcome in Austria, she should go back to Iraq, and moreover, she was ugly, MiH 38]. Ali takes the lead in luring them into the school cellars where they are gagged and tied, but released three hours later (MiH 253). His motivation is to demonstrate to his housemates that even refugees have a right to agency, 'dass man sich nicht alles gefallen lassen muss. Dass man sich wehren kann. Dass man solchen Leuten Grenzen setzen muss' [that you don't have to put up with everything. That you can fight back. That you have to set limits for people like that, MiH 253–54].

The success of this disciplinary measure (MiH 266) encourages Ali to mount a public awareness action. 'Abschiebung für alle' [deportation for everyone] encourages passers-by, for a small contribution of €0.50, to take active part in getting rid of asylum seekers by loading them into garbage containers, an offer that is enthusiastically accepted (MiH 267). Under the heading 'Inländer erschrecken' [frighten natives], Ali and his friends confront Austrians with common stereotypes such as

Ich bin Asylwerber, ich bin Lügner. Ich bin Asylwerber, ich bin Drogenhändler.  
Ich bin Asylwerber, ich bin ein Problem. Ich bin Asylwerber, ich nehme  
euch eure Arbeitsplätze weg. [...] Ich komme aus Afghanistan und mache  
gerne Frauen an.

[I am an asylum seeker, I am a liar. I am an asylum seeker, I am a drug  
dealer. I am an asylum seeker, I am a problem. I am an asylum seeker, I  
take away your jobs. I am from Afghanistan and like to hassle women.]  
(MiH 266–67)

These stereotypes mirror the populist discourse on migration, which seeks to influence the attitudes of the majority population towards migrants.

Ali's polemical art-action can be situated in a specifically Austrian tradition of art as a politics of transgression that ranges from the Viennese Actionism of the 1960s to Valie Export's critique of the patriarchal construction of the female body in the 1980s and 1990s, and, most important for this context, Christoph Schlingensiefel's container action 'Ausländer raus!' [Foreigners out!] in 2000. Schlingensiefel's public intervention responded to the electoral success of the far-right Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs [Austrian Freedom Party, FPÖ], by inviting

<sup>50</sup> bell hooks, 'Reconstructing Black Masculinity', in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, ed. by bell hooks (Toronto, 1992), pp. 87–113 (p. 96).

the public to 'deport' each day two 'asylum seekers'.<sup>51</sup> The project engendered intense public debate, exposed the latent xenophobia of the Austrian public and attracted national media attention. Ali's 'Abschiebung für alle' clearly references Schlingensiefel's project, highlighting the necessity for art to be political and to intervene in public discourse. By giving voice to the actual asylum seekers who carry out the art project, Horváth also disrupts the expectation that refugees be silent, submissive and grateful.<sup>52</sup> He directs attention to the role popular media play in exacerbating hostile discourses while profiting from the low-paid labour that migrants provide, as Ali's experience as a news vendor shows: 'Ich rufe weiter die Schlagzeilen aus. Ausländerkriminalität explodiert. Jeder zweite Asylwerber kriminell, Asylwerber läuft Amok, Nigerianischer Drogenring gesprengt' [I keep calling out the headlines. Crimes committed by foreigners go through the roof. Every second asylum seeker a criminal, asylum seeker runs amok, Nigerian drug ring busted, MiH 193]. Such sensationalism fans the flames of discourse that aims to discredit (within a broader ideology of nativism) *a priori* the honesty and vulnerability of refugee claimants, while casting suspicions of deception, opportunism, sexual and moral deviance, criminal and terrorist intentions on male migrants in particular.<sup>53</sup> Again, Ali contests the reductionist images used to justify restrictive policies on asylum and migration by embodying the black criminal foreigner in satirical manner:

Ich bin ein schwarzer Neger, ich bin nicht sehr integer, warne ich einen Autofahrer, ich bin zum Schein nur Asylant, das ist der Zeitung auch bekannt, beichte ich einem Autopfarrer, ich bin ein Ausländer, ich hab' 'nen Dauerständer, raune ich einer Beifahrerin ins feine Klunkerohr, ich riech' nach Elefantendung und Sorge jetzt für Umvolkung, schreie ich in die Welt hinaus [...].

[I am a black piccaninny, not much integrity in me, I warn a driver; as the newspapers know full well, my need for asylum is a lie I tell, I confess to a priest at the wheel; I am a foreigner, I have a permanent hard-on, I whisper into the bejewelled ear of a female passenger; I smell of elephant defecation, and will make sure there's a transfer of population, I howl out into the world] (MiH 193)

Strikingly, Ali once again not only refers to long-established white fears of black male sexuality, hyper-fulfilling its tenets to satirical effect, he also employs the National Socialist term 'Umvolkung' [transfer of population], which had been reintroduced into the political vocabulary in the 1990s by the former leader of

<sup>51</sup> Theron Schmidt, 'Christoph Schlingensiefel and the Bad Spectacle', *Performance Research*, 16.4 (2011), 27–33 (p. 28).

<sup>52</sup> For the historical continuity of this behaviour pattern, see Peter Eppel, 'Wo viele helfen, ist viel geholfen: Ungarn-Hilfe 1956/57 in Österreich', in *Die Ungarische Revolution und Österreich 1956*, ed. by Ibolya Murber and Zoltán Fónagy (Vienna, 2006), pp. 431–62 (p. 451).

<sup>53</sup> Griffiths, "'Here, Man is Nothing!'", pp. 472–73; Scheibelhofer, 'Repräsentationen', p. 223.



the FPÖ Jörg Haider.<sup>54</sup> Since then, it has achieved broad currency in the ‘alright’ community, which employs it insistently to identify the purported issue of a ‘great exchange of population’ already under way Europe-wide, stoking irrational fear of homogeneously imagined nations being dismantled through immigration and the replacement of the indigenous population.<sup>55</sup> Ali employs ‘Umvolkung’ in Haider’s sense, drawing attention to the continuity between National Socialist racial theory and the re-engagement with these long-discredited ideas in populist political discourse.

Ali’s public performances display a willingness to confront the native population that unsettles the accepted conceptualization of refugees as ‘passive “suffering bodies” rather than political agents, with protection framed accordingly as a matter of sympathy and humanitarianism, rather than rights.’<sup>56</sup> Ali troubles this ‘moralized, feminized, and pacified ideal of the genuine refugee’,<sup>57</sup> insisting on his right to humanity and agency: ‘[I]ch brauche keinen, der mir erlaubt, Mensch zu sein, der mir die Lizenz zum Leben, [...] erteilt. Ich *bin* Mensch, ich lebe’ [I don’t need anyone to allow me to be human, to give me a licence to live. I *am* human, I am alive, MiH 9, emphasis in original]. In migration, Ali, like the other refugees, has become an ‘object in the eyes of the world’, as Robert Young summarizes, an ‘intruder, out of place’, forced to stand by as politicians change the rules of the game (MiH 244) and legislate ever more restrictive rules to strip refugees of their rights and prevent them from remaining in their country.<sup>58</sup> In displacement, the refugees have become subject to a different kind of knowledge, an epistemology that only grants personhood to very few, regardless of the danger to life and body of those who are not admitted. The migrants’ situation in Austria vividly illustrates Butler’s notion of ‘precarity’, the exclusionary epistemological process that renders some lives ‘unliveable’: ‘their legal and political status [...] suspended’, ‘illegitimate, if not dubiously human’.<sup>59</sup> Yet Ali’s activism not only confronts racist prejudices, it also hyper-fulfils their tenets, a strategy that often correlates with self-destruction and foreshadows his ultimate nervous breakdown, which has been discussed in depth by Roth.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Jean-Yves Camus and Nicolas Lebourg, *Far-Right Politics in Europe*, trans. by Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge, MA, 2017), p. 189.

<sup>55</sup> See for example ‘Umvolkung’, *Identitäre Bewegung*, <<http://blog.identitaere-bewegung.de/tag/Umvolkung/>> [accessed 5 June 2018]; Nail Al Saidi, ‘Hip, internetaffin und aggressiv’, *Deutschlandfunk*, 21 October 2016, <[http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/rechtsextreme-identitaere-bewegung-hip-internetaffin-und.724.de.html?dram:article\\_id=369227](http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/rechtsextreme-identitaere-bewegung-hip-internetaffin-und.724.de.html?dram:article_id=369227)> [accessed 5 June 2018].

<sup>56</sup> Griffiths, “Here, Man is Nothing!”, p. 472.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Robert C. G. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2003), p. 12.

<sup>59</sup> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Melancholy* (London, 2004), pp. xv, 91.

<sup>60</sup> Roth, ‘Migration und Adoleszenz’, pp. 302–34.

As mentioned above, the Austrian vernacular is still replete with racist expressions. Migrants, but especially black men, are subjected to what Butler calls 'injurious speech'.<sup>61</sup> Its goal is to produce the racialized and gendered subject performatively in an appellative process that re-cites injurious discourses of the past and constitutes the Other through a form of violence. Black men are subjected to slurs that deny their humanity: 'du Affe' [you ape], 'der Afrikaner is ja ein wildes Tier' [the African is a wild animal, MiH 164]. These clichés (re-)produce black men within the discursive historicity of white power, as when Ali is called 'Nigger' (MiH 152) or 'Scheißnigger' [fucking nigger, MiH 249]. Even high-level political representatives (in-)cite such discourses of the past, sanctioning expressions of racist discourses that engender the Other through injurious speech, as Ali notes: 'Glaubt man der österreichischen Bundesabschiebeministerin und einigen anderen vertrauenswürdigen Politikern, dann neigen Menschen mit schwarzer Hautfarbe grundsätzlich zu erhöhter Gewaltbereitschaft' [If the Austrian federal deportation minister and some other trustworthy politicians are to be believed, then people with black skin as a rule have a greater propensity to violence, MiH 73]. This opens space in public discourse to articulate a diffuse discomfort with immigration by reiterating the nineteenth-century Eurocentric, social-Darwinist model of knowledge that places the white European (male) at the very pinnacle of the evolutionary scale, while connecting black masculinity to lowly physicality.<sup>62</sup>

An older figuration of the European cultural memory is also evoked here, namely the black man as 'a "phobogenic" object provoking anxiety',<sup>63</sup> caused by (white) obsession with the supposedly insatiable sexual drive of black men.<sup>64</sup> Ali himself mirrors this preoccupation when his imagination reproduces the racist cultural trope of the white woman's desire for the potent black phallus. The social worker Mira, whom Ali posits as his love object in the first part of the novel, appears in his dreams and begs him 'besorg's mir bitte mal so richtig' [give it to me good] with his 'heiße Schokolade' [hot chocolate stiffy, MiH 97], in language that mimics the patriarchal imaginary of pornography. Ali describes his own penis as 'mein schöner schwarzer Schwängerschwanz' [my beautiful black impregnation cock, MiH 98], and contrasts his own virility with the presumed lack of sexual aptitude of white masculinity in the form of the German as a Foreign Language teacher Lukas Neuner, whose 'Ohngemächt' [feeble member], 'läppischen Luststengel' [pointless pleasure stalk] and 'bleichen, teigigen Mochtgergnminiaturverführerpenis' [pale, pasty wannabe-miniature-seducer-penis] Ali mocks repeatedly with great linguistic inventiveness (MiH 123).

<sup>61</sup> Judith Butler, 'Burning Acts: Injurious Speech', *The University of Chicago Law School Roundtable*, 3 (1 January 1996), 199–221 (p. 204).

<sup>62</sup> Sander Gilman, 'Preface', in *On Blackness without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany*, ed. by Sander Gilman (Boston, 1982), pp. xi–xiv (p. xii).

<sup>63</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York, 1967; reprint 1982), p. 151.

<sup>64</sup> Dietze, 'Ereignis Köln', p. 97.

Ali declares to Neuner, who at that point is in a relationship with Mira, that he himself previously engaged in a sexually fulfilling relationship with her, whose failure could not be attributed to the quality of the sex, 'denn der war immer toll' [because that was always great, MiH 105]. Lukas Neuner's moderate member on the other hand, Ali alleges, clearly cannot provide a similar level of satisfaction: 'Mit einem Neuner-Schlüssel [...] kommt man da wohl nicht weit' [With a size-nine wrench, you won't get far, MiH 106]. As this verbal attack indicates, Ali deploys the trope of black sexuality aggressively in opposition to white masculinity, yet remains firmly within the confines of traditional patriarchal, heteronormative discourses. While Ali's embrace of the trope of a superior black sexual potency at first glance reverses the racial hierarchy, it simply reinforces the historical binary and perpetuates the racial imbalance that metonymically substitutes the black man with the fertile black phallus, erasing black male subjectivity and leaving intact the power differential that is inherent in colonial racist fantasies of black masculinity.<sup>65</sup> Ali's obsession with his own sexuality, it becomes clear, is nothing more than a hyper-fulfilment of the hegemonic historical discourse of white superiority, a screen on which members of Austrian mainstream society project their fears and anxieties via colonially constructed gender identities designed to ensure white, male power over the racialized Other.

The cultural import of Ali's preoccupation with black sexuality becomes most apparent when he dreams about his ability to achieve an 'Umvolkung'. In what must be read as a political satire of an adolescent's wet dream, Ali's task is to impregnate all the women in the refugee home in order to make up for the low birth rate of the native Austrian population: 'du weißt doch, wie dringend Österreich Kinder braucht' [you know how urgently Austria needs children, MiH 98]. Ali's dream recalls colonial discourses of white anxieties about a racial onslaught of black sexuality on white culture.<sup>66</sup> By voicing the language of these discourses through his narrator, Horváth exposes their interlacing with today's ethno-sexist anti-migration discourses. The black masculinity that Ali satirically performs both exposes and undermines the attempt (via the metonymic drive of the stereotype) to 'fix' the identity of the Other. Fittingly, in his dream, Ali is castrated following the successful impregnation, reflecting white society's conflicting desire to avail itself of the allegedly superior fertility of the black man as a form of biopolitics, while eliminating him as a further threat, precisely by emasculating him (MiH 98).

Horváth's *Mohr im Hemd* is an unabashedly political novel that presciently engages with the dominant nativist and ethno-sexist discourses of exclusion that have proven so powerful over the last few years in Austria and other European countries in creating a climate of suspicion, denunciation and rejection of

<sup>65</sup> See Gilman, *On Blackness*; also Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven, 1992).

<sup>66</sup> Richard Dyer, *White* (London, 1997), p. 26.

refugees. Horváth intermingles the iconic literary 'Ali' figure with the trope of the sexualized black man to give voice and visibility to the real-life trauma of refugees as well as their increasingly precarious position within the nativist imaginary of the bounded, homogeneous nation. I read this as an attempt to intervene in a politics of representation that frames migrants as the Other and to trans-code negative images with new meanings, revealing the exclusionary discourses of the Other as grounded in the identitary imaginary. Ali's skin colour, which contrasts so effectively with his promiscuous multilingualism, his fluency in the cultural codes of Western and Germanic high culture and his facility with the German language, all combine to expose the key building blocks of nativist codes of belonging. These cultural constructs rely on a dangerous heritage of essentializing, racist and heteronormative ideologies of white (male) Western supremacy, a heritage that employs the image of the young male foreigner as a threat, producing categories of belonging that leave no room for the Other in the national self-image and denying any possibility of change. The nativist siren call proved powerful during the 2017 election for an Austria that wants to close its borders and society to the imagined Other, resulting in a majority coalition government of the anti-immigration Österreichische Volkspartei [Austrian People's Party, ÖVP] and the far-right FPÖ.<sup>67</sup> Horváth's *Mohr im Hemd* trenchantly exposes the dangerous fallacies of the populist position. It only remains to be hoped that critical insight will prevail over the present government's glib rhetoric and the inhumane 'Austria first' policies that it is eager to implement.

<sup>67</sup> Maria Sterkl, 'FPÖ-ÖVP-Plan. Asylwerber sollen Handys und Bargeld abgeben müssen' (16 December 2017), <<https://derstandard.at/2000070505945/regierungsprogramm-oevp-fpoe-kurz-strache-asy>> [accessed 20 December 2017].