

THE CONSTITUTION OF PERSONAL IDENTITY IN CRISIS:
THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE 1848 REVOLUTION
FOR UFFO HORN'S 'NATIONAL HERMAPHRODITISM'

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During the 19th century, nationalists frequently used the term “hermaphrodites” pejoratively to refer to individuals who refused to be identified by a single, monolithic ethnic-national identity. Over the last few decades, the literature on nationalism has mostly tended to interpret those complaints as evidence of “national indifference” – an absence of national identity. But a close examination of early-nationalizing Austrian society reveals that the term can be understood more literally. An entire generation of poets, writers, and thinkers, like the Bohemian poet and dramatist Uffo Horn, exhibited a very powerful kind of national identification, but one that acknowledged and joyfully embraced multiple linguistic and ethnic-national identities – in Uffo Horn’s case both Czech and German identities. In the course of the 1848 revolution, however, self-conscious “hermaphrodites” like Horn, under the pressure of the growing tension between liberals, radicals, and reactionaries, found themselves increasingly forced to choose sides, to adopt a clear identity which was not only single and unambiguous, but which explicitly excluded the national “Other.”