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Identities under Siege: a Comment on the Hungarian Attitude Towards Refugees Informed by Shakespeare's *Othello*

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Introduction

During the Hungarian parliamentary elections of 2018, the Fidesz-KDNP coalition led by Viktor Orbán maintained its two-thirds majority, despite winning only 48.49% of the votes. In spite of such extreme curving achieved via the voting system which has been geared in favour of the ruling party, 48% remains an inarguably large value. I argue that a major – if not the single most important – factor that contributed to such great portion of the votes is the coalition's policy regarding the refugee crisis that started in 2015 and on which Orbán's party centred its political campaign before the election. Up until its victory, the antagonistic discourse with which refugees were represented, had been the government's most potent tool for gaining supporters, even amongst those who were otherwise aligned with the opposition. Although members of the government are now much less vocal about refugees in the national media, the discourse about them became an integral part of the Hungarian national discourse. Moreover, one could argue that perhaps the refugee crisis, and the supposedly innate deviance of refugees, became a characteristic component of Hungarian identity, since they remain paramount concerns of individuals and organizations alike, even among those who do not have an affiliation with the government. Besides its persistence, I consider the Hungarian discourse noteworthy in Europe and the West in general, due to the immense hostility with which it treats refugees. One significant characteristic of the attitude of this discourse toward refugees is their subhuman, animalistic portrayal. They are often depicted as a swarming mass of predatory young men, an entity that conjures up the prospect of the systematic raping of women; the infestation of Europe; and the defilement of its old Christian culture.

Even though such an adverse depiction of the current crisis is still largely unusual, the enmity that arises when a community must face a cultural 'Other' has a long tradition. A similar concern is illustrated in William Shakespeare's *Othello*. There too, the established cultural boundary separating the Self from the Other is breached by the marriage between members of the two groups, which engenders an animalised, barbaric conceptualisation of the Other. In my essay, I compare Shakespeare's dramatic text with Hungarian media articles to highlight certain transhistorical qualities of the process of Othering, for which purpose I utilise the findings of psychoanalysis. During my examinations, I intend to illuminate how Othering in fact underlines the fragmented nature of the Self that is doing the Othering.

I.

Both in the refugee crisis and in *Othello*, the Other is perceived to be threatening due to its proximity. The reason why the lack of distance is regarded as alarming can be explained by the psychoanalytical concept of *abjection* as posited by Julia Kristeva. To briefly summarise, when an infant begins to detach itself from the mother and establish its own subjectivity in the symbolic realm of the father, the process of separation is underlined by a set of rituals involving ingestion and excretion. We all consume food to subsequently expel it from our bodies along with other bodily fluids. However, these rituals can never be concluded for they are necessitated by our corporeal existence, we can never achieve a complete control over our subjectivity. Therefore

the outside is elaborated by means of a projection from within, of which the only experience we have is one of pleasure and pain. An outside in the image of the inside [...]. The non-distinctiveness of inside and outside would thus be unnameable, a border passable in both directions by pleasure and pain. (Kristeva, 1982: 61)

Any external object that vividly reminds the subject of its incomplete subjectivity is then consequently conceived as threatening in its psyche.

Melanie Klein posits that the negative conception of this external object and the consequent attempts of its destruction arise not simply because it reminds the subject of its incomplete being, but because the Other is perceived to be complete (Klein, 1975: 176–235). According to her, the subject's sense of Self emerges from the relationship with its primary object: the mother's breast. Depending on the success of this relationship, the primary object can either become 'the good breast' or 'the bad breast'. The former 'is the basis for trust in one's own goodness' (*idem*, 188), while the latter signifies life-long feelings of incompleteness, emptiness, and of being damaged. However, counter-intuitively, experiences of the bad breast do not engender resentment toward the bad breast, but rather envy toward the good breast:

For if the infant cannot tolerate either the discrepancy between its own badness and the goodness outside itself or the sense of dependency on this external source of goodness, the good breast will not be available for the infant's use: its goodness will in effect be spoiled by the infant's own envious rage. (Adelman, 1997: 135)

The subject can only satisfy this rage by 'put[ting] badness, primarily bad excrement and bad parts of the self, into the mother, and first of all into her breast, in order to spoil and destroy her' (Klein, 1975: 181). Therefore, the status of the Other in fact belongs to the Self that develops at the sight of an external object's goodness or completeness in the face of the Self's feelings of inadequacy. The establishment of the external object as Other is the tool that the Self chooses to demolish the perceived discrepancy of inner quality. To borrow Adelman's words, 'racism is the psychic property of the racist, not simply of his [*sic*] victim' (Adelman, 1997: 127).

Feelings of threat and envy most readily emerge when the abject is perceived to be near. Such proximity need not be close in a sense that the Other is able to make physical contact with the subject: it can be understood more abstractly through entities referred to as body images. These 'are not confined to our bodies but extend beyond them to encompass elements

of the object world and the body images of others' (Wilton, 1998: 176). Furthermore, the construction of boundaries, and the impulse to keep the abject far away from the body or the body image, are not merely individual psychic phenomena but can be observed in communities that regard themselves as relatively homogenous. In such cases, facing the Other becomes a 'struggle for collective psychological survival' (*idem*, 175). The struggle takes the form of constructing the boundary where one side is designated for the Self and the other for the abject. However, a 'boundary can be variously located according to who is doing the categorizing' (Sibley, 1995: 34); therefore, the identity of the Other may vary among different communities and different eras. Yet, there exists a palpable aversion to people who seemingly do not belong and must be separated both in the early modern and at present. Below, I will chart the similar manners in which the two periods utilise the transhistorical practice of Othering.

II.

David Sibley argues that the predominant manner in which European powers in the Middle Ages and in the early modern period visualised the world was that a given power and its people identified themselves as the centre of the known world; for they assumed themselves to be the most civilised of peoples, and all the others that surrounded them were considered to be vile (*idem*, 49–71). Moreover, Europeans believed that this kind of innate deviance translated into physical characteristics. Members of such 'lowly' groups were seen as "“imperfect” – physically deformed and/or black and at one with nature, in other words, not quite human by civilised, white European standards' (*idem*, 51). It was necessary to locate the signs of Otherness in physical characteristics because biological difference sealed the boundary between Europeans and their Others; otherwise, the boundary could have been easily dismantled.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Othello is Othered via his blackness. However, it is impossible to know whether Shakespeare did in fact imagine Othello to be dark-skinned, or whether he wished to underline the constructivist nature of this tradition. As Doris Adler points out, Shakespeare utilises the words *black*, *white*, and *fair* multiple times in the play; and he also tends to merge the various literal and metaphorical meanings that the terms possess (Adler, 1974: 248). Adler identifies the following functions in *Othello*:

first, *black* is used as a color designation for the darkest hue, 'an old black ram' (I.i.88); *white*, as the opposite, designates the lightest hue: 'white ewe' (I.i.89). Second, *black* is used to designate a Moor, a Negro, one of African origin: 'the black Othello' (II.ii.29); *white* is suggested for European counterparts, as in Othello's reference to Desdemona, 'that whiter skin of hers than snow' (V.ii.4). Third, *black* is used to describe a brunette, 'black and witty' (II.i.131), and both *white* and *fair* are used to describe a blond, 'fair and wise' (II.i.129), 'a white that shall her blackness fit' (II.i.113). Fourth, *black* is used to denote the soil of filth or grime, 'Her begrimed and black' (III.iii.386-87), and by suggestion, *white* is clean or unsoiled. Fifth, and finally, *black* is used for the morally foul, 'blackest sins' (II.iii.334), 'black vengeance' (III.iii.447); and *fair* is used as an aspect of virtue: 'If virtue no delighted beauty lack, / Your son-in-law is far more fair than black' (I.iii.289-90) (*ibidem*).

In accordance with Adler and Adelman, I maintain that a shift occurs in the usage of these terms as the play progresses. Whereas in the beginning, blackness and whiteness seem to describe merely aspects of the physical realm, later in the action they appear to connote a largely moral discrepancy that happens to be articulated with the same words. For instance, at the beginning of the play Othello does not associate the blackness of night with negativity: 'The goodness of night upon you, friends' (1.2.33). However, in the later acts the blackness of his own face becomes the indicator of moral filth: 'My name, that was as fresh / As Dian's visage, is now begrim'd, and black / As mine own face' (3.3.392-4). The transformation of meaning is further supported by a phonological aspect: Adler argues for the significance of the similar pronunciation of 'white' and 'wight' (Adler, 1974: 253). The latter denotes 'a human being' and, if used as an adjective, it means 'active, strong, brave and nimble'. At first, 'white' is simply a physical phenomenon; but as meanings alter, it begins to signify the

human being, and anything that falls outside its spectrum is no longer human. In other words, Othello is dehumanised as the play progresses, and he himself internalises this notion. It is paramount to note that this metamorphosis of meanings is not organic but is purposefully used throughout the play by the Venetian characters in order to cement Othello's Otherness. The primary agent in this process is Iago; nevertheless, other white characters are also apt in bending implications of words as exemplified by the Duke. When he says, 'If virtue no delighted beauty lack, / Your son-in-law is far more fair than black' (1.3.287–8), he deems blackness to be abhorred; however, he excuses Othello from being defined as such. Adler claims that 'the black-skinned Othello is exonerated as being metaphorically white' (Adler, 1974: 252). I insist that it is impossible to know whether Othello was truly conceived to be black-skinned, for the human body can display a myriad of skin colours. It is possible that Othello's skin colour may have been simply *darker* than those of the Venetian characters, and as such the category to which he belonged could have been debated. This would in fact explain the determination to define him *via* the colour of his skin. Nevertheless, in either case, the example supports the capricious nature of words and especially the way they are used.

A similar unpredictability, or outright self-contradiction, is evident in the Hungarian government's policy regarding who is and who is not considered to be a refugee, an immigrant, or a notorious 'migrant'. The last word implies an individual whose movement has neither an origin nor a destination: it denotes a person who does not belong anywhere. According to the government, this category is by far the largest and is the reason for the so-called '*migrant* crisis'. The government claims that such people barely resemble humans; they are not even individual people but are more akin to threatening swarms that are controlled by Western forces that mean harm to Hungary. The most notable of such figures is George Soros, the Hungarian-American investor. His ill-intentions are the works of the government's

imagination, since – amongst others – Soros has generously contributed to the development of non-governmental organizations in Hungary. Nevertheless, *via* his figure, the migrants acquire a Western aspect and as such they can be used in arguments against the East and West alike. The difference between migrants and refugees is described as thus: ‘Refugees are not migrants, they knocked on our doors [...]’, as the prime minister articulates (Kovács, 2018). According to Orbán, the difference is simply that while migrants do not have the slightest respect for Hungary’s borders and violently threaten the Hungarian nation with their invasion, refugees respectfully stop at the country’s entrance and politely request a refugee status. Ironically, having a refugee status equates to being locked up in the transit zone, which resembles a prison fabricated from containers (figures 1 and 2):



Figure 1. The transit zone. Source: MTI / Hungarian Telegraphic Office. Photo by: unknown.



Figure 2. The transit zone. Source: Index.hu. Photo by: István Huszti.

In addition, new legislation came into effect in the beginning of July 2018, according to which refugee status in Hungary is denied to those who have already entered another safe transit country. This affected two refugee families in August, who were not granted refugee status but were handed over to the Aliens Policy Authority within the transit zone. The difference in status meant that only the children and the breast-feeding women received food. Not even the leader of the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship, Gábor Iványi, was allowed to give food to these families. The issue was eventually resolved by the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, a non-governmental watchdog organization, which appealed for an intervention by the European Court of Human Rights (Dobsi, 2018). All in all, despite the different terms, refugees and ‘migrants’ receive equally harsh and inhumane treatment. However, the word ‘immigrant’ appears to have evaporated from public discourse. A probable reason for this is the booming business of the Hungarian investment immigration programme. Between 2013 and 2017, roughly 20,000 foreigners brought shares and consequently citizenships in Hungary, which cost more than €60,000 per person (Zöldi, 2018). Yet, since the primary

theme of the campaign of Orbán's party was the refusal of aliens within Hungary, it would have been openly hypocritical to admit to the existence of the programme. Therefore, the party's discourse was manipulated by completely eradicating the topic as well as the general notion of the immigrant. Similar to the Venetian characters of *Othello*, the fluidity of language is exploited to the fullest – with the difference being that the government's logic is not driven by skin colour but by money, profit, and *self-interest*.

The emphasis of 'self' is key, for both the Othering practices of the Hungarian government and the events of the action of *Othello* arise from a single, damaged Self, as Klein and Kristeva remind us. In the case of *Othello*, the position of this Self is occupied by Iago. Adelman notes that Iago's very name hints at this function: 'Iago's name unfolds from the Italian *io*, Latin *ego*' (Adelman, 1997: 127). But more importantly, his Self is thrice damaged:

Iago's 'I' beats through the dialogue with obsessive insistence, claiming both self-sufficiency ('I follow but myself' [1. 58]) and self-division, defining itself by what it is not ('Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago' [1. 57]), in fact, simultaneously proclaiming its existence and nonexistence: 'I am not what I am' (1. 65). (*ibidem*)

Self-sufficiency would normally be considered a positive characteristic; however, coupled with the other two aspects of his personality, it instead reinforces the sense of injury. After all, he is dependent on his divided, vacuous Self. Furthermore, Adelman highlights that 'Iago erupts out of the night [...] as though he were a condensation of its properties' (*ibidem*), and posits that his schemes are directed at Othello because he appears to Iago as the epitome of matter, fullness:

Othello is everywhere associated with the kind of interior solidity and wholeness that stands as a reproach to Iago's interior emptiness and fragmentation [...], Othello is initially 'all in all sufficient' (4.1.261), a 'full soldier' (2.1.36), whose 'solid virtue' (4.1.262) and 'perfect soul' (1.2.31) allow him to achieve the 'full fortune' (1.1.66) possessing Desdemona. (*idem*, 127–8)

Iago's only chance to cope with such a sight lies in the destruction of Othello, which he achieves by gradually infusing his own darkness within him, like an envious child does with

‘a good breast’, according to Klein. In fact, the whole play is nothing but a playing out of this process, which is supported by W. H. Auden’s criticism of the play: ‘I cannot think of any other play in which only one character performs personal actions – all the *deeds* are Iago’s – and all the others without exception only exhibit behaviour’ (Auden, 1962: 145).

The current state of Hungarian affairs could be envisioned somewhat analogously. Since 2010, Orbán’s government has communicated a phoenix-like phenomenon: out of the ruins of a leftist government a powerful leadership has emerged, which has made Hungary strong and self-sufficient once again, but is continuously attacked by enemies such as the notorious George Soros, the migrants or, if all else fails, the European Union. The notable difference between the two narratives lies in the fact that while Iago appears to perceive Othello’s solidity to be set in stone (which necessitates its destruction), the Hungarian government claims that Western prosperity is maintained by the purposeful disposal of ‘migrants’ in Eastern Europe, and especially Hungary. In the next section of my essay, I will analyse the particularities of the Hungarian government’s discourse by examining the public letter that the prime minister wrote before Christmas 2017, for which I will provide my own translation.

III.

The text of merely 1,188 words speaks volumes, but I will concentrate on three themes that are relevant for the discussion of this paper. To begin with, Orbán expresses sentiments of the aforementioned anxiety which is engendered by an Other. He describes the refugee crisis as follows: ‘Today, our lives, the foundations of our world are targeted by the attack’. The grim end of Europe is envisioned; and interestingly, though he often talks of Europe – especially Western Europe – in a negative tone, here it is presented as a respected partner. It is probably more accurate to say that he cherishes an ideal notion of Europe but is disillusioned by most

of the leaders of the other nations that are part of it. This is supported by his claim that other European nations either contend that there is no crisis whatsoever and deem the integration of refugees into Europe an advancement or that they have just simply given in. Hungary, however, in his view is different, and has always been because it has never failed to stand up for its rights. In light of this, the reigning government promises to maintain Hungary's integrity without compromises; it assumes the role of guardian, not only of Hungary but of the whole of Europe. The ghastly prospect Orbán conceives for Hungarians is twofold. On the one hand, Hungarians are forced to change their customs: amongst several changes, they have to 'celebrate Christmas Eve behind curtains drawn'. On the other hand, these arguably superficial modifications threaten something much more essential – the Hungarian sense of Self:

They want us not to be what we are. They want us to become people whom we do not want to be. They want us to mix with people who have arrived from a different world and that we change for the seamless completion of this fusion [...]. They want to take our lives away from us and to change it for a life which is not ours. (Orbán 2018)

The stressing of the alien nature of the ominous people is peculiar since in this very same text he posits that Hungarians themselves have a degree of 'alien quality' about them.

Albeit briefly, Orbán draws attention to segments of Hungarian history which to him signify the special position of Hungary within Europe; yet at the same time he highlights that Hungarians to some extent occupy the periphery, the place usually reserved for Others. At the beginning of the letter, he mentions that Hungarians originate from the East and that only after having met European culture did they become an integral agent in it. He later alludes to three periods when Hungary's independence was limited and when Hungarians attempted to reclaim it: the occupation of the Ottoman Empire, and the revolutions of 1848 and 1956. His intention is to establish a connection between the freedoms of Hungary and Europe. If

Hungary remains free, so will Europe. In my view, however, these allusions also underline Hungary's peripheral position in Europe and its link more to the East than to the West. I would propose that what Orbán is trying to engage is a nationwide subconscious fear of identifying with the East which in turn fuels the antagonism toward refugees arriving from the (Middle) East. By refusing to let these people inside Hungarian territory via the erection of fences and by treating them as if they were inferior, the Hungarian collective psyche is able to conceptualise itself as more European than Eastern.

Finally, the most dominant theme of the letter is that Hungarian freedom and identity are inextricable from Christianity, though Orbán is quite self-contradictory in its depiction. He begins his argument with Christ's second commandment: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (Mark 12:31). He mentions that his government is often frowned upon, for it deems itself Christian yet is unwilling to welcome the refugees. He then suggests that one should focus on the second part of the commandment: one should love oneself and that includes 'the family, the home, the nation': the core values of modern societies according to Sibley (1995: 41). Orbán claims that 'Christianity is culture and civilization. We live within it. It's not about the number of people that go to church or how many pray sincerely'. I would certainly agree with the first part of the last statement; yet the second part quite perplexes me. If a whole nation's identity is rooted in religious faith, I contend that its faith should be sincere; otherwise, the whole structure of that identity is faulty and unstable. He adds: 'The self-evidence of European life is now at risk, those things which one does not need to reflect upon, merely perform'. For him, Christian life in Europe is one that lacks self-reflexivity, with people carrying out their actions the way they do simply because they were told or taught to. As such, according to Orbán, the European Christian is merely a machine. At the end of the text, he even admits that such a lifestyle is far from perfect:

we are aware of imperfection, our own imperfections too, nevertheless we have learnt to live with them, to draw inspiration from them, to gain lift from them. That is why we, Europeans, have been striving for centuries to make the world better. (Orbán 2018)

The logic within this sentiment looks erroneous. If one is aware of one's imperfections, one should try to improve them within oneself, and not try to change the world to fit these imperfections. Besides, I cannot help but associate with this sentiment the multitude of occasions when people, perceived as Others, were exploited or, in the worst of cases, slaughtered by people who claimed their actions were serving God. Despite such illogical reasoning, Orbán stresses the importance of Christianity because, due to its ubiquitous nature within Europe, and to the more positive connotations it holds (in contrast to money), it can be fabricated into a litmus test to identify the Self and the Others, the civilised and the subhuman.

IV.

Finally, I would like to illustrate that the above-mentioned ideological concepts, which emerge in the proximity of an Other to the Self, are most fully fleshed out if that Other is animalised. Bequeathed to Europeans by Antiquity, there exists the 'habit of seeing animals not as they are, but as crucial sites of contrast to human identity' (Anderson, 2000: 7). Identity depends on factors such as 'reason, agency, history, communicative status, and cultural life' (*apud* Ingbold, 1994: 22), especially European Christian cultural life, as Orbán and his government contend. Every individual's identity is determined by these factors, whether one is deemed to be human or animal: identity depends upon whether one can claim to possess these features or is presented to lack them. Both the Hungarian refugee policy and *Othello* depict this dialectic and both utilise a terminology that expresses such sentiments. Othello is referred to by all sorts of animal names instead of his own name: 'an old black ram', 'a

Barbary horse, 'exchange me for a goat', for instance (1.1.89 and 112; 3.3.178). In addition, his humanity is questioned by Iago: 'Are you a man? Have you a soul? Or sense?' (3.3.372).

The humanity of refugees is questioned in a similar fashion. Outside of the transit zone, individual identities are reduced into 'waves of migrants', a term which many government-affiliated news outlets have integrated into their style of communication. András Bencsik, a journalist and editor of several of these news outlets, stated that 'these are animals' (qtd. in Herczeg, 2015), when refugees attempted to cross Hungary in order to reach other European countries. In addition to this, Tamás Varga-Bíró, a journalist of *Pesti Srácok* ('Guys of Pest'), an online magazine favouring the government, recently commented on his blog that 'these African migrants are not animals. Namely, animals possess a serious and ordered sense of flock'. Here, he was referring to the alleged incident that took place on the Spanish coast, when refugees, who had already landed on the shore, did not bother to offer help to their fellow refugees on the brink of drowning. As discussed earlier, once inside the transit zone, refugees are locked into metaphorical 'cages' where they are completely at the mercy of their 'caretakers', like animals. Several news articles dealing with the predicament of refugees were filled with comments by people who asserted that this was the right place for 'migrants' and that they agreed with such measures. These few examples illustrate the readiness with which people tend to question the Others' humanity and animalise them at the same time. When discussing the process of Othering, Sibley notes that Others are usually associated with 'nature, dirt, excrement, overt sexuality' (Sibley, 1995: 51). All of these aspects are applicable to animals as well; therefore, the image of the animal provides the perfect vehicle for Othering. However, I will only discuss sexuality here, because it is the most dominant feature both in *Othello* and in the Hungarian public discourse.

The prospect of sexual relations between a male who is perceived as Other and a female who belongs to a given community is perhaps regarded as the most potent catalyst of anxiety about the Other because it embodies the transgression of two boundaries at once. On the one hand, it conjures up the image of the miscegenation between people who belong to two distinct categories and as such it is argued that their bloodlines would be spoiled and their lineages destroyed. On the other, it evokes the boundary crossed between the animal and the human. The desire for sex is instinctive and natural but Nature denotes everything that humans have distanced themselves from and against which they have established their sense of identity. Therefore, to be defined by one's sexuality is an act of dehumanisation and animalisation which is exactly what happens to Othello and the refugees. The first impressions of Othello, which Iago offers, relate to the sexual relationship that exists between Othello and Desdemona.

Even now, now, very now, an old black ram
Is tupping your white ewe. Arise, arise,
Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,
Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you (1.1.89–92)

you'll have your
daughter covered with a Barbary horse; you'll have your
nephews neigh to you (1.1.111–12)

your daughter
and the Moor are now making the beast with two
backs (1.1.115–17).

the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor (1.1.127)

Besides insinuating that sexuality is depraved, these remarks also appear to come from a collective unease that one's otherwise seemingly pure lineage may be defiled by the genetic intrusion of the Other. Hence Brabantio's outcry: 'O treason of the blood!' (1.1.168). Although this instance does not specifically revolve around money, it certainly involves value and once again, *self-interest*. Othello has wrecked the chance of Desdemona having a

favourable marriage for which reason Brabantio deems him 'an abuser of the world' (1.2.80) a scene later. With his 'transgression', Othello, in Brabantio's eyes, does not simply disrespect local custom but the very order of the world.

Similar attitudes are discernible in Hungarian attitudes toward refugees. Countless Hungarian magazine articles report cases of refugee men having sexual relations with European women. On most occasions, these men are portrayed as immoral and aggressive to the point that intercourse becomes rape. In 2018, the League of Towns with County Rights held a meeting in Budapest concerning the refugee crisis. One main line of argumentation for resisting the entry of refugees was encapsulated by the rhetorical question formulated by Éva Farkas, mayor of Makó: 'Do you want to bear children for migrants?' (qtd. in Vég, 2018) In my mind, the conception of children with a refugee parent is a repulsive notion to many Hungarians because first, it would cement the physical proximity with the Eastern Other; and second, it would seal an ideological subjugation to Western influence. I believe this encapsulates the core of the Hungarian dilemma: the Hungarian nation is within the throes of an identity crisis. Since historically it has suffered subjection from East and West alike, it is, as an independent nation now, unable to establish its sense of Self on the grounds of anything other than grievance in both directions which are both embodied by the refugees. I think that Hungarian identity is currently in grave need of the refugees because their Othering provides the only means in which it can engage its Self. Wilton notes that 'the prolonged proximity of someone identified as abject/uncanny overwhelms the symbolic construction of them as 'Other'' (Wilton, 1998: 181). If this happened, however, it would be a fatal blow to Hungary's current state because, like Iago, the Hungarian nation would no longer be able to define itself: it would be unable to speak a word.

Conclusion

Understanding the mechanisms that operate behind the refugee crisis is a task of growing importance because, even though the number of arriving refugees is at its lowest, the crisis is far from being over. There are only a handful of measures that minimise the influx of refugees and the countries within the European Union are still unable to reach a consensus on how to tackle the crisis. Hungary is one of the most prominent opponents of the integration of refugees which is why I think it crucial to investigate how the crisis is approached there. I maintain that the Hungarian Self, similarly to Iago, is experiencing an identity crisis. Due to its historical injuries, Hungary is unable to establish itself in a positive manner; it is entangled within various ill-feelings toward both the West and the East and, for the moment, it can only define itself through the alienation of Others. Through a comparative analysis of current Hungarian public discourse and Shakespeare's *Othello*, I hope to have illustrated the ways in which this Othering occurs. In the face of this, I would claim that initiatives such as the one instigated by Judith Sargentini in which she proposes sanctions in accordance with Article 7 of the EU treaty against Hungary are beneficial, because they raise awareness of the detrimental effects of the current Hungarian government's actions – both nationally and internationally. The former seems to me to be more important in this case because national awareness could propagate a re-evaluation of national identity. For this, actions are needed but at the same time it is equally important that researchers investigate how Hungary and other countries equally crippled in their identity will be able to construct a positive sense of Self based on strengths and not on the demonisation of Others.

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List of Illustrations

Figure 1. The transit zone. Source: MTI / Hungarian Telegraphic Office. Photo by: unknown. <https://civilhetes.net/a-menekultek-halalraheztetesen-dolgoznak-a-magyar-hatosagok-a-tranzitzonaban> (accessed 5 January 2019).

Figure 2. The transit zone. Source: Index.hu. Photo by: István Huszti. https://index.hu/belfold/2017/06/12/tranzitzona_roszke_tompa_borton_menekultek_terhes_no_hatosagi_tulka_pas_gyerekek/ (accessed 5 January 2019).