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# Writing politics: the emergence of immigrant writing in West Germany and Austria\*

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## **Abstract:**

This paper compares the emergence of immigrant writing in Germany and Austria with a view to explaining why a guest worker literature emerged in Germany in the 1970s but not in Austria despite the fact that the immigration histories were comparable in these two countries. While these differing developments can be traced back to a number of factors, the paper argues that a critical factor is what a political scientist would call the opportunity structure within the receiving countries. Using this approach and Bourdieu's theory on the literary field, the author illustrates that the changes in the literary field in Germany were conducive to such a development at the time while the structure of the literary field in Austria was one of the factors that hampered such a development. However, when the first immigrant and ethnic minority publications eventually appeared in Austria in the 1990s, the circumstances were comparable to those in Germany in the 1970s: the writers positioned themselves as immigrants to express their opposition to mechanisms of political and cultural exclusion. Yet, the responses to these developments differed: while the works written in 1970s West Germany display a strong belief that change can be brought about by workers solidarity in a fight against capitalism, the novels published in the last decade in Austria seem to subscribe to a more individualised approach to social change.

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Immigration is not necessarily followed by the emergence of an immigrant literature in the respective host country. This does not mean that the arriving immigrants do not write but that these writers are not perceived as immigrants. One of the most prominent examples of such immigrant writers is Günter Grass. Grass was one of the 7.9 million ethnic Germans from the former German territories in Eastern Europe who moved to West Germany after the Second World War. But Grass has never been perceived as an immigrant writer. On the contrary, he has always been regarded as central to the development of West German literature and for its perception abroad. Of course, one could counter that the obvious reason for Grass not being categorised as an immigrant lies in his being an ethnic German. However, there are examples of ethnic German immigrants, such as the Romanian German Herta Müller, who are read as migrant writers. Moreover, that ethnicity is not the decisive factor for such a categorisation also becomes apparent if we look at Milo Dor. Born in Budapest and grown up in Belgrade where he joined the resistance, Dor was one of the many forced labourers deported to the Third Reich during the Second World War. Nevertheless, Dor has always been perceived as an unhyphenated Austrian writer. So while ethnic German immigrants in Germany are classed as migrant writers, authors who are not of Austrian descent and immigrated to Austria are perceived as Austrians. What is the rationale behind such categorisations?

The classification of writers as guest workers, immigrants, migrants or intercultural authors, to name just a few of the many terms used for this phenomenon<sup>1</sup>, initially resulted from writers positioning themselves as such in response to racism and exclusion in their respective host countries. James Procter has aptly described how these factors led to the emergence of Black British writing (Procter 2000). And, as the following discussion will show, the same holds true for the emergence of a guest worker literature in West Germany in the 1970s and of immigrant writing in Austria in the 1990s. However, racism and exclusion might be necessary but are not sufficient conditions for immigrants and ethnic minorities to use literature as a means of protest. Thus a guest worker literature evolved in Germany in the 1970s but not in Austria where the patterns of immigration and the legal regulations were comparable at the time. To some extent these differing developments can be explained by the facts that the immigration of foreign workers to Austria started slightly later than to Germany and that Austria did not attract workers from countries that had transnational organisations who promoted such writing (e.g. Italy). However, another critical factor is what a political scientist would call the opportunity structure within the receiving countries. Political scientists use this concept to explore why the political behaviour of immigrants and ethnic minorities varies in different receiving countries. In this context an opportunity structure consists of a country's laws, institutions, and public policies and culture that either promote or hamper the political activity of these groups (Bauböck 2006). In analogy, a literary opportunity structure would include the various actors within what Pierre Bourdieu has called the literary field, ranging from authors and publishers via critics to schools, universities and the general public. As Bourdieu has shown, acceptance in the field demands some adaptation to its rules. However, the criteria determining who is accepted change mostly due to a younger group of

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<sup>1</sup> These terms stand for different theoretical approaches to immigrant and ethnic minority writing whereas the terms I use are less motivated by theoretical approaches than by self-descriptions. Thus the authors emerging in the 1970s in West Germany often described themselves as guest worker writers, while a recent anthology published in Austria talks of immigrants (*Zugereiste*) (Dor 2005).

authors challenging an established group of writers (Bourdieu 2001).<sup>2</sup> These changes can open up publication channels for immigrants as they did in West Germany in the 1970s and in Austria in the 1990s. In what follows, I shall trace the emergence of immigrant writing in these two countries using the opportunity structure approach and Bourdieu's theories on the literary field to explain why immigrant writing emerged at different times in these comparable contexts.

### ***Writing solidarity: the emergence of a German guest worker literature in the 1970s***

In West Germany, the concept of an immigrant literature first emerged in the wake of the second major wave of immigration after the Second World War, the so-called 'guest worker' immigration. To overcome labour shortages due to high economic growth, the West German government signed recruitment agreements with Italy, Greece, Spain, Turkey, Morocco, Portugal, Tunisia and former Yugoslavia between 1955 and 1969. Almost four million labour migrants, i.e. 6.4 per cent of the total population, lived in West Germany when the government decided to stop the recruitment of workers in Southern Europe in 1973 (Bauer, Dietz et al. 2005: 206f.). However, this did not mean that the foreigners left the country. On the contrary, since they knew that it would be more difficult to return, many of them stayed and their families joined them. Following the oil crisis, attempts were made to push the workers to leave by stricter handling of the procedure for granting work permits and by barring foreigners from unemployment benefits (Yano 2000: 5). The workers responded to these moves by getting politically organised. At a time when political and social activities bloomed in West Germany, the immigrants established multicultural associations that aimed to influence the perception of foreigners in Germany and to foster their emancipation (D'Amato 2000: 24). At the same time, they started to publish political texts in German, ventilating an anger that due to the lack of a political opportunity structure could not be expressed by political means (Chiellino 1983a: 10-11). The body of these works came to be known as 'guest worker literature'. Unlike the term 'guest worker' itself, this description was not imposed by the German majority. On the contrary, the authors intentionally deployed the paradoxical term 'guest worker' as a group identifier, thereby turning the stigma into a signifier of resistance (Biondi and Schami 1981: 134-135).<sup>3</sup>

A comparatively large share of the emerging writers was of Turkish and Italian origin, for different reasons. Most of the Turkish immigrant writers and particularly those who stayed in the business had amassed symbolic capital in their country of origin before they came to Germany.<sup>4</sup> Aras Ören, one of

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<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu's analysis focuses on the literary field in France in the nineteenth century but his ideas have already been transferred to the West German and the Austrian literary fields (see Gilcher-Holtey 2000; and the chapter on the literary field in postwar Austria in Schöblier 2006: 59-65).

<sup>3</sup> Not all of the writers mentioned in this text used this description. Moreover, as will be explained below, some of the writers later distanced themselves from this term.

<sup>4</sup> In his work *Die Regeln der Kunst (The Rules of Art)* Pierre Bourdieu distinguishes between economic capital and symbolic capital in order to describe the specific forms of capital accumulation in the literary field. Writers accumulate symbolic capital by publishing books that are praised by critics and literary scholars but often go unnoticed by the general public. So symbolic capital does not immediately translate into economic capital (although it might do so in the long run) but it contributes to the consecration of the writer (Bourdieu 2001: 227-235). Bourdieu shows that the accumulation of symbolic capital depends on cultural capital (i.e. social class, education etc.) and economic capital (supporting the writers in those times when their books do not earn them money). In addition, social capital (i.e. networks within the field), gathered in odd jobs related to the field, can facilitate the entry into the field, especially for those who do not have cultural and/or economic capital. Nevertheless, it seems to be more difficult for a worker than for an educated foreigner to enter a specific literary field (Bourdieu 2001: 340-360).

the first widely successful guest worker writers, and Güney Dal professedly entered Germany as guest workers and spent some time working in factories which was important cultural capital for the works they wrote and is therefore mentioned on all the covers of their early books.<sup>5</sup> However, both had started to write literature before they came to Germany. Aras Ören had published in Istanbul since 1960. First German translations were issued in 1970, i.e. immediately after his arrival in Berlin in 1969 (Ören 1973: 70; Hamm 1988: 45). Güney Dal had published short stories, translations and radio plays in Istanbul before he came to Berlin in 1972 where he started to work for the radio station *Sender Freies Berlin* in 1973. The German translation of his first novel, published in Turkey in 1976, was issued in Berlin in 1979 (Dal 1981: 254). The same is true for those authors whose texts are usually not defined as guest worker literature. Emine Sevgi Özdamar, some of whose writings focus on the period of guest worker recruitment, first came to Germany as a factory worker in 1965 but returned to Istanbul to train as an actress before coming back to Berlin in 1976 since many theatres were closed in the aftermath of the 1971 putsch in Turkey. She published her first German text in 1990 (Haines and Littler 2004: 118-119). Other writers, such as Aysel Özakin and Fakir Baykurt, left Turkey for political reasons after the putsch in 1980 (Pazarkaya 1984: 115-117). Unlike his compatriots, Yüksel Pazarkaya came to Germany as a student in 1958, i.e. before a recruitment agreement was signed with Turkey. During his studies in Stuttgart, he joined the Stuttgart school of concrete poetry, established by Max Bense, and began to publish experimental poems. When the first Turkish guest workers arrived, or in his own words, when ‘the Dursuns and Hamzas caught up with the student from Izmir during his studies in Germany’, he started to focus on the situation of Turkish workers in Germany (Pazarkaya 2004: 18, my translation). So Pazarkaya had built up cultural and social capital in the West German literary field before the guest worker literature emerged which to some extent explains why he could act as a mediator between Turkish and German writing.

The outstanding literary activity of the Italian community in Germany had different roots. Unlike many of the Turkish authors, several of the Italian writers really were workers. Their interest in writing was stimulated by transnational Italian associations and their publications that issued *inter alia* literary texts. Among these were the local Italian missions that from the 1960s onwards published poems and short autobiographical texts in their weekly circular *La Squilla*, later to be renamed *Corriere d'Italia* (cf. also for the following Biondi 1984; Reeg 1988). When the interest in the literary works of emigrants grew, further associations, such as the *Federazione Italiana Sport e Cultura* (FISC) and the *Associazione Letteraria Facoltà Artistiche* (ALFA), promoted the literary activities of Italian émigrés, mainly using literary competitions. Of these only the *Federazione Italiana Sport e Cultura* expressly subscribed to aesthetic norms while the other organisations and journals mainly aimed to promote literature written by Italian guest workers. However, this does not mean that they agreed on what it meant to promote such a literature, as became manifest in a literary debate in the mid-1970s initiated and mostly published by the *Corriere d'Italia*. In this debate Antonio Pesciaoli, guest worker, poet, founder of ALFA and editor of the journal *Il Mulino*, stated that his journal aims to

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<sup>5</sup> That Ören was unskilled worker and bartender in Berlin is omitted from his later publications, such as *Berlin Savignyplatz* (Ören 1995), that can no longer be described as guest worker literature. The same is true for Dal's *Der enthaarte Affe* (Dal 1988).

gather literature of Italian workers all over the world, regardless of content and style. This understanding vastly differs from the more political objective propagated by Vito D'Adamo in his manifesto on the 'Letteratura Gast' published by the *Corriere d'Italia* and also supported by its editor Corrado Mosna for its 'democratising aims', as he put it. According to D'Adamo the 'Letteratura Gast' aims to protest against the unbearable working and living conditions in the countries receiving Italian workers and to establish a Europe of the workers. This focus on solidarity was also shared by Franco Biondi. However, Biondi felt that such a literature could only make an impact if it was written in the language of the respective host country in order to bridge the gap both between the guest workers from different countries of origin and between guest workers and workers in the host country.<sup>6</sup>

So the foundations for the literary activity of immigrants were mainly laid in the countries of origin or by transnational organisations for émigrés (Reeg 1988: 30).<sup>7</sup> That these bore fruit, i.e. that their texts also found publishers and critics in West Germany, was due to the challenges to the basis of West German society in the 1960s.<sup>8</sup> In the literary field, these found expression in the growing opposition to the *Gruppe 47* (Group 47) that had dominated the West German literary scene since the end of the Second World War. Their meetings that began as small discussion circles turned into media and marketing events that decided on who was going to be accepted as an author in the Federal Republic of Germany (Pohl 1981). One of the first signs of opposition against this group was the emergence of a worker literature in the wake of a crisis in mining in the Ruhr area (for the following see Heller 1981). First initiatives to promote such a literature were based on the observation that there was a lack of literary works representing the lives of a majority of West German society, the workers. This failure was mainly due to the fact that the institutions responsible for the dissemination of literature, most prominently the Group 47, were not interested in such works. To right this wrong, a group of workers, critics and journalists founded a literary association which they called *Gruppe 61* (Group 61), thereby expressing their distance to the Group 47. The Group 61 aimed to promote literature dealing with the industrial world of work in order to raise the awareness of this world in the general public. One of its most prominent members was Max von der Grün whose texts had a massive impact, not least because the companies he mentioned sued him for libel. Nevertheless, authors such as Max von der Grün came under strong criticism of a younger generation of writers dealing with the same topic. Their criticism was mainly directed at the fact that the Group 61 had concentrated on aesthetic norms and had neglected to encourage workers to write.

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<sup>6</sup> The emphasis on workers solidarity is particularly surprising less because the *Corriere d'Italia* was published by the Catholic mission but because the German government supported this publication between 1963 and 1970 in order to counteract the fact that many guest workers were listening to communist radio stations since these were the only foreign language radio programmes available in Germany at the time (Sala 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Pimonmas Photong-Wollmann (1996: 88) argues that these organisations facilitated the internal integration within the Italian communities which was a necessary precondition for their integration into the German literary field.

<sup>8</sup> These changes in the literary field and their impact on the emergence of a guest worker literature have rarely been discussed. For an exception see Zielke (1985: 82-88).

In 1970, the critics of the Group 61 established the *Werkkreis Literatur der Arbeitswelt* (Working circle for literature on the world of work) that was less driven by literary than by political motives.<sup>9</sup> Based on a Marxist understanding of working life, also fashionable in the contemporary student movement, the members of the *Werkkreis* intended to change society with a view to freeing the dependent workers from their shackles. This meant that they judged literary works by political rather than aesthetic norms and only promoted literature that expressly supported the above aim; furthermore, they tried to empower the workers by encouraging them to write; and they searched for new publishing channels, such as the trade union organs, in order to reach their intended audience. One of the founding members of the *Werkkreis* and its most prominent writer was Günter Wallraff who later took up guest worker issues in his famous book *Ganz unten*, published in 1985. Wallraff once described the writing of literature as a ‘direct armed intervention’ against capitalism, ‘equipped with the arms imagination, sense and form’ (Wallraff 1974:11), a description that aptly captures the spirit that prevailed not only in the *Werkkreis* but at the time in general.

It was this anti-capitalist spirit that also led to the foundation of many new publishing houses in the wake of the student movement. Reacting to the growing concentration in publishing in West Germany, these new publishers aimed to establish an alternative public. One of these was Rotbuch, founded in 1973 by a number of editors and writers who broke away from Wagenbach (founded in 1964 as one of the first left wing publishing houses) in order to realise socialist ideals both in their working life – they owned and worked for Rotbuch – and in their publications. But Rotbuch was a large player compared to other publishers who were to become important for the publication of immigrant writing in Germany, such as edition der 2, Buntbuch, CON, Verlag Atelier im Bauernhaus or Ararat, a publisher focusing on the publication of Turkish literature for Turkish and German readers (for more see Seibert 1984; Heinze 1986).

These developments within the West German literary field opened up publishing channels for immigrant writers, especially if their texts focused on workers solidarity in a fight against capitalism.<sup>10</sup> However, their use of these channels differed, depending *inter alia* on the symbolic, cultural and social capital they had already amassed, the texts they wrote and the aims they pursued. The first German publications were translations mainly of texts written by established Turkish authors. Among these were Aras Ören’s narrative poems published by Rotbuch and Güney Dal’s first novels issued by edition der 2 and Buntbuch. Ören’s *Was will Niyazi in der Naunynstraße?* (What does Niyazi do in Naunyn street?), published in 1973, has been read as an illustration of the multicultural reality in Berlin (Ackermann 1984: 35-38). However, Ören’s narrative poems, which are indebted to Nâzım Hikmet’s works, do not primarily deal with culture but with class or, to be more precise, with the class ‘that will regulate destroy erase and rebuild this society’ (Ören 1973: 64). Focusing on Turkish and

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<sup>9</sup> The *Werkkreis* still exists although the number of members has constantly been decreasing since the 1970s (Dosch, Reufels et al. 2000). It also still publishes texts written by immigrants or foreigners born in Germany (Werkkreis Literatur der Arbeitswelt 2007).

<sup>10</sup> One of the earliest German publications, Gianni Bertagnoli’s *Arrividerci Deutschland!* (Arrividerci Germany), published in 1964, is an exception to this rule. Bertagnoli’s protagonist strongly believes that European integration rather than workers solidarity will improve the situation of the guest workers in Germany (Bertagnoli 1964: 153-156). Moreover, like many of the books published in Austria recently, this novel describes the personal integration of the protagonist into the host society through a relationship with a German woman.

German workers living in the Naunyustraße in Berlin, Ören describes the history of capitalist exploitation of labour in Turkey and Germany as well as the efforts of Niyazi and his German comrade Horst to raise the awareness of this history in particular among the Turkish workers in Berlin. Hence, Ören's poems perfectly matched Rotbuch's contemporary titles including several books on Marxism, such as Bernd Rabehl's *History and Class Struggle* or D. Rjazanov's *Marx and Engels for beginners*, but also poems, stories and essays by German left wing writers, such as F.C. Delius and Peter Schneider.

A further factor that might have been conducive to the publication of Dal's novels was the beginning reception of contemporary Turkish literature in Germany. Thus the edition der 2 published satires by Aziz Nesin and Buntbuch poems by Nâzim Hikmet, both critical left-wing authors. So is Güney Dal. His first German publication *Wenn Ali die Glocken läuten hört* (When Ali hears the bells ring), published by edition der 2 in Berlin in 1979, deals with the legendary 1973 strike at Ford in Cologne initiated by the dismissal of guest workers who were on sick leave and by the subsequent increase of the work load for the other workers. Although the text contains some hints at worker and guest worker solidarity, it mainly focuses on members of the Turkish community. However, it does not construct an ethnic community joined in the fight against discrimination. On the contrary, Dal uses a multifocal narrative to portray the diversity of voices within this Turkish community. While some of the Turkish workers involved in the strike share a deep belief in communist ideas, others join in because they are afraid of losing their jobs. Moreover, some decline to take part in the strike fearing that they will lose their jobs and residence permits in Germany as well as their pieces of land and houses in Turkey. However, it is not only the Turkish community that is split by diversity. The rifts are even deeper between the different ethnic communities. Attempts to unite the workers of different origin in their fight against the company are mainly undermined by linguistic barriers. Thus, the atmosphere at a meeting of the strikers' committee, for example, is compared to the building of the tower of Babel with the ethnic groups standing together and speaking their respective languages (Dal 1979: 104-105). Moreover, the Turkish representative of the workers in the company is unable to forge links with German workers due to his lack of German. For the same reason, he does not have a voice in the meeting of the workers' committee which decides to cooperate with the police in order to suppress the strike (a description that does not coincide with the official description of the strike and its suppression). And, what is more, he leaves the meeting due to a linguistic misunderstanding and as a consequence fails to warn his fellow strikers of the approaching danger. Altogether, Dal's novel thus focuses on the same topic as Ören's but is more critical of international workers solidarity. Dal further discusses this topic in his second novel published in German, *Europastraße 5* (European road 5 – the route linking West Germany/Berlin and Austria to Yugoslavia and Turkey, the main countries of origin of their foreign workers), in which he explores the deep rift between Turkish communist intellectuals and Turkish workers (Dal 1981). That solidarity was a prominent topic at the time also becomes clear if we look at Aysel Özakin's *Die Leidenschaft der Anderen* (The passion of the others). This autobiographical novel focuses on feminist issues, but the protagonist, a Turkish woman writer, constantly has to defend this topic against critics who argue that the more pressing class question has not yet been resolved (Özakin 1983).



The Italian writers focused on the same topic but used less conventional German publication channels. In fact, they imitated the publishing practices they already knew from the Italian organisations that originally published their works and that coincided with the practices pursued by the *Werkkreis*. This was mainly due to the fact that they were not only interested in publishing their own works but intended to increase the solidarity between the different ethnic immigrant groups in order to raise the awareness of their joint problems and interests, as pointed out by Guisepe Giambusso in an article published in the *Corriere d'Italia* in 1981: 'A movement should not and cannot emphasise the individual. Its power lies in the collective work' (cited in Reeg 1988: 31, my translation). For them guest worker literature had a clear social function: to overcome the exclusion of guest workers from German society (Biondi and Schami 1983a). For this purpose, a group of writers and artists, including Franco Biondi and Gino Chiellino, but also writers from other countries of origin, such as Rafik Schami, founded the association PoLiKunst (association for polynational literature and art) in 1980. PoLiKunst organised workshops and issued a yearbook that published poems and short stories written in German by immigrants (Reeg 1988: 88). Moreover, this group managed to establish links with the above mentioned *Werkkreis*. On the one hand, this had programmatic reasons because the guest worker writers were also trying to overcome the gap to their German colleagues and to convince these that their fight was not only a fight for guest worker rights in particular but for worker rights in general (Biondi and Schami 1981). They argued that the discrimination and exclusion of the guest workers was the first sign of an erosion of democracy and that eventually these practices would also affect Germans (Biondi and Schami 1983b: 26).<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, the links to the *Werkkreis* also had practical reasons as it paved the way into the German publishing world. It helped to establish the series 'Südwind gastarbeiterdeutsch' within the publishing house CON that published guest worker literature in German from 1980 to 1983 (subsequently the series was renamed 'Südwind Literatur' and published by Neuer Malik Verlag) (Chiellino 2000: 66). In addition, the two associations together with the interest group of German women married to foreigners published the anthology *Sehnsucht im Koffer* (Longing in the suitcase) (Werkkreis Literatur der Arbeitswelt 1981) with Fischer, one of the major German publishers. Fischer issued more than 50 titles in a series edited by the *Werkkreis* between 1973 and 1985. By 1981, they had printed more than one million *Werkkreis* books (Dosch, Reufels et al. 2000). Hence, the publication of guest worker texts within this series massively increased the visibility of this new literature.

The aims of PoLiKunst also shaped their publications. Most of these were anthologies of poems and short prose texts written in German by authors of various origins.<sup>12</sup> Writers published together in an anthology are usually assumed to share some basic characteristics or interests which promoted the perception of this group of writers as a unity. So the publications in themselves were a form of overcoming the gap between the different ethnic groups of immigrants. They were a form of polynational culture. Moreover, most of the texts invoke a community of foreigners united by their

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<sup>11</sup> This position could be regarded as anticipating Giorgio Agamben's theories.

<sup>12</sup> An exception to this rule were the bilingual anthologies comprising Italian poems in their original language and in German translation (see for example Chiellino 1983c).

suffering inflicted on the one hand by specific authorities, such as employers (Naoum 1980a), the police (Papanagnou 1981), civil servants issuing residence permits (Schami 1981) or trade unions (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund/ Verein für Ausländische Mitbürger 1981), on the other hand by the general racism (Biondi 1980a,b; Naoum 1980b; Trumbetas 1980; Papastamafelos 1983; Viale 1983).<sup>13</sup> The editors of the collection of short texts *Im neuen Land* (In the new country) interpreted the understanding of these conditions as a first step towards joining forces in a fight for a better life (Biondi, Naoum et al. 1980a). However, the texts do not only moan about the situation of the guest workers, as provocatively suggested by Feridun Zaimoglu (2000: 11-12), a second generation Turkish-German writer. Some texts identify reasons for this situation. This holds true for Antonio Hernando's famous text 'Das Gastspiel eines Gastarbeiters' (The guest performance of a guest worker) which implies that the problems the guest workers experience are related to class rather than ethnicity: '[our tragedy] is the tragedy of the poor who do not master the weapons of intellect' (Hernando 1981: 39). Others call for a joint fight against the living conditions in Germany. Camine Abate's poem 'Ausländer raus' (foreigners out), for example, that portrays the persisting racism in Germany appeals to the foreigners to jointly resist this resurfacing of Nazi ideology:

'Let us start it again,  
this life without sense,  
clenched lips, balled fist' (Abate 1981, my translation).

Of course, the balled fist is a well-known symbol of workers solidarity. Similarly, Gino Chiellino's poem 'Der nächste Morgen' (The next morning) invokes a solidarity in the fight for a secure residency status (Chiellino 1983b). And his poem 'Gastarbeiter in Italien' (Guestworker in Italy) implies that guest workers in different countries – Turkish steel workers in Italy as well as Italian workers in Germany – jointly fight against the same powers and prejudices (Chiellino 1980). Moreover, some of the texts portray the benefits of such solidarity. Rafik Schami's tale 'Die Kartoffelbrille' (The potato glasses) implies that joint initiatives of immigrants and citizens might help to overcome the prejudices against immigrants in Germany (Schami 1983). And Yusuf Naoum's short story 'So einen Chef haben' (To have such a boss) illustrates that solidarity among workers can counter discrimination of individuals (Naoum 1980a).

In the course of the 1980s, workers solidarity becomes less important in the works of the immigrant and ethnic minority writers for various reasons. First, class as a central element of the discussion was slowly being supplanted by ethnicity. In 1981, PoLiKunst still tried to counter this trend: when Turkish minorities were being singled out as problematic by politicians and the media, PoLiKunst published a yearbook entitled: *Ein Gastarbeiter ist ein Türke* (A guest worker is a Turk). They argue that it is a strategy of the ruling classes to split the forces of the working class in order to prevent solidarity and social unrest. However, ethnicity has become a more important element since, also in the literature of the writers (see for example Özdamar 1990; Zaimoglu 2000). Second, in the late 1970s the Institute for German as a foreign language of the University of Munich started to show an

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<sup>13</sup> This analysis is based on three selected anthologies that represent the three publishing channels of this group of writers (Biondi, Naoum et al. 1980b; Werkkreis Literatur der Arbeitswelt 1981; PoLiKunst 1983).

interest in German literary texts written by authors whose mother tongue is not German. While their publications have been very important for the consecration of individual writers in Germany, they have also meant a change of focus from political to literary interests as their literary competitions focused on language rather than political activities (Seibert 1984: 57). Third, the writers themselves abandoned straightforward political writing and adopted a more literary approach. Suleman Taufiq, one of the editors of the series 'Südwind gastarbeiterdeutsch' published by CON, was one of the first to distance himself from guest worker literature as promoted by the association PoLiKunst, and to turn towards aesthetic ideals (Heinze 1986: 82-83). Similarly, Aras Ören's recent writing has been less inspired by Karl Marx than by Marcel Proust, as implied in the title of his roman-fleuve *Auf der Suche nach der Gegenwart* (In search of the present); and Güney Dal's *Der enthaarte Affe* (The depilated monkey) is reminiscent of Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela*.

### ***Writing love: the emergence of an immigrant literature in Austria in the 1990s***

Immigrant writing is a more recent phenomenon in Austria than in Germany despite the fact that Austria has gone through similar phases of immigration after the Second World War with one major difference: Austria received a comparatively large number of refugees from Hungary in 1956, from Czechoslovakia in 1968 and from Poland in 1980/81 due to its neutrality in the Cold War conflict. For a large share of these refugees, Austria was only a transit country on the way to the United States or Canada. Moreover, the numbers of refugees were small compared to labour migration and family reunification. Nevertheless, some writers emerged from these groups that often included a high percentage of intellectuals. However, writers, such as Geörgy Sebestyén, who came to Austria in the wake of the uprising in Hungary in 1956, were never perceived as immigrants. This can to some extent be explained by the fact that leading Austrian writers at the time, most prominently Alexander Lernet-Holenia, promoted the myth of a central European literature and culture, reminiscent of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Hence, they warmly welcomed Sebestyén who not only confirmed but also actively supported this idea (Blaschek-Hahn 1990: 75-78).

An immigrant writing did also not emerge from labour migration to Austria. Like Germany, Austria recruited labour migrants to overcome labour shortages during the period of economic growth in the 1960s. The first recruitment agreement was signed with Spain in 1962, followed by agreements with Turkey and Yugoslavia in 1964 and 1966 respectively. But only in 1969 the numbers of guest workers coming to Austria began to grow significantly. By 1974, the year when Austria stopped the recruitment of guest workers, more than 300,000 immigrants, mostly from Turkey and then Yugoslavia, lived in Austria, which at the time constituted 4.1 per cent of the total population. Like in Germany, the recruitment stop in Austria was followed by attempts to push resident guest workers to leave the country, mainly by means of the 1975 Aliens Employment Act that codified preferential treatment of Austrians on the labour market and the exclusion of foreigners from some welfare benefits. Like in Germany, these moves had two effects: while about 40 per cent of the workers left Austria between 1974 and 1984, mostly to return to then Yugoslavia, a large share of Turkish workers stayed and their families joined them so that overall the numbers of foreigners living in Austria remained the same during this period (Münz, Zuser et al. 2003: 21-24). Nevertheless, no guest worker

literature protesting against these developments emerged in Austria at the time. Of course, a large share of the labour migrants only arrived in Austria in the late 1960s. So while some of the workers had been in Germany for more than 15 years when recruitment was stopped, the majority of their colleagues had been in Austria for only five years when the government took this decision. This might explain why the immigrants did not get organised in multicultural associations to mobilise against the legal regulations that forced them to leave the country but left it to existing Austrian organisations to fight for their rights (Waldrauch and Sohler 2004: 645). It might also be the reason why there were no writing collectives as organised by the Italian workers in Germany. However, it does not explain why no writers, such as Aras Ören and Güney Dal, came to Austria to write about the situation of their compatriots in this country. As related above, Ören and Dal only arrived in Germany in 1969 and 1972 respectively and immediately began to publish in their host country. What prevented Turkish writers from doing the same in Austria?

One reason for the lack of such publications in Austria might have been the structure of the Austrian literary field at the time. From the Second World War up to the early 1970s, the literary field in Austria was dominated by authors, critics and functionaries who became famous during the interwar period and some of whom openly supported Hitler, such as Max Mell or Franz Nabl, while the many authors who were forced to emigrate during the Third Reich, such as Hermann Broch or Elias Canetti, were ignored not only by publishers but also by critics, university professors, school teachers and the general public (Amann 1984). The latter also holds true for an emerging generation of avant-garde writers, including Ernst Jandl and H. C. Artmann, who positioned themselves in opposition to the traditionalist established authors from the early 1950s onwards. However, as they found no support in Austria, they were forced to publish in West Germany. Only in the 1970s did this younger generation openly challenge the established writers, organised in the Austrian PEN, by founding a second writer's association, the so-called *Grazer Autorenversammlung* (Zeyringer 2001: 94-107). The writers organised in this new association not only demanded public recognition of their works but also aimed to put an end to what Gustav Ernst and Helmut Zenker at the time called the 'guest worker existence' of the Austrian literary avant-garde in Germany by improving the dire conditions for contemporary writers in Austria (Ernst and Zenker 1974: 26, my translation). So the focus of attention at the time was not on establishing a counter public, as it was in Germany, but on creating a public for Austrian writers (Sachs 1991: 15). Except for Residenz who started to publish contemporary Austrian writing by authors such as Peter Handke and Thomas Bernhard in 1967, there was no publisher in Austria who focused on this particular market segment (Hall 1987). As the writer Josef Haslinger put it: 'No press, no market, no state provided the authors with what they needed most urgently: possibilities to publish' (Haslinger 1987: 11). To change this situation, many writers founded literary journals and small publishing initiatives in the 1970s. Among these were also immigrants. Thus, Edition Rötzer, founded in 1972, was a joint venture of the printer Rudolf Rötzer and the writer György Sebestyén. And in 1977, Vintila Ivanceanu, a political refugee from Romania, founded the Verlag Rhombus. However, neither Rötzer nor Rhombus specifically focused on immigrant writing: while Rötzer promoted regional authors from the Burgenland as well as central European writing harking back to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Rhombus concentrated on avant-garde literature. Unlike in Germany, the

publishing channels of the workers literature emerging in Austria in the late 1960s also did not prove to be a forum for guest worker writing. The outlet for these writers was the journal *Wespennest*, established in 1969. While the odd issue of *Wespennest* included a text on the situation of labour migrants (see for example Grimminger 1973), the journal only printed one text written by a foreign worker in the course of the 1970s, namely Aras Ören's poem 'Ein idyllischer Ausflug' (An idyllic excursion), included in his collection of poems *Privatexil*, published the same year (Ören 1977a,b). Not only is this text not written by an author working in Austria, it also does not specifically focus on the situation of the guest workers but looks at workers in general.

So the Austrian literary field in the 1970s did not really open up any publishing channels for a guest worker literature in German. At the same time, there do not seem to have been any writing initiatives by the guest workers themselves, such as PoLiKunst in Germany.<sup>14</sup> It took another 20 years before an immigrant literature emerged in Austria. That it emerged at the turn of the millennium had various reasons. First and foremost, racism and xenophobia became a growing concern in the 1990s, with a small Burgenland village mobilising against refugees from Romania being the most prominent example. However, the growing racism did not only result from the fact that immigration to Austria had been rising again since the mid-1980s. It was also linked to the fact that immigration had become a party-political issue and that the open expression of anti-immigrant sentiments had become acceptable again with Jörg Haider taking over the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) in the 1980s (Bauböck 1999). Rather than opposing these tendencies, the mainstream parties reacted to the growing xenophobia by introducing stricter asylum procedures and by adopting a foreigners' law that mainly aimed to reduce immigration (Fassmann and Fenzel 2003; König and Stadler 2003). The only political party opposing these developments has been the Green Party. However, many NGOs and individuals mobilised against xenophobia in the 1990s and have opposed governmental politics in this area ever since. Two of the groups involved in this protest are of particular importance for this topic: on the one hand, the open racism resulted in growing political activity among immigrants. A large number of immigrant organisations evolved at this time and several of these have since been actively involved in political decision making processes (Waldrauch and Sohler 2004: 645). On the other hand, some of the most vocal activists involved in the continuous protests have been writers.

The political activity of the writers in Austria can be traced back to the 1970s and 1980s, which saw a renewed interest in the Austrian Nazi past, long suppressed by the myth that Austria was Germany's first victim (see also for the following Scheidl 2003). This interest was further stimulated when Kurt Waldheim became president in 1986 and did not even step back when the rumours about his membership in the SA and his service in Saloniki from 1942 to 1943, i.e. during the deportation of the Jews, were confirmed in 1988. Writers, such as Elfriede Jelinek, who had already published a novel on the Austrian Nazi past in 1980, openly commented on these events. Moreover, a new generation of Jewish authors, including Robert Schindel, who began to write in the 1970s, and Doron Rabinovici, started to write about latent anti-Semitism in Austria. Several of these writers have continuously commented on racism in Austria, particularly when the conservative party formed a government with

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<sup>14</sup> More research is necessary in order to establish whether there was such a literature in other languages than German.

the FPÖ in 2000 (Michaels 2003). Moreover, several Austrian authors published novels focusing on migration and racism following these events (Fiddler 2006).

That immigrant voices came to join this opposition was due to the fact that Austrian publishers began to show an interest in these writers and that funding was made available for such projects, both by the state and the *Länder*.<sup>15</sup> The interested publishers often either had a long history in publishing autochthonous minority literature, such as Drava, well known for its publication of Slovene writing, or were more recent foundations, dedicated to the promotion of minority cultures and literatures, such as EYE in Innsbruck, Kitab in Klagenfurt and, most importantly, edition exil in Vienna. Established by Christa Stippinger in 1997, edition exil is the organiser of the yearly writing competition 'Schreiben zwischen den Kulturen' (Writing between cultures) that aims to promote immigrant and ethnic minority culture in Austria. This initiative was a springboard for writers, such as Dimitré Dinev, who has since won critical acclaim with his novel *Engelszungen* (Angel's tongues), published in 2003 by Deuticke, a bigger Austrian publishing house that has shown an interest in immigrant and ethnic minority voices. These include Radek Knapp, who fled from Poland with his parents in 1980, Vladimir Vertlib, a Jewish refugee from Russia, and Hamid Sadr, an Iranian refugee. However, that these writers came to Austria as immigrants was of no importance for their publications with Deuticke in the 1990s. This particular aspect only became more important after the change of government in 2000 when even authors, such as Doron Rabinovici, who has been living in Austria since he was three years old and has won critical acclaim as a Jewish minority writer, began to describe themselves as immigrants to express their opposition to the political developments.

To provide an overview over immigrant writing published in Austria over the last decade is far more difficult than for the guest worker literature that emerged in West Germany in the 1970s due to the greater diversity of origins, themes and styles that also marks current immigrant and ethnic minority writing in Germany. Unlike in 1970s West Germany, the immigration motives and experiences of the writers publishing in 1990s Austria are diverse. However, the majority of the writers are refugees, with a large group originating from former Yugoslavia. It therefore comes as no surprise that workers solidarity is of no significance in their works. If solidarity comes up at all, it does not draw on communist ideas but is reminiscent of network theories: in several texts the foreigners help each other out with information on the asylum procedure or ways to circumvent internal controls and evade deportation (Knapp 1999; Dinev 2003). Nevertheless, there is a dominant topic: the portrayal of racism and exclusion, often linked to the Austrian Nazi past. Moreover, many texts use a similar motif as a signifier of integration in its manifold senses: love. It is love that leads the protagonist of Vladimir Vertlib's autobiographical novel *Zwischenstationen* (Transit stations) to move from Vienna to Salzburg after a long odyssey from Russia via Austria, the Netherlands, the United States and Israel. This last move makes him aware of how much he has come to feel at home in this country and the first thing he does in Salzburg is to buy a Tyrolean style hat. Nevertheless, some doubts remain even in this last scene of the novel: shortly before he reaches Salzburg, the train passes under a motorway built in

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<sup>15</sup> Several writers have complained that their works were rejected by Austrian publishers (see for example Dimitré Dinev in Stippinger 2000: 42). Moreover, Stanislav Struhar has devoted a novel to this topic (Struhar 2005).

the Third Reich, a reminder not only of the Austrian past but also of the latent anti-Semitism in the country (Vertlib 2005: 300-301). While in Vertlib's novel the process of integration seems to be completed, Dinev's novel *Engelszungen* ends with a beginning love that symbolises the only hope for Svetljo, an illegal immigrant from Bulgaria, whose fate serves to illustrate the inhumanity of Western democracies (Dinev 2003). Radek Knapp's novel *Herrn Kukas Erzählungen* (Mr. Kuka's stories) finishes on a similar note, although the situation of his protagonist Waldemar, a naïve Polish student who comes to Vienna on a tourist visa but intends to work there, is not as hopeless as Svetljo's (Knapp 1999). Doron Rabinovici, by contrast, uses the same motif in his novel *Ohnehin* (meaning both anyway but also no place to go) to describe the relations between different ethnic groups in Vienna. Out of the three couples he describes, only one succeeds to bridge the gap between two enemy cultures: Theo Alexandrus, whose father has come to Vienna after Northern Cyprus was occupied by the Turks, and Şirin Ertekin, whose family is from Turkey. Significantly, both the relationship between the Jewish Austrian Lew Feininger and the Austrian Sophie Wiesen and between the Austrian Stefan Sandtner and the refugee Flora Dema from former Yugoslavia fail (Rabinovici 2004). All of these examples illustrate a significant difference from the ideas promoted in the guest worker literature: while the guest worker authors subscribed to the belief that social change would bring them equality, the above works seem to imply that racism and exclusion can only be overcome on the individual level.

### **Conclusion**

'Future literary scholars will certainly analyse more closely the process of how [writers such as Dimitré Dinev, Vladimir Vertlib and Radek Knapp] became Austrians. I am just happy that there are such people.' (Dor 2005, my translation)

With these words Milo Dor closes his introduction to an anthology of texts written by immigrant writers living in Vienna. My concern was less to analyse how these writers became Austrians but how they became immigrants, a matter that has rarely been discussed. As should have become obvious from my analysis, writers are not necessarily read as immigrants. Both in Germany and in Austria, this reading only emerged after a group of writers positioned themselves as such in response to mechanisms of political and cultural exclusion. Moreover, for literature to become a means of protest at such times, there need to be immigrants who dispose of the necessary cultural and social capital to start writing, publication opportunities for such a literature and favourable critics in the respective host country. The latter explains why immigrant writing emerged at different times in Germany and Austria despite the fact that the histories of immigration are comparable in these two countries. Moreover, the different contexts in which these writings emerged have led to different responses to exclusion in the writings: while the works written in 1970s West Germany display a strong belief that change can be brought about by workers solidarity in a fight against capitalism, the novels published in the last decade in Austria seem to subscribe to a more individualised approach to social change.

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