



universität
wien

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„Discourses of Belonging and Foreignness: Mapping
African-Diasporic Writers in Austria“

verfasst von / submitted by

Laura Kisser, BA BA

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of

Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2023 / Vienna 2023

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

UA 066 870

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Ass.-Prof. Dr. Rémi Armand Tchokothe

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to express special thanks to the authors featured in the interviews for this thesis: Ishraga Mustafa Hamid, Mihret Kebede, Tarek Eltayeb and Fiston Mwanza Mujila. I am very thankful for their cooperation and willingness to contribute to this work. Thank you for your trust and your time.

Further, I want to thank the supervisor of this thesis, Rémi Armand Tchokothe, for his constant support, advice, time and patience. Thank you for motivating me to always go the extra mile, for opening up new perspectives and giving me the courage to explore new directions.

I would also like to thank my wonderful writing groups for their encouragement: Firstly, Hannah and Ines, with whom I really enjoyed spending time working and writing together during my studies, and further, Laura and Dani, for their support during the last hurdles of writing. Big thanks also goes to Ona for proofreading this thesis.

Finally, I would like to thank the people closest to me for their constant support and for patiently listening to all my worries, ideas and thoughts about this thesis for the past year. To my dear family, friends and especially my partner Jasmin: Thank you, I am deeply grateful.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
1.Introduction	8
1.1. State of Research and Research Gap	10
1.2. Method and Research Questions	13
1.2.1. Interviews and Criteria for the Authors Selected	14
1.2.2. Qualitative Content Analysis and Discourse	15
1.2.3. Reflections on My Own Positionality and the Interviews.....	16
1.3. Terminology and Key Concepts	18
1.3.1. The African Diaspora	18
1.3.2. The Discourse and Discourse Analysis	21
1.3.3. The Literary Field.....	23
1.4. Contextualization: History of the African Diaspora in Austria	25
1.4.1. Historical Overview	26
1.4.2. The Situation Today	30
1.4.3. Statistical Data.....	33
2. Authors of the African Diaspora in Austria: Occupying Space(s)	35
2.1. Fiston Mwanza Mujila.....	35
2.1.1. Biographical Information	35
2.1.2. Literary Works and their Themes.....	36
2.1.3. Literary Style and Genre	39
2.2. Tarek Eltayeb	40
2.2.1. Biographical Information	40
2.2.2. Literary Works and their Themes.....	42
2.2.3. Literary Style and Genre	43
2.3. Ishraga Mustafa Hamid.....	44
2.3.1. Biographical Information	44
2.3.2. Literary Works and their Themes.....	46
2.3.3. Literary Style and Genre	47
2.4. Mihret Kebede	49
2.4.1. Biographical Information	49
2.4.2. Literary Works and their Themes.....	50
2.4.3. Literary Style and Genre	52
2.5. Self-Positioning in the Discourse	52
2.5.1. Language and Silence.....	52
2.5.2. Translation.....	60

2.5.3. The Question of Belonging: Identity, Hybridity and Nationality	67
2.6. <i>Conclusion Chapter 2</i>	78
3. The Power of Institutions: Making African Diasporic Literature (In)Visible	79
3.1. <i>Academia</i>	79
3.1.1. Migrant Literature? Questioning Concepts of National Literature	80
3.1.2. Terminology Goes Transnational: Afro-European / Afro-Austrian / Afropolitan	83
3.1.3. The Selected Authors in the Academic Discourse	90
3.2. <i>Literary Platforms</i>	91
3.2.1. Forum Stadtpark	92
3.2.2. PEN-Platform “literatur*grenzenlos”	93
3.2.3. VAW - Vienna Austrian Writers	94
3.2.4. Amerlinghaus	94
3.2.5. Writing Workshops – „Wir schreiben unsere Geschichte_n selbst“	95
3.3. <i>Literary Festivals</i>	96
3.3.1. CHIALA – Tage der Afrikanischen Literaturen in Graz.....	98
3.4. <i>The Publishing Market</i>	99
3.4.1. The Importance of Publication	99
3.4.2. Publishing Houses - The Road to Getting Published	101
3.4.3. Difficulties with Publishing.....	103
3.5. <i>Literary Prizes and Scholarships</i>	104
3.5.1. Grazer Stadtschreiber*in scholarship	107
3.5.2. Elias Canetti scholarship	108
3.5.3. Exilliteraturpreis	108
3.6. <i>Library and Bookstores</i>	109
3.6.1. AFRI-EUROTTEXT	110
3.6. <i>The Danger of a Single Story: Representation in the Media</i>	111
3.7. <i>Conclusion Chapter 3</i>	113
4. Conclusion	113
5. References	118
5.1 Primary Literature	118
5.2. Secondary Literature	119
5.3. Websources	123
6. Abstracts.....	130
6.1. <i>English Abstract</i>	130

6.2. <i>German Abstract</i>	131
-----------------------------------	-----

1.Introduction

Why do we even make plans?
Being human is like being the plan
of another planner/planet,
so that in some way you are always
a plant in some-one else's plan
and so until the planner decides to
change the plan
or unless the planner decides to
dismiss the plan
you are beautifully sitting there,
plain plan man.

– Excerpt from *The Planner* (Kebede & Wolf (translator), 2022)

In recent years, literature by authors from the African diaspora in Europe has seen a rise in production and popularity – so too in Austria. Changed discourses about diversity, as well as social movements such as ‘Black Lives Matter’, have led to a new visibility of literature by Afro-diasporic writers. This has also become apparent in the academic field, where the interest in the phenomenon has increased and led to numerous attempts to grasp the literature and authors of the African diaspora terminologically and conceptually. Many authors of the African diaspora, however, do not fit in conventional categories, for they do not write their works in the language of their country of residence. The literature of these authors can often be seen as subversive, making terms based on concepts of national literature, such as ‘African authors and literature’ or ‘Austrian authors and literature’ quickly reach their limits. In more recent scientific discourses, the terms ‘African diaspora’, ‘Afro-European/Afro-German/...’ and ‘Afropean’ (Byrne, Daulne/Miano/Pitts) emerged, which try to describe the transnational and intercultural nature of the texts.

Despite these terminological debates, there has not yet been an analysis of Afro-diasporic literature in Austria in an academic context. This is why the aim of my master thesis is to examine authors of the African diaspora in Austria: based on the literature of four selected authors, the discourse in Austria should be approached. Starting from literary works and their themes, four interviews with the selected authors were carried out. These authors from

the Austrian scene write in German, French, English, Arabic and Amharic: Fiston Mwanza Mujila (Democratic Republic of Congo/Austria), Tarek Eltajeb (Sudan/Egypt/Austria), Ishraga Mustafa Hamid (Sudan/Austria), Mihret Kebede (Ethiopia/Austria). While the authors function as an assumed group, it is not a homogenous one, with their works covering genres from prose to spoken word and poetry. However, many of their works contain similar themes, often showcasing the question of belonging, the struggle and adaption of humans in foreign surroundings, and the feeling of being lost. My methodological approach is thus both narratological and discourse-analytical, as the literary works form the base for the interview design.

Even though none of the works to be discussed are autobiographies, the authors individual biographies do play into account. Their writing is a form of participation in the Austrian public discourse and the literary field. Alongside entities such as academia, literary institutions, or the readership, the authors presence is often overlooked. The approach seems to be particularly appropriate, as the direction of research is also usually reversed. Instead of trying to assign the authors and their works to preconceived categories and concepts, the authors are given a chance to position themselves.

I will therefore work through the following sections in my work: first, I will introduce the methodology, as well as all basic concepts and theories I am working with, also providing a contextualization with depicting the history of the African diaspora in Austria.

Secondly, I will proceed to introduce the selected authors and their literary works and themes. Subsequently, the self-conception and positioning of the authors will be explained based on the conducted interviews: making use of the categories of language, translation and belonging/identity, the author's way of taking up space in the discourse will be discussed comparatively. This is particularly interesting, as the authors situate themselves differently along these categories. While Mujila, for example, considers himself an Austrian Writer: "Ich bin ein österreichischer Schriftsteller" (Kieselbach, 2017) and thus places himself in an existing hegemonic national literary discourse, Eltajeb refuses the idea of identity as a fixed concept, stating in an interview: "Identität birgt ein historisches und kulturelles Erbe in sich, aber keine Nationalflaggen oder Staatsnamen," thus eluding this discourse. (Etwebi, 2010) Along the category of language, it is apparent that none of the authors write primarily in German. However, they do take up different positions regarding the question of writing in

colonial languages and translation, with Mihret Kebede also foregrounding silence as an act of resistance and non-participation in discourse. (Sultanija & Hofbauer, 2022)

Finally, the institutions of African diasporic literatures shall be focus of my analysis, as they play a vital role in making literatures of the African diaspora visible or invisible. Divided in the sub-categories academia, literary festivals, literary platforms, literary awards, the publishing market, libraries/bookstores and media, the discursive interconnections will be drawn out. Important examples of this include Mujila holding a position of power as the literary representative at the Forum Stadtpark, or Hamid being involved as a commissioner for Arabic literature and migrants at the PEN platform literatur*grenzenlos. Guided by the interviews conducted, I will move through different levels of institutions, further depicting different discourses. Based on the interviews, their comparative analysis and discourse-analysis, I am mapping out the discourse surrounding African diasporic authors in Austria.

1.1. State of Research and Research Gap

While there is a tradition of research on African-diasporic literatures in other European states, such as in France, there is hardly any research on African-diasporic authors in Austria. With regard to the connection between African-diasporic authors in particular, their position in the discourse and different literary institutions has not been investigated at all. There is no systematic academic review of the literature of these authors and most of them are also rather unknown within the general public discourse.

However, there have been increased attempts to make literature by authors of the African diaspora more visible in Austria. Erwin Ebermann included texts by Afro-diasporic writers in his publication *Afrikaner in Wien* (2007). The first (and to this date, only) attempt to compile texts by Afro-diasporic voices in Austria was issue 167 (2021) of the literary magazine “Lichtungen” on the topic of African presence in Austrian literature. The issue contains texts in German translation and/or language of all authors discussed in this paper. Curated by Fiston Mwanza Mujila, one of the authors I had the privilege of interviewing in this thesis, this work does not come from academic research but from engagement in the literary-institutional field. As will become apparent in chapter three, this is not an unique matter: through institutions such as literary festivals (e.g. CHIALA, Weltwortreisende), literary prizes (e.g. the Exilliteraturpreis) and platforms (e.g. PEN, Amerlinghaus), there are a number of initiatives to enhance the visibility of the literature of the diaspora in Austria

and to provide a platform for it. This makes it all the more surprising that no in-depth research on the literature and its institutions has happened yet at the academic level.

The first attempt to embed literature by authors of the African diaspora in Austria in a scholarly context was in the summer semester of 2023 at the University of Vienna, where Ass.-Prof. Dr. Rémi Tchokothe, who is also the supervisor of this paper, taught a course for master's students of comparative literature and African studies on the topic 'Mapping 'African Diasporic' Literary Voices in the Austrian Cultural Scene'. (U:find, 2023) I also participated in this course.

This being said, there are some publications on the authors discussed in this thesis, as will be further discussed in chapter 3.1.3. Fiston Mwanza Mujila is probably the best known of the four authors, and numerous papers have been published on his work, especially his debut novel *Tram 83* (e.g. Gehrman, 2022 / Fyfe, 2022 / Mapangou, 2022) Two theses are available on Tarek Eltayeb (Pfeisinger, 2012 / Bauer, 2018), as well as some academic interviews (Malina, 1997 / Etwebi, 2010). Ishraga Mustafa Hamid's work has not yet been analyzed in an academic context, but an interview with Elke Christiansen and Birgit Englert (2010) from the Institute of African Studies is available. One paper can be found on the literary work of Mihret Kebede (Blamberger, 2023); besides this, there are only interviews in the non-academic field, such as an interview with the podcast "Radio Grille" (2023). At this point, however, it must be said that, due to my language skills, I can only read English, German and French academic texts. It is possible that research in other languages (e.g. Arabic, Amharic) exists.

However, not only the topic itself, but also the methodological approach is only sought very sporadically in German-speaking literary studies. There are only few examples of scholars working with interviews as a research method, with one of the few being the publication "'Migrant' writing and the re-imagined community: discourses of inclusion/exclusion" by Mairead Nic Craith (2015), who uses ethnographic interviews with authors of "migration literature" as a starting point for the paper. In the Austrian literary context, Wiebke Sievers' project "Literature on the Move" can be noted, which examined the positioning of immigrant authors in relation to multilingualism in the Austrian literary field. Based on Bourdieu's theory of the literary field, writers and the literary scene from 1918 on were discussed.

However, only one African-diasporic author – Fiston Mwanza Mujila – was included in the research. Sievers also conducted interviews with some contemporary writers and pointed out that all of the authors interviewed reported being treated differently than German-native writers. (Sievers, 2018, p. 45) The project took place from 2012 to 2016 at the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

Focusing on the question of multilingualism, Sievers named four phases in the Austrian literary field: the pre-monolingual phase (post 1918), where being an Austrian writer and not speaking German as the first language wasn't a contradiction. While nationalism was growing, the authors stuck to "a pre-monolingual condition." (Sievers, 2018, p. 41) This continued after 1945 with another pre-monolingual phase. However, from the 1970s and 1980s onwards, nationalization increased in the literary field and even though immigration numbers were rising, there were no visible immigrant authors. This slowly started to change in the early 1990s, with some non-native authors claiming German as their language of writing. From 2000 on, monolingual borders were increasingly questioned and aesthetics of the German language outside of grammatical norms are more acknowledged (e.g. Tomer Gardi, *Broken German*). There are also authors present in the Austrian literary field who do not primarily write in German (e.g. Fiston Mwanza Mujila). (Sievers, 2018, p. 41)

Another paper worth mentioning is Grabovszki's "Österreich als literarischer Erfahrungsraum zugewanderter Autorinnen und Autoren". With the goal of analyzing how authors who immigrated to Austria affect the construction and perception of 'Austria' in literature, Grabovszki went on to analyze literary works from the 1980s onwards. His corpus of authors also featured one African-diasporic author, namely Chibo Onyeji. Austria is seen both as a geographical and sociocultural location – named by Grabovszki as "literarischer Erfahrungsraum," a space of literary experience, marked by different dynamic encounters and relationships of native and foreign cultures. (Grabovszki, 2009, p. 276)

Writing in Austria in a non-German language is seen by Grabovszki as "Abgrenzung zum Diskurs 'Österreich'" ("a distinction from the discourse 'Austria'") (Grabovszki, 2009, p. 278), although he specifies that this isn't necessarily a distinction by choice, a "freiwillige Ausgrenzung." (Grabovszki, 2009, p. 278) In his opinion, the authors not writing in German affect the reception of their works, as non-German literature might not be understood in

Austria. To him, non-German works in the Austrian literary field are a way of keeping the distance to the Austrian discourse.

He concludes from his analysis that the authors, all having experienced migration, are adding a different point of view to what is seen as ‘Austrian literature’, subverting the idea of national literature:

Es ist die Authentizität des (vermeintlich) Fremden/Anderen, der den Diskurs ‘Österreich’ in der Literatur erweitert und ihn stellenweise auch subvertiert: zum einen, weil er dem Konzept des ‘Österreichischen’ seine einseitige Beschränkung auf eine Idee des Nationalen nimmt, zum anderen weil er den Diskurs ‘Österreich’ auf seinen Umgang mit dem vermeintlich Fremden/Anderen hinterfragt und somit sein Verhältnis zum Anderen mit zu fassen hilft. (Grabovzki, 2009, p. 290)

1.2. Method and Research Questions

Based on interviews with four selected authors, as well as locating them alongside literary institutions, the discourse in Austria should be approached and thus be ‘mapped’.

The following questions should be answered in my thesis:

- What place(s) do the selected writers occupy in the Austrian literary scene?
- What roles do institutions play in their reception and visibility?

My methodological approach is thus both narratological and discourse-analytical, as the literary works formed the base for the interview design. In addition to discourse theory, I use the terms ‘authors of the African diaspora’ as well as ‘Afro-diasporic authors’ to refer to the chosen writers. In some cases, I refer to ‘authors with migratory experience’ when speaking about the broader group of authors who live and write in Austria who have experiences with migration.

I also utilize Bourdieu’s concept of the literary field, which is useful to further distinguish the different entities of the literary scene into the categories: authors, readership and institutions. I try to map the discourse on the two dimensions authors and institutions, which also function to structure my thesis. However, not only the structural framework, but the inherent themes and the way in which discourses are created and carried will be reflected upon. Essential to my analysis is the question of self-perception versus external perception, positioning in the discourse, as well as visibility and invisibility.

1.2.1. Interviews and Criteria for the Authors Selected

The interviews were conducted between March and April of 2023. I reached out to the authors by email and/or phone call prior to the interview to discuss all formalities. I did not meet any of the authors prior to the interviews, except for Fiston Mwanza Mujila, whom I first met at the premiere of his play *Après les Alpes* at the Viennese Volkstheater in spring 2023. The authors were given the choice of date and location. Two of the interviews were conducted in the author's homes, two in public cafés according to the authors' wishes. I also conducted the interviews according to their preferred languages: three of the four interviews were conducted in German; one interview was conducted in English. Thus, all conversations were held in languages that are not the first languages of the authors. My own first language is German.

I selected the authors based on the following criteria:

- As of 2023 living in Austria
- Being part of the 'African diaspora'¹
- Gender balance: two of the selected authors define themselves as men, two as women
- At least one published literary work in German, English or French (counting translations and publishing in anthologies, literary magazines, etc.)

The interviews had a semi-structured design according to previously defined categories, leaving room for variation and spontaneous questions. With this thesis focusing on two main actors of the literary field – institutions and authors – the main categories were derived from these two sectors. I further distinguished different literary institutions, as well as common discourses around authors of the African diaspora (language, translation, identity). Wanting to examine the position of the authors in the discourse, the tension between self vs. external perception is essential to this work. Finally, I also asked the authors questions within the field of literary themes, motifs and style. Even though the exact questions varied per interview, the following categories served as a common thread for my research:

- Positioning in discourse:

¹ My definition of the 'African diaspora' is discussed in chapter 1.3.1.2.

- Self-perception/external perception
- Language and translation
- Identity
- Institutions:
 - Academia and terminology
 - Literary platforms, festivals, prizes
 - Publishing
 - Libraries/bookstores
 - Media
- Literary themes and style:
 - Genre
 - Central motifs and themes

All of the interviews were transcribed by me. As my research interest focuses on the contents of the interviews, rather than psychological or linguistic matters, the author's statements were edited by me for the sake of comprehensibility and readability, without altering the natural flow of the interviewees' speech. Incomplete sentence parts were therefore included, as well as the general use of vocabulary. Grammar and sentence structure were adapted if necessary to ensure comprehension of the statements. As the contents of the interviews contained sensitive topics and the interviews are not anonymized, I presented the transcripts of the conversations to the authors and asked for their approval before analyzing them. The authors were thus given the opportunity to afterwards anonymize names and sensitive content, or to have them completely removed from the transcript that was used for analysis, if necessary. This was an important factor for me to ensure a relationship of trust during the interviews.

1.2.2. Qualitative Content Analysis and Discourse

Aiming to analyze the interviews conducted in regard to the discourse about Afro-diasporic authors in Vienna, my method is discourse analysis, which is described by Taylor as "an interpretative analytic approach grounded in the evidence provided." (Taylor, 2013, p. 71) The interviews were analyzed with regard to the discourses they referred to and were connected to other discourses, therefore applying a comparative analysis. However, to

structure the process of coding, I roughly followed Mayring's technique of qualitative content analysis. Since the source material, consisting of around 60 pages of interview transcripts, is quite extensive, I utilized the software 'MAXQDA' designed for qualitative content analysis. As I am mainly focusing on the inherent themes of the discourse, I oriented towards the approach of thematic structuring. This is, according to Mayring, an especially suitable method to summarize and organize the different contents and aspects from the source material in connection to their content. (Mayring, 2015, p. 103) However, in terms of categorizing and coding, I opted for combining both a deductive and inductive approach. I see the combination of both types as very useful and necessary for the discourse-analytical nature of my work. After listening to the interviews multiple times, as well as going through the transcripts and my interview notes multiple times, I went on to look at the connections between the source material. Starting with the main categories that I pre-defined and based the outline of my interviews and my thesis on, I went on to code the interviews, adding new categories (mainly sub-categories) while going through some of the material: "A discourse analyst detects a pattern in the data and eventually labels it for the purposes of the particular discussion." (Taylor, 2013, p. 71) After this process, I re-evaluated and edited the list of categories and compared the text passages with similar codes. With this new and edited scheme of categorization, I went through the pre-coded material again, and then proceeded with the source material that wasn't previously coded. It was important for me to let the results of the interviews guide my master's thesis in terms of both content and structure, which was possible by combining deductive and inductive categories.

1.2.3. Reflections on My Own Positionality and the Interviews

However, before going into the thesis, I want to clarify my own positionality in carrying out this research, since my own position within the discourse influences the analysis and thus the results of this thesis: "Understanding positionality is important, as positionality changes the authority and legitimacy with which one may speak about, or contribute to, African European debates, cultural productions, and experience." (Garrido et al., 2020, p. 10)

I am a white², Austrian-born female living in Vienna, studying comparative literature after pursuing a bachelor's in journalism and communication studies and a bachelor's in comparative literature at the University of Vienna. My first language is German and my second language is English. I am also proficient in reading literature in French and have a basic understanding of Kiswahili. I am aware that through me being white and speaking German as a mother tongue, I have a hegemonic position in Austria in contrast to BIPOC³ and people who speak German as a second language. Through this work, I also act as part of academia, which also represents a field of power, as it evaluates, selects and groups literature according to certain criteria. This thesis is also, directly and indirectly, contributing to this.

However, I decided to reverse the common direction of research after consultation with my advisor, Ass-Prof. Dr. Rémi Tchokothe. In comparative literature, field research is rarely done. The literary field, consisting of the different entities authors, institutions and readers is also a system of power and thus constitutes realities. The same goes for the authors: while they are subject of constant research in comparative literature, being ascribed certain terminology and categories, they are almost never asked for their point of views. Nevertheless, a certain power relationship still prevails in interviews, which already begins with the selection of the interview partners. In addition, the interview is also a form of participation in the discourse itself and is therefore structured by its rules. The interview questions and my own background also are significant factor to the outcome, as I was reminded once again after the interviews. In the interview situations, I focused primarily on encouraging a safe and open conversational atmosphere. However, as I realized in retrospect, this also sometimes led to the interview shifting more into a conversation with some of my own thoughts coming through. Some of the pre-defined questions were phrased more naturally in the moment or were accompanied by additions, which can also have a suggestive effect. Lastly, I also noticed my own journalistic background in conducting the interview, further contributing to the conversational style of the interview. These are all points I would

² Here, I refer to the category white in lowercase and capitalize the category 'Black', since the concept refers to a "essential and shared sense of history, identity and community among people who identify as Black" (Daniszewski, 2020)

³ The abbreviation BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous and People of Color. See: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/bipoc/>

in hindsight reflect more upon before doing the interviews. Nevertheless, I think that the validity of the interviews is guaranteed.

By choosing the method of interviews, my thesis has author-centered approach. There are, however, certain risks to this reinforcing the idea of the biographical background of an author constituting the literary work and focusing only on the political aspects of the books. (Loimeier, 2006, p. 12) As these authors all have Afro-diasporic backgrounds, it is especially important not to fall into this reduction and to transfer the life story of the author to their works. I am also aware that using terminology such as ‘Afro-diasporic literature’ contributes to visibility, but also includes a direct categorization and reduction.

1.3. Terminology and Key Concepts

1.3.1. The African Diaspora

The term ‘diaspora’, derived from the Greek and meaning dispersion or dissemination, has been used for centuries before being coined for concepts of an African diaspora. Initially having a negative connotation, the term was first used in a theological context during the translation of the Septuaginta, referring to Jewish people in Babylonian exile. The term described an involuntary exile and was centered around the idea of an eventual return to Palestine and was also adopted in Christianity. Since the Jewish diaspora was coined first, the concept ‘African diaspora’ was often compared to aspects of the Jewish diaspora. (Mayer, 2005, pp. 73-74) It would take until the 1950s and 1960s for the term to be used in African studies apart from the usage in comparison with the Jewish diaspora. George Shepperson is widely seen as the first one to use the concept to describe a global, international community in his essay “The African Abroad or the African Diaspora” in 1966. The concept of the African diaspora was especially useful because it was distinguished from pan-Africanistic concepts emerging at the time and was not tied to the African-American context. (Mayer, 2005, pp. 78-79) From the 1980s onwards, its popularity increased as through the adaption of the term for cultural studies, which lead to ‘diaspora’ being used as a positive concept to describe different minorities. It proved to be useful to describe transnational formations of community and belonging, as well as to “reflect on questions of black identity, home and belonging and to analyze power structures, processes of exclusion and forms of black resistance.” (Nehl, 2016, p. 40)

1.3.1.1. Theoretical Concepts of the African Diaspora

With further popularization, different theoretical concepts of the diaspora formed. Without a doubt, Stuart Hall's notion of the diaspora is one of the most known and used concepts. He describes two different concepts of cultural identity: while the first refers to a stable identity, characterized by collective experiences and continuity, the second concept is the very opposite: cultural identities are seen as unstable and ever changing, according to the changing relations of power, history and culture. However, these two concepts, or rather the tension between them, constitutes the diasporic experience. He illustrates this with the example of the Caribbean diaspora. This diaspora shares a history of violent displacement, as well as discrimination and racism, but is also a diverse and hybrid group. (Nehl, 2016, 44) The term diaspora is therefore particularly suitable for exploring a non-essentialist notion of identity and to draw attention to its construction.

Paul Gilroy's work "The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness" (1993) also constitutes the diaspora in a transnational way: he sees the Black Atlantic as a metaphor "to refer to a hybrid system of interactions between black people from different cultural and national background". (Nehl, 2016, p. 45) Making use of the image of the ocean and – closely linked – the ship, the Black Atlantic not only refers to the trauma of transatlantic slave trade, but also to the exchange between the continents. It is a symbol of Black agency, resistance, citizenship across borders as much as it is a reminder of how slavery formed the base of modernity and wealth in the west. (Nehl, 2016, pp. 45-46) Gilroy especially draws attention to music, which for him is a hybrid cultural product. The Black Atlantic is not an identity concept, but rather an assumed community is created through constant ascriptions of being 'African'. Since the Atlantic is the focal point of reference, it negates an essentialist understanding of identity and belonging and functions independently from factors like origin, current home nation or religion, etc. (Mayer, 2005, pp. 81-81) As a terminological framework, it proves to be useful to describe a dynamic, hybrid network between Black people that isn't based or held back by origin or current home nation. However, Gilroy's concept is still very much based upon the African American experience, male intellectuals and the traumatic experience of the middle passage, without regard to hierarchies within the diasporic community. Furthermore, Africa is almost never a point of reference or subject of exchange. It focuses on the positive sides of intercultural relations. (Nehl, 2016, pp. 47-48)

Avtar Brah, on the other hand, draws in her 1996 study “Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities” attention towards structures of power, as well as the socio-economic, political, and cultural conditions of the journeys. Looking at the power structures (e.g. categories like gender, class, race, sexuality, etc.) within and between different diasporic groups, as well as the power structures that lead to the formation of diasporas, she also deconstructs the hierarchy between minority and majority groups. Minority and majority are unstable categories dependent on context, so one individual or a group can be both at the same time. Furthermore, she argues that location is important for the diasporic experience, not only the imaginative home or the memory of displacement. It is the very point where identity is negotiated. (Nehl, 2016, pp. 52-53) She further coins the term “diaspora space”, a concept uniting the idea of diaspora, different borders (not only geopolitical ones, but also borders in society, like cultural, racial, etc.), as well as location. In this hybrid space, diasporic and non-diasporic groups come together, interact and thus “subvert the hegemony of the supposed dominant culture” (Nehl, 2016, pp. 54). Brah’s concept is especially useful, as she points out different forms of inclusion and exclusion related to different structures of power.

1.3.1.2. Definitions and Problems

In this thesis, I am referring with the terms ‘African diaspora’ and ‘African-diasporic’ to Zeleza’s definition of the terminology:

Diasporas are complex social and cultural communities created out of real and imagined genealogies and geographies (cultural, racial, ethnic, national, continental, transnational) of belonging, displacement, and recreation, constructed and conceived at multiple temporal and spatial scales, at different moments and distances from the putative homeland. (Zeleza, 2005, 42)

The diaspora is therefore not a fixed concept or entity; rather, it is ever changing. At the same time, the word also means “a process, a condition, a space and a discourse.” (Zeleza, 2005, p. 41)

Further, I am also drawing on Tina M. Campt’s work on the concept. The German historian examined in her 2004 study “Other Germans: Black Germans and the Politics of Race, Gender, and Memory in the Third Reich” the experiences of Afro-Germans in Nazi Germany by close-reading oral accounts of two Afro-Germans. While she provided new findings on

resistance, subjectivity and discrimination against Afro-diasporic people in Germany, she also rethinks the usage of the concept of the African diaspora. She found that while the African diaspora is often defined by unifying aspects, the differences might be of most importance. “In Campt’s view, it is essential to contextualize the history of a particular black diasporic group and to consider the tension between the local specificity of a given community and the larger framework of the African diaspora.” (Nehl, 2016, pp. 51) This is why I am giving a specific overview of the African diaspora in Austria, with special attention to the literary scene. The concept of the African diaspora can only be used sufficiently when taking the different cultural, historical or geographical contexts of the diaspora into account. In this work, the term ‘African diaspora’ is my conceptual starting point: I am using this framework to go into conversation with the authors selected.

It is thus also important to note that the terminology ‘African diaspora’ also faces criticism. As Tölöyan argues, diaspora is nowadays turning into a positively connotated word, losing the dimensions of exile, minority, discrimination and displacement. Brubaker even describes diaspora as an overused concept, making the point of it obsolete. (Nehl, 2016: p. 40-41)

When talking about African diaspora it is also important to reflect, as Zeleza points out, that while other diasporic groups are constituted by nation or ethnic group, for the African diaspora the extremely broad term ‘Africa’ is used and thus homogenized. (Zeleza, 2005: 40) This becomes especially apparent when talking about smaller diasporic groups, e.g. the African-Austrian diaspora.

1.3.2. The Discourse and Discourse Analysis

Since the different theories on discourse are as numerous as the possibilities of discourse analysis, I focus in this thesis on Foucault’s concept of discourse and make use of critical discourse analysis to explore the interviews.

Michel Foucault, notably the most cited humanist as of today, set the basis for discourse analysis with his work *Les mots et les choses* (ger.: *Die Ordnung der Dinge*) by introducing the term “discourse.” Foucault defined the discourse as the sum of different practices that are essential to the construction of reality and objects. (“[Diskurse, author’s note] als Praktiken zu behandeln, die systematisch die Gegenstände bilden von denen sie sprechen.” (Foucault, 1981, p. 74)) Discourses are thus the basis of all things; all subjects are actors

embedded in the discourse. An essential category to his understanding of discourse is difference: all assertions in the discourse have meaning because of their difference to other assertions. The epistemes are seen as the rules, the structures that decide whether things are scientific or not, true or false, right or wrong, and so on. The discourse brings these epistemes with different forms of speech and specific terminology to life. However, the production of the discourse is subject to different rules: “Ich setze voraus, daß in jeder Gesellschaft die Produktion des Diskurses zugleich kontrolliert, selektiert, organisiert und kanalisiert wird – und zwar durch gewisse Prozeduren” (Foucault, 1991, pp. 10-11) Not every subject meets the requirements to access to the discourse, these however depend on the rules of the different discourses. (Foucault, 1991, p. 26)

Foucault used the concept of discourse for his method, the discourse analysis. While Foucault focused in the books *Ordnung der Dinge* and later, *L'archéologie du savoir* (ger.: *Archäologie des Wissens*) on exploring the immanent rules in societies, he focuses his later work on investigating the genealogy of these rules. (Stiegler, 2015, pp. 88-94) Foucault distinguishes between two different approaches in discourse analysis: on the one hand, an analysis that focuses on the critique, i.e. the limitations of discourse, and on the other hand, an analysis of the emergence of discourse. However, these two also merge into each other, which is why drawing a clear line between them is not always possible. (Foucault, 1991, p. 41)

In relation to literature, Foucault states that writing in itself is to be understood as an act that has a constituent function in discourse, that is, it can separate discourses or establish rules for them. The role of the author corresponds to a function that certain individuals take on and that is always shaped by society and context. (Foucault, 1991, pp. 21, 28) There are different procedures that are limiting the discourse, notably the following principles: “Prinzip des Autors, das des Kommentars und das der wissenschaftlichen Disziplin.” (Foucault, 1991, p. 40) This distinction will be reflected in my work, since all three entities are part of my analysis, aiming to show how different discourses are at play.

After Foucault, many different theorists tried to make use of the concept ‘discourse’ and the method of ‘discourse analysis.’ When referring to the method, I also draw on Keller’s understanding of discourse analysis.

As the Reiner Keller suggests, one must first define the discourse one seeks to analyze. This definition can be approached from different directions, above all the theme-related, the

discipline-related, the stage-related, and the actor-related. In this work, I am seeking an actor-related approach to the discourse, since I am focusing on four different authors who are all actors in the Austrian literary discourse. (Kajetzke, 2008, pp. 106-108) However, the thread of discourse I am trying to depict can never be shown in its full form, is interwoven with many other threads, and consists of even more different discursive fragments. These fragments are drawn from my corpus of texts and the interviews with the authors. (Kajetzke, 2008, p. 108) It is also important to note that I am also inevitably part of the discourse, which I already mentioned.

1.3.3. The Literary Field

Bourdieu's concept of the literary field is certainly one of the best-known concepts in the sociology of literature, which has a great deal of application. It is introduced by Bourdieu in the work *Les règles de l'art* (1992) (eng.: *The Field of Cultural Production*, 1993). For the theorist, society is a conglomeration of several different fields, which differ in their structure and autonomy and are all subjected to different (internal and external) rules. The literary field is one of these fields.

In order to describe the fields further, Bourdieu takes the concept of capital out of its economic context and translates it into other categories: for Bourdieu, every action is oriented in relation to a maximization of profit. This profit can be material, but also symbolic. What is important, however, is the particular field in which capital is negotiated, since different structures of meaning prevail in each field. He distinguishes between economic capital (e.g. financial resources such as money, land property), social capital (e.g. resources drawn from the network of relationships, recognition), symbolic capital (e.g. fame, recognition, prestige) and cultural capital. Cultural capital is more complexly broken down into three different categories: first, the incorporated state, meaning internalized dispositions and skills of a person – the habitus of the person. Second, the objectified state, meaning the extent to which the person possesses cultural goods that are (materially) transferable (books, instruments, etc.). The third and last subgroup, the institutionalized state, describes how the incorporated capital becomes objective cultural capital through institutionalization (e.g. titles, educational degrees). It is clear that these types of capital strongly interact with each other and are also mutually dependent. (Seljak, 2010, pp. 234-235)

As with Foucault, the concept of power is essential: the literary field is subject to certain rules, and by following them, the writers or artists are granted power. However, these rules

are negotiated in the field, including the question of definition, i.e. who may be a writer and who may not. (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 350; 357) Bourdieu argues that access to the literary field is restricted and only for those whose viewpoint is consistent with the basis of its existence. It is therefore important to embed the work in the broad social context of its creation in order to determine the different viewpoints. The field is important, since its institutions and frameworks enable a writer to become an author that produces a literary work in the first place. (Loimeier, 2006: pp. 19-21) However, even if actors don't have power in the literary field, they can produce effects, even if they might only be exclusion or devaluation. The concept is also especially useful when talking about Afro-diasporic authors, as Loimeier notes: "Damit geht es im vorliegenden Fall auch darum, ob und wie sich ein Autor auf einem ihm möglicherweise fremden literarischen Feld behaupten und die Spielregeln und die äußeren Determinanten zu erkennen und sich anzueignen versteht." (Loimeier, 2006, p. 20)

However, Bourdieu also utilizes the concept of 'discourse', but places it within his theory of the literary field. He defines the discourse as a speech act from specific actors and locates it in the field of language. If this actor achieves a performative effect with the speech act, symbolic power is exercised by the actor. Foucault, as already discussed, unites all assertions in his concept of the discourse and directly relates it to power and knowledge, which he sees as generated and transmitted through the discourse, and therefore through different assertions. (Kajetzke, 2008, pp. 83-84)

In recent discourse-analytical approaches, the concepts are usually both used, as they complement each other well: Foucault's vocabulary and assumptions about discourse provide a basis for Bourdieu's habitus and field theory, which is a useful framework for discourse analysis. (Kajetzke, 2008, pp. 84-85) In order to determine the order of discourse, it is advisable to distinguish, according to Bourdieu, between the carriers of the discourse and the contributions themselves. The carriers can further be divided into different discursive communities that follow similar discursive practices and have common points of identification, and discursive elites that have more symbolic capital and thus more authority and legitimizing power in the discourse. The contributions in the discourse are therefore led by the elites, who use various strategies to establish and legitimize their arguments. To truly analyze the order of the discourse, one must analyze both the carriers and the contributions,

as well as their relationship to each other, argues Bourdieu. (Kajetzke, 2008, pp. 109-111) In this thesis, both the carriers (i.e. the authors), as well as their contributions (i.e. interviews, literary works) will be analyzed.

1.4. Contextualization: History of the African Diaspora in Austria

For a long time, the history of the African diaspora in Austria was seen only from an Austrian-centered perspective and the country's colonial entanglements were not taken into account. From the 1980s onwards, however, there was an increase in research that opened up a new perspective on the diaspora in Austria. Of particular note are the works of Walter Sauer, who has written a number of remarkable works on the history of African-Austrian relations (e.g. 2007/2014), as well as on the African diaspora in Austria. Research on Afro-Austrian identities and living situations was also done by Erwin Ebermann (2007), who also runs a blog on matters of the African diaspora in Vienna (afrika-wien.at), as well as by Abdallah Salisu (2013). Other research on Black Austrian History includes the project "Verborgene Geschichte/n Remapping Mozart" (2006) by the research group "Schwarze Österreichische Geschichte" and the publication *Talking Back* (2016) by Claudia Unterweger, who analyzed the strategies of Black historiography in Austria on the basis of this project.

More recent efforts to reappraise the history of the African diaspora in Austria emerged after the Black Lives Matter 2020 movement, which also gained strong foothold in Austria. This also showed in academic works, such as Vanessa Spanbauer's paper "Schwarze Menschen in Österreich in widerständigen Kontexten – ein chronologischer Überblick" in 2022. In the course of the media coverage of Black Lives Matter, there was also an increased focus of media outlets on the diaspora and its actors in Austria, especially in left-oriented media, such as the online magazine "Moment" (Moment, n.d.). A raise in awareness can also be seen within some Austrian museums, for example in the Viennese "Weltmuseum" ("World Museum"), where the exhibition "Re:Present. Unlearning Racism" was shown in 2022 (OTS, 2022) and also in the "Haus der Geschichte Österreichs" ("House of Austrian History") in the same year as part of Black History Month (Hdgoe, n.d.). In 2022, the event "Schnittpunkt Afrika" at the Institute for African Studies also included a student-curated exhibition on the topic of "Debatten um Dekolonisierung und Rassismen" ("Debates on Decolonization and Racisms"). Based on this, the exhibition "CLAIMING SPACES,"

curated by Lisa Tackie, was set up in the main library of the University of Vienna in the summer of 2023. (Universitätsbibliothek, 2023)

Further, reports on the situation of Black people in Austria were carried out by Beatrice Achaleke/Simon Inou in 2009, resulting in the publication “Schwarze Menschen in Österreich. Lagebericht,” as well as by Hamid (2003). The association ZARA also provides an annual report on the state of racism in Austria, and Statistics Austria provides various demographic and other statistical data.

1.4.1. Historical Overview

The first encounters of Austria and Africa date back to Roman antiquity. Since the Roman Empire extended also into the territories of present-day Austria from the year 15 BC, as well as Northern African territories, there was general mobility between these regions. Apart from trade relations, the empire also had an exchange of personnel, such as administrative staff, but sometimes also entire legions were transferred. (Sauer, 2014, p. 11)

From the early Middle Ages and the fall of the Roman Empire on, there were hardly any relations between the two continents of Europe and Africa. However, trade routes passed through Austria, bringing slaves from northern and Eastern Europe, as well as from Russia and the Caucasus to the Middle East, Spain and Northeastern Africa. There was also an increase in crusades from the 11th/12th century, especially to Egypt, which led to negative images of the Islam and dark skin tones. At the same time, there were also positive images of the Orient, as crusaders regularly imported treasures and valuables perceived as “exotic” to Europe, which were popular among the upper classes. However, at that time, hardly any Africans lived in Central Europe and vice versa. (Sauer, 2014, pp. 16-26)

However, the interest in what was perceived as ‘exotic’ spread over time to other aspects of life. Since the Middle Ages (from the 15th century) and the early modern period, slaves were acquired in Europe, and from the 17th and 18th centuries almost the entire Austrian aristocracy had slaves in their households. Sources of acquisition were the Spanish or Portuguese slave trade, as well as the conflicts in the Mediterranean. In addition, the Habsburgs repeatedly captured groups of people in Eastern Europe, which included African soldiers and slaves as well as the local population. Certainly, also spurred by the supposed ‘discovery’ of the ‘new’ world, there was a great interest in what was perceived as ‘exotic’ – the phenomenon known as “curiosita” was born. This trend was also reflected in the trend

of cabinets of art and curiosities, botanical gardens and menageries. (Sauer, 2014, pp. 27-34)

However, the terms 'Black' and 'African' increasingly became emblematic of 'the other' and 'the bad'. At the time, they were mostly used to denote enemies (such as the heretical Europeans) and not explicitly against Africa. However, negative images about the continent and its people were nonetheless established that later on legitimized the colonial conquest. (Sauer, 2014, pp. 34-36)

There were missionary attempts from the 18th century, but mainly in Latin America and China. Aiming to increase trade with the Ottoman Empire, two Oriental companies were founded by the Habsburgs, followed by the first East India Company to promote long-distance trade in the Indian Ocean and to establish Chinese and Indian trade posts. Those attempts failed, however, for the time being in the early 18th century. At the end of the 18th century, an East India Company was established for the second time, obtaining the first colony of the Habsburg Monarchy in Delagoa Bay, Mozambique, which, in addition to territorial use, was also used for the export of slaves. In 1781, Delagoa Bay again was reconquered by Portugal. (Sauer, 2014, pp. 36-39)

All this led to the emergence of a larger African diaspora in Austria in the 18th century, whose most prominent member is probably Angelo Soliman. Soliman, a son of an African king, had been forcibly brought from Africa to Sicily as a child slave, where he came to Prince Lobkowitz in the early 18th century. His exact origin however is not definite due to the lack of trustworthy sources. Following Lobkowitz's death, he ended up at one of the most prestigious aristocratic courts, that of Field Marshal Joseph Wenzel von Liechtenstein. (Sauer, 2007a, pp. 64-65) By the time he had entered the service of the latter, he had probably no longer been a slave, but a "free" man. Highly educated, he gained financial security through gambling, which he invested, among other things, in mining.

Soliman's employment, however, came to an end in 1768 through his marriage to his wife Magdalena and his previous acquisition of private properties, which was at the time forbidden to the subservients. (Sauer, 2007a, pp. 70-72) After Liechtenstein died, Soliman was re-employed by his heir. In the 1780s he joined the Freemasons "Wahre Eintracht." (Sauer, 2007a, pp. 74-77) However, after Soliman died in Vienna in 1796, his body was prepared to be displayed as part of the "kaiserlichen Physikal-, Kunst-, Astronomie- und

Naturkabinetts” (“Imperial Cabinet of Physics, Art, Astronomy and Nature”), against the wishes of his daughter Josepha, who issued a letter of complaint. (Sauer, 2014, pp. 40)

Soliman’s story can be seen as representative – the situation of people of the African diaspora in Austria in the 18th century was ambivalent: slavery was increasingly questioned, and slaves were more and more perceived as household servants to whom wages were paid and who were sometimes also allowed to live privately. Changes also occurred in the law. In 1758, slavery was abolished for people who were baptized, and twenty years later the legal view increasingly prevailed that all people were to be considered free men upon entering the country. Until the 19th century, however, this was rarely so applied. Finally, slavery was officially abolished in 1811, and in 1815 came the emperor’s approval of the ban on the slave trade declared by the Congress of Vienna. Nevertheless, racist images and stereotypes were perpetuated in society and language, which were reinforced and found new legitimacy through their inclusion in the natural sciences, such as in Linné’s much-received work *Systema naturae*. Freed slaves were also increasingly confronted with poverty, as they were unable to find jobs due to, among other things, often having low education. (Sauer, 2014, pp. 40-41)

Despite Europe’s colonial aspirations gaining strength in the mid-19th century, there was growing distrust of overseas military action among the local population, especially among the liberal bourgeoisie. This was probably one of the main reasons why colonial ambitions were kept within limits and instead the region of the Balkans was officially declared the Austro-Hungarian area of interest by Prime Minister Beust in 1871. The nation continued trying to strengthen international trade relations but showed great restraint in colonial politics. By the end of the 19th century, however, the public support for colonial conquests was growing, especially among travelers, publicists, and economists, leading to further attempts of land grabbing. In 1893, for example, the steel and arms company Krupp sent the military navy to the Pacific Ocean in a search for nickel ore deposits, resulting in the occupation of the island of Guadalcanal. After the population resisted, the operation was called off. Apart from the search for raw materials, there also were several emigration projects aiming to settle in Africa, which found support in circles of the navy in particular. (Sauer, 2014, pp. 45-46)

Expeditions to the continent became increasingly popular, both in an academic and private context of leisure travel. Frequently, these expeditions were accompanied by aspirations of

settlement and violence against the population. The travels also facilitated the colonization projects of other nations through a variety of aspects, such as the study of local languages or the creation of maps and the intrusion into unknown. It is certain that these voyages therefore inevitably took place in a colonial context, but whether some of them were also based on a colonial mission cannot be said with certainty. (Sauer, 2014, pp. 46-48)

The change in societal images of Africans continued into the negative in the 19th century – African people were seen as savage and primitive, which was reinforced by the racial theories that became more prevalent in the late 19th century. Travel accounts were also linked to this ‘research’ and contributed to the spread and confirmation of stereotypes. Around the beginning of the 20th century, there was also extensive missionary work on the part of the Catholic Church. Critics of racial theory and colonialism, such as Leo Reinisch, a linguist, were few and far between. (Sauer, 2014, pp. 50-53)

After the First World War, an international paradigm-shift occurred through the increasing resistance in the colonies as well as the foundation of the League of Nations, as well as through new representations of Black people, which were triggered by trends such as jazz music. In Austria, however, this paradigm shift did not have an impact. Due to the poor economic situation and the distrust of the population towards the new small state of Austria, emigration fantasies and desires for the acquisition of colonies continued to be spun. In the name of ‘science’, racist theories and research continued to be spread, especially in the subjects of ethnology, linguistics, and physical anthropology, for example through the forceful measuring of people and the (often violent) appropriation of human remains. (Sauer, 2014, pp. 53; 60)

After a military intervention against Ethiopia was initiated by Mussolini in 1935, Austria, being in alliance with Italy, supported the intervention with the desire to have a share in the exploitation. However, this was made obsolete after Austria became part of Hitler’s Germany in 1938. During the Nazi rule in Austria, Black people were politically persecuted, harassed, in some cases forcibly sterilized and murdered. With the hope of creating German colonies in Central Africa, the North African campaign was launched in 1941. (Sauer, 2014, pp. 61-62) For many people, however, the African continent also became a place of refuge from the Nazi regime – there are documented stories of exile “im heutigen Senegal, oder in Côte d’Ivoire, in Nigeria, Angola, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Südafrika oder

Mauritius.” (Sauer, 2014, pp. 62) This is particularly interesting because this story of Austrian migration to Africa is not known in public discourse in Austria.

After World War II and the resolution of neutrality with the State Treaty in 1955, Austria increasingly positioned itself in political discourse as a colonially unburdened and uninvolved country based on the background of never having owned its own colonies. This narrative was also reflected in the public consciousness. (Sauer, 2014, pp. 64-65) The anti-colonial movements of the 1960s were seen critically by large parts of the Austrian public and there was (and partly still is!) no political, geographical or colonial-critical education about Africa in the school system either. The number of Afro-diasporic and BIPoC – inhabitants in Austria after the Second World War was also as low as never before. (Sauer, 2014, p. 67)

1.4.2. The Situation Today

The new beginning of a larger African diaspora in Austria eventually came about through immigration, which happened in different phases. From the 1950s/60s, it was mainly students who came to Austria. While this process was initially driven by the countries of origin, organizations such as the Afro-Asian Institute in Vienna and Graz also offered incentives from the 1960s onward. The proportion of African students then rose significantly, especially in the 1990s, but began to decline after the introduction of general tuition fees at the turn of the century. (Sauer, 2007b, pp. 192-95) The students also entered theological studies and consequently lead to increased employment of African priests and other clergy. This was reinforced due to the lack of personnel within the Catholic Church. (Sauer, 2007b: p. 197) As a result of the student migration, many students of African worked part-time jobs as newspaper carriers. From the 1960s onward, this division of work established itself and there was increased work migration of mainly Egyptian newspaper vendors. The migration for these mostly extremely precarious jobs was further facilitated by a decree of the Ministry of the Interior starting in 1983. (Sauer, 2007b: p. 199) Diplomats formed another group of migrants. While in the 1950s only Egypt and South Africa had diplomatic posts in Austria, the number of missions and consulates increased from the 1980s onwards as Austria’s foreign political interest grew. In 1979, the Vienna International Center was also opened in the federal capital. From the 1990s onward, there was another significant increase due to strengthened diplomatic relations. (Sauer, 2007b: pp. 195-196)

Lastly, there is asylum migration. While the number of refugees from Africa was still extremely low in the 1970s and 1980s (about 0.16-0.26%), it rose considerably in the 1990s (about 3.75%). In Austria, this first led to restrictions for refugees on the job market, and finally to tighter asylum laws, which were again intensified after 9/11. (Sauer, 2007b, pp. 201-203) In the beginning of the 21st century, asylum migration, described by Sauer as “Krisenmigration [...] als Folge einer extrem ungleichen globalen Wohlstandsverteilung” (Sauer, 2007b, p. 204), increased again.

With this increase in immigration, the situation of Afro-diasporic people in Austria deteriorated. Reports (Achaleke/Inou 2010, annual ZARA reports) also confirmed that the racist discrimination intensified within the Austrian white supremacist society. This can be seen on several levels: On the one hand, through “Abwertung im öffentlichen Sprachgebrauch” (“devaluation in public use of language”) – both in the political and private spheres (Sauer, 2007b: p. 206), “die Verweigerung von Dienstleistungen” (“the denial of services”), such as entrance to discotheques or discrimination in job-seeking (Sauer, 2007b, p. 207), as well as “gewaltsame Übergriffe” (“violent assaults”). (Sauer, 2007b, p. 208) People of African descent often ended up in poverty and working in the shadow economy due to their exclusion from the job market. Particularly in the tabloid media, the image of Afro-diasporic people as criminals and drug dealers became established in the 1990s and 2000s. This was reinforced by rising right-wing political fractions, such as the FPÖ and BZÖ on the one hand, and by police actions on the other. (Sauer, 2007b, pp. 211-212)

This led to the first public incidents of racially motivated police violence. In 1998/99, for example, several people of African origin were mistreated by officers. The growing violence culminated in the death of Marcus Omofuma, who was restrained and gagged by the officers in charge on May 1, 1999, while being deported to Nigeria, and subsequently suffocated to death during the deportation flight. The police officers responsible for the death were eventually jailed for only eight months on charges of negligent homicide. (Hafez, n.d.) That same month, the ‘Operation Spring’ was carried out, in which 850 police officers arrested 127 alleged African drug dealers in a raid of private homes, bars, and refugee shelters. Among them was the writer Obiora Charles Ikelie Ofoedu, who recounted his experiences in the book *Morgengrauen*. (2000). (Sauer, 2007b, p. 213) Omofuma’s death, however, was

only one of many violent acts: Ahmed F. (1999), Richard Ibekwe, Johnson Okpara and Seibane Wague (2003) all died directly or indirectly due to police violence. (Hafez, n.d.) The importance of also considering intersectional dimensions to racism was shown by Hamid with several studies on the living situation of African women in Austria, whose situation she classified as “besorgniserregend” (“alarming”). (Hamid, 2003, p. 26) Sauer also mentions that the situation of the group of “illegalen Migrant/inn/en” (“illegal migrants”) (Sauer, 2007b, p. 205) is particularly under-researched. Categories such as gender, religion, sexuality, and social class need to be considered in research and data collection on racism, as experiences of discrimination in everyday life are often shaped and reinforced by these very intersections.

Racism and discrimination exist in Austria to this day, as was made apparent by the Black Lives Matter movement. After George Floyd, a Black American man, was suffocated by a policeman in Minnesota in 2020, the movement experienced a new upswing. Originally founded in the USA in 2013, the movement campaigns against violence against BIPoC. The protests addressed racially motivated violence, demanding justice for the murder of Floyd, as well as several other Black American people who died through police violence. Despite the global COVID-19 pandemic, the demonstrations quickly spread internationally and on June 4 2020, the first Austrian rally was organized by Mireille Ngosso, medical doctor and member of the socialist political party SPÖ, which was attended by almost 50,000 people. This was followed by a second protest, which was attended by about 10,000 people and organized by Naomi Saphira Weiser, founder of Black Lives Matter Vienna. (Hafez, n.d.) The political scientist Hafez argues that this movement “might have the potential to challenge structural racism on a larger scale than ever before.” (Hafez, n.d.) In any case, this led to the “Black Voices” petition in 2021, which was initiated by Noomi Anyanwu and made various demands to overcome racism in Austria – including, for example, the establishment of an “unabhängigen Kontroll- und Beschwerdenstelle gegen polizeiliches Fehlverhalten” (blackvoices, n.d.) Although the petition did not receive enough signatures during the registration period, it was invited to parliament for discussion on the occasion of the International Day against Racism in 2023.

There are also a number of institutions that speak out for people of the African Diaspora in Austria and provide safe spaces. In the area of media, the outlets “Radio Afrika TV” and the online platform “Blackaustria” can be mentioned. (Spanbauer, 2022, p. 22) The platform “Schwarze Frauen Community” aims to support women* and girls*, as well as Black youth, children and their families. The focus of the organization is on empowerment and various events, workshops and support groups are offered. Other platforms focusing on empowerment are “We are Vienna too”, an institution that advocates for BIPoC mental health in Vienna, as well as “Pamoja” (Swahili for “together”). Founded in 1996, Pamoja is also engaged in the recuperation of Black Austrian history, and also founded the research group “Schwarze Österreichische Geschichte” mentioned above. (Spanbauer, 2022, p. 15) In addition to “ZARA,” the organization “Dokustelle” is another contact point for those affected by racism, specifically anti-Muslim racism. (Dokustelle, n.d.) The association “DISRUPT”, as well as the “Gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft” also provide support for people facing discrimination. (DISRUPT, Gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft, o.d.) Kids of the Diaspora, described on the website as a “movement brand” (Kids of the Diaspora, n.d.) is on the one hand a clothing line, on the other hand a platform that operates in the fields of music, art and fashion and aims to create representation and connect people of the diaspora. The LGBTIQ+ community is supported by the association AfroRainbowAustria. Finally, the organization “Advancing Equality Within The Austrian School System” (AEWTASS) advocates for non-discriminatory educational materials and systems. (Spanbauer, 2022, p. 23) Institutions relevant for the cultural and literary sector are presented in chapter three.

1.4.3. Statistical Data

According to the institute Statistik Austria, as of 2023, there are 41,150 people with an African citizenship living in Austria. (Statistik Austria, 2023) There is no public data available discussing the numbers of different member states or people of the second or third generation who have one or two parents or grandparents of African descent.

ZARA, the Austrian association and advisory center aiming to counteract racism in Austria, published in their 2022 yearly report the numbers of reports of racist experiences in Austria. In 2022, 1,479 reports of racism occurred, most of them taking place on the internet (999 cases), while public spaces were in second place (167). (ZARA, 2023, p. 8) Out of all these cases, 59 cases concerned racist police violence. However, only eight percent of these cases

resulted in a formal complaint. This might be because there are no neutral structures in Austria aside from the police to investigate. Moreover, most investigations are discontinued and the general outcome of complaints is low. (ZARA, 2023, p. 11) While most reports in 2022 were related to anti-Muslim racism (313), 206 reports fell into the area of anti-Black racism. (ZARA, 2023, pp. 10-11)

The significantly increased experience of violence is also confirmed by data in the Statistical Yearbook on Migration and Integration provided by Statistik Austria. “Besonders häufig wurden, wie auch in den vergangenen fünf Jahren, Afrikaner:innen (3,4%) Opfer von Straftaten” (Statistisches Jahrbuch, 2022, p. 14) When it comes to criminal acts, people with African citizenship living in Austria are thus the most targeted group of people out of those without Austrian citizenship. Moreover, citizens of African states residing in Vienna were also the most imprisoned group of non-Austrian citizens. “Zu Jahresbeginn 2022 waren bezogen auf die Wohnbevölkerung 0,06 % der Österreicher:innen und 0,26% der Ausländer:innen in Haft. Relativ am höchsten war die Haftquote von Angehörigen afrikanischer Staaten mit 1,30%.” (Statistisches Jahrbuch, 2022, p. 74) The Institute defines Africa as “alle Staaten in Afrika” (“all states in Africa”) (Statistisches Jahrbuch, 2022, p. 126).

The just mentioned precarious situation of people of African origin in Austria is also confirmed in comparison to the situation in other EU states. In 2019, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights presented the EU-MIDIS II study on the situation of minorities in 12 EU countries, which showed that Austria had in EU comparison a very high number of reports of racist violence. Within the five years preceding the study, 13% of the participants reported racist violence – only Finland (14%) exceeded the number of reports in Austria. Austria also had the highest number of reported physical attacks within one year prior to the study (11%). (EU-MIDIS II, 2019, p. 2) At the same time, the study also discussed the number of police stops that were perceived as racial profiling by those affected. Here, Austria is again in first place: “respondents were stopped at the highest rates in Austria (5 years: 66%, 12 months: 49%)” (EU-MIDIS II, 2019, p. 5) It also became apparent that “respondents in Austria have the lowest level of trust in the police” out of all the countries in the study. (EU-MIDIS II, 2019, p. 5) It is thus no surprise that the reporting

rates of racially motivated violent acts were with 8% also the lowest in Austria. (EU-MIDIS II, 2019, p. 7)

2. Authors of the African Diaspora in Austria: Occupying Space(s)

Was machen wir in Europa, herumziehen wie Jakob und in der Haut einer Schlange enden?

– Excerpt from *Zu der Zeit der Königinmutter* (Mujila, 2018, p. 197)

2.1. Fiston Mwanza Mujila

2.1.1. Biographical Information

Fiston Mwanza Mujila is a writer, poet, performance-artist, and literary mediator based in Graz, Austria. The author was born 1981 in Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic Congo, where he attended a catholic school. (Huber-Lang, 2019) He grew up in a merchant family and was introduced to the world of commerce in his early childhood. Both his grandparents and his father owned stores and he was socialized and schooled to one day take over premises or stores. However, he decided against following this family path and completed his studies at the University of Lubumbashi with a diploma thesis at the institute for Literature and Humanities in 2007 after previously pursuing a bachelor's degree from 2002 to 2005. After realizing he wanted to pursue a career as a writer, he knew he had to leave his city and Congo:

And then I started writing already in Congo and then I realized, it's going to be hard for me as a writer to live in Africa, in my city, because I was born, raised in a mining town. Then it was clear to me: I have to go. Then I went to Europe and I decided not to live as a student but as a writer.⁴⁵ (Mujila, 2023)

He was granted multiple scholarships in Europe, in "Belgium in 2007, in Germany in 2008 and in France in 2009." (Sievers, 2018, p. 53) He received the Heinrich Böll Foundation scholarship in Germany in 2008, and moved to Austria when he was awarded the Grazer

⁴ With the exception of the interview with Mihret Kebede, all interviews were conducted in German. The translations into English are mine, the original quotations are listed as footnotes.

⁵ "Und dann habe ich schon im Kongo angefangen zu schreiben und dann habe ich bemerkt, es wird schwer für mich als Schriftsteller in Afrika zu leben, in meiner Stadt, weil ich bin in einer Minenstadt geboren, aufgewachsen. Dann war für mich klar: Ich muss gehen. Dann bin ich nach Europa und ich habe entschieden nicht als Student, sondern als Schriftsteller zu leben." (Mujila, 2023)

Stadtschreiber-scholarship in the city Graz in 2009/10, where he is still living now, almost fourteen years later. He was the first African writer to receive this honor. Mujila continued his studies in 2011, starting a doctorate program on African literature in Graz, also holding lectures on African literature(s) at the Institute for Romance Studies. (Adk, 2017) As of 2021, he works within the cultural association Forum Stadtpark, where he was instated as literary delegate. (Fistonmwanzamujiila.com, n.d.)

Fiston Mwanza Mujila writes mainly in French, but more recent theater pieces were also written in German. Initially composing primarily poetry, he published his first book, *Poèmes et rêvasseries*, in 2009 with the Spanish publisher Linkgua Ediciones. His literary breakthrough, however, was the author's debut novel *Tram 83* in 2014, which won the International Literary Prize from HKW, the Etisalat prize for Literature and the Austrian Peter-Rosegger literary prize, among other awards. This also attracted greater media attention. (Sievers, 2018, p. 54) In 2018, his first German-language play *Zu der Zeit der Königinmutter* premiered at the Akademietheater in Vienna, followed by a production at the Deutsches Theater Berlin in 2019/2020. (Fistonmwanzamujiila.com, n.d.) In January 2024, a new piece by the author will follow in Geneva: Mujila's libretto for the opera *Justice* by Hèctor Parra from a screenplay by Milo Rau will be shown. The opera is a co-production between the Grand Théâtre Genève and the "Festival Tangente" in the Austrian city St. Pölten. (APA, 2023a) It is the first libretto to be shown on a larger stage, after he previously composed and performed the street opera *Seppi. Das Kind, das nicht aufhörte zu wachsen* in 2018 in cooperation with Patrick Dunst for the Festival „La Strada“ in Graz. (Krone, 2018) To date, the author writes across all literary genres. His most recent publications include the novel *La Danse du Villain* (2020, ger.: *Der Tanz der Teufel*, 2022) the poetry collection *Kasala pour mon Kaku et autres poèmes* (2021, ger.: *Kasala für meinen Kaku und andere Gedichte*, 2023), the play *Après les Alpes* (2023).

2.1.2. Literary Works and their Themes

The author himself sees his literature and his themes as influenced by the issues of society and humankind. He therefore always tries to keep an eye on how society is developing and

what themes are emerging: “Everything is connected to man, man is at the center of society. I think these themes are ‘contemporain’, are timeless.”⁶ (Mujila, 2023)

Many of Mujila’s works contain similar themes and motifs, sometimes even the same characters. Since the author refers to himself as a “collector”⁷ (Mujila, 2023), he collects characters, words and phrases to draw them out of his literary pockets whenever needed. In our interview, we talked about the themes of *Après les Alpes*, a play he wrote for a double-theatre evening with Jelinek’s *In den Alpen* at the Viennese Volkstheater. The author tried to establish a connection to Jelinek’s play through language and the common Austrian ground, namely the Alps. For him, this does not mean aligning himself linguistically or thematically, but rather approaching the topics with his own language, his own identity and experiences as an author: “Then, as a Congolese, I just tried to build this piece and yes, so just transport my African memories, reality to Austria.”⁸ (Mujila, 2023)

This applies to the play *Zu der Zeit der Königinmutter* as well, which is a great example of Mujila’s usage of literary themes and his literary style. One could say, the main theme of the text is humanity, even though the play portrays rather the lack of it. Often in a satirical manner, the text portrays many forms of consumption and exploitation, which run through the entire piece. There is consumption of women’s bodies, of alcohol, of resources, exploitation through tourism, exploitation of the “Königinmutter” (“Queen Mother”). Different forms of violence also run through the play, with science being also implicitly criticized: When the character Jakob turns into a snake, all research institutes are suddenly interested, wanting to study the strange creature: “Jakob wurde in vielen zoologischen Museen ausgestellt, Prag Berlin, Brüssel und von allen Seiten der Erdkugel stürmten die Menschen zusammen, die ganze Erde wollte ja den Kopf des Monsters bewundern.” (Mujila, 2018, p. 195) This can also be read as an implicit reference to exoticism and racism, since BIPoC have historically and also in the present time been made objects of study by the ‘west’.

⁶ “Alles ist mit dem Menschen verbunden, der Mensch ist in der Mitte der Gesellschaft. Ich glaube diese Themen sind ,contemporain‘, sind zeitlos.” (Mujila, 2023)

⁷ “Sammler” (Mujila, 2023)

⁸ “Dann habe ich als Kongolese einfach versucht, dieses Stück zu bauen und ja, also einfach meine Afrikanischen Erinnerungen, Realität nach Österreich zu transportieren.” (Mujila, 2023)

On the other hand, the play is characterized by its hybridity: language is used heterogeneously, there are many linguistic experiments, and the text is self-referential. Characters or dialogues in the conventional sense do not exist; there are numerous plot and narrative threads, which can also be seen more as fragments. The play centers not only around the characters on stage, but particularly on those who are not actually visible: The Königinmutter, an ambivalent female figure, who is the “kleine Hure” (“little whore”) of the village “Fucking” but at the same time also the savior, a Queen, a kind of biblical mother figure who shows mercy to all villagers and invites them to the New Jersey Bar. The Königinmutter, the center of the entire play, is also characterized by constant absence, and seems more like a saint, a distant figure. So are Jakob, the man who turns into a snake, or Solo, the man made of clay, both of whom we only get to know through the other characters’ stories.

Just as in *Tram 83*, the bar is the main location and serves as a recurring space of negotiation. Susanne Gehrmann argues that the bar is both a transcultural location, a “microcosm of a globalized late capitalist society” and “serves as the satirical *mise en abyme* of a postcolony par excellence”. (Gehrmann, 2022, p. 168) The characters reflect this society: the women, in particular, are portrayed as pure sex objects, with the singer La Diva being the only exception.

In *Zu der Zeit der Königinmutter*, the bar recurs as a microcosm of a late capitalist world and dysfunctional society. Named “The New Jersey Bar”, it can be seen as continuation and radicalization of the bar in *Tram 83*: unlike the name suggests, the bar is not set in the US, but rather everywhere and nowhere. Neither in Africa, nor in Europe or the US, the location is set in a peripheric, lost space that is at the same time inherently global. The characters mourn the past times within this melancholic space. (Gehrmann, 2022, pp. 171-172) The bar is also the breeding ground for the capitalist and sexist desires and thoughts of the characters, who are portrayed with a strong gender dichotomy and stereotypically performative masculinity and femininity, with the exception of “die kleine Gertraud” (“the little Gertraud”), described as a cross-dressed man. In Gehrmann’s interpretation, “Instead of merely confirming it, the play mocks gender dichotomy.” (Gehrmann, 2022, p. 173)

The text is also musically influenced, which becomes apparent in its structure. rhythm, tempo and sound. There is a continuous polyphony running through the text, which further

emphasizes the fragmentation of the text, with its different plot and narrative strands. In the end, however, the play seems to portray a cycle, since the character “die kleine Getraud” reveals herself to be the daughter of the Königinmutter, possibly even being the new Königinmutter: “Ich trage den Namen meiner Mutter seit dieser Nacht. Ich bin die Königinmutter. Ich bin die Mutter.” (Mujila, 2018, p. 219) states Gertraud at the end of the play.

2.1.3. Literary Style and Genre

The author writes across all literary genres, but sees himself as a poet first: “I consider myself a poet who writes novels and theater.”⁹ (Mujila, 2023) Consequently, everything the author writes contains a lot of lyrical elements. According to the author, “I think everything I write is poetry”¹⁰, even going as far as stating: “If I write a novel, I can also call it poetry.”¹¹ (Mujila, 2023)

His writing often defies genre classification, and in his literary works, genre is often a point of reference in the text itself. Genre is also referenced in *Zu der Zeit der Königinmutter*: “Monsieur spuckt in unser Bier, Monsieur, verhält sich wie ein Despot. Sag ihm mit deinem Mund, sag diesem Ding, dass wir uns nicht im Theater befinden. Was bedeutet das Theater, das Theater des Absurden? Monsieur, wir existieren im Ernst, wir proben nicht.” (Mujila, 2018, p. 190) Here, the text does not only reference genre and the ascription of genre, but also the performative aspect of theater, and in revealing this breaks the boundary that is otherwise drawn between performativity and the text itself. In general, Mujila often makes use of references and intertextuality and plays with different genealogies of genres and literary texts, only to transcend them in favor of something new. Another essential stylistic feature of Mujila’s works is musicality. The author often performs with Jazz musicians such as Patrick Dunst. In the process, the author shouts over the music, presenting his work not in the manner of a poetry slam, but of a performance with theatrical elements. Each performance is unique.

Musicality also finds its way into Mujila’s written works: Taking *Zu der Zeit der Königinmutter* as an example, it can be said that already the structure resembles an opera or

⁹ “Ich sehe mich als Lyriker, der Romane und Theater schreibt.” (Mujila, 2023)

¹⁰ “Ich glaube alles, was ich schreibe, ist Lyrik.” (Mujila, 2023)

¹¹ “wenn ich einen Roman schreibe, kann ich es auch Lyrik nennen.” (Mujila, 2023)

a piece of music – the piece is divided into the following parts: Monolog/Ouvertüre, Zweistimmige Ballade in D-Moll, Der Neue, Die Dorfgeschichten, Die Geschichte der Königinmutter, Epilog. At the same time, there is a chorus as a possible reference to ancient Greek drama. The monologues of the play, because of their language, melody and length (e.g., Jimmy’s monologue), more closely resemble a spoken word song or slam poetry than a theatrical monologue.

The author sees himself as a collector and a craftsman, particularly when he writes in German:

I put these sentences and words together; in all my plays sometimes these same words appear. These same words, also sometimes the same characters appear in my novels and that’s why I think I’m really a mine child, a child from a mine town. Because it’s the work of a craftsman, in a positive sense, trying to repair the world.¹² (Mujila, 2023)

These stylistic and linguistic features are important for the author, because he actively works to create a new language. In his works, the language itself takes up a lot of space. Sometimes, the characters almost end up getting lost in the language: the language takes over and undermines their authority as main characters in favor of the language itself “I think the language is the main character.”¹³(Mujila, 2023) Although his works may sometimes be described as plotless, this by no means implies that the works are lacking in content. On the contrary, his texts are very dense, which is mainly due to the powerful language. Accordingly, the language is often more in focus than the characters or the story itself.

2.2. Tarek Eltayeb

2.2.1. Biographical Information

Tarek Eltayeb is a poet, writer, scholar, painter and translator living in Vienna, Austria. He was born 1959 in Cairo, Egypt and grew up in the city. His parents were both Sudanese and the family lived in Ain Shams in the north of Cairo, a part of the city that is a home to many members of the Sudanese diaspora. After graduating from school, he studied business administration in Cairo and worked there as an auditor. He immigrated to Vienna in 1984

¹² “Ich baue diese Sätze und Wörter zusammen, in allen meinen Theaterstücken kommen manchmal diese gleichen Wörter. Diese gleichen Wörter, auch manchmal gleiche Figuren kommen in meinen Romanen vor und deshalb glaube ich, ich bin wirklich ein Minenkind, ein Kind aus einer Minenstadt. Denn es ist die Arbeit von einem Handwerker, im positiven Sinn, der versucht die Welt zu reparieren.” (Mujila, 2023)

¹³ “Ich glaube die Sprache ist die Hauptfigur.” (Mujila, 2023)

and continued his studies at the university of economics, the WU in Vienna, where he wrote his dissertation in the department of philosophy of economics on the transfer of ethics through technology (“Der Transfer von Ethik durch Technologie im Kampf zwischen Identität und Profit”), earning his doctorate in 1997. After his doctorate, he started working at the University of Applied Sciences in Krems 1995 and as a lecturer at the Karl Franzens University in Graz, as well as at the University of Vienna at the Institute of Oriental Studies. (Eltayeb.at, n.d./Eltayeb, 2023)

Tarek Eltayeb started writing in 1985 and his works were soon published in several Arabic and German literary magazines and anthologies. The author mainly writes prose (novels and short stories) and poetry, however, also composed the play *El-Asanser* (1992) and the one-man-theater play *Na ja, Mist!* (2000). His first official publication in German was the bilingual (Arabic and German) collection of prose and poetry *Ein mit Tauben und Gurren gefüllter Koffer/Haqiba Mamlu'a bi-Hamam wa-Hadil* (1999). Eltayeb writes in his first language, Arabic; the German translations of his works are usually done by his wife, Ursula Eltayeb. The process of translation is born out of discussions and their shared engagement with the texts. (Eltayeb, 2023) The author himself also sometimes works as an interpreter for institutions and does some translations, however, he doesn't identify himself as a translator, as his focus is always on his literary work. (Eltayeb, 2023) His most recent and most successful publication in German is the novel *Das Palmenhaus* (2007) (ar: *Bayt An-Nakhil* (2006); eng: *The Palmhouse* (2012)), a sequel to the earlier novel *Städte ohne Dattelpalmen* (2000) (ar: *Mudun Bila Nakhil* (1992), eng: *Cities without Palms* (2009)).

For his literary works the author received numerous awards and scholarships, including the Elias Canetti scholarship from city of Vienna in 2005 and the major scholarship for literature from the collecting society Literar Mechana in 2005. He also received the Order of Merit of the Republic of Austria in 2008. Since Tarek Eltayeb doesn't shy away from writing about sensitive topics, such as the love and desire of a married woman, some of his works have been censored and banned in some Arab countries, such as the *Die Reise 797 nach Wien*¹⁴. (Eltayeb, 2023)

¹⁴ The work isn't translated into German. Since the book is written in Arabic, Tarek Eltayeb referred to the title in his own translation as “Die Reise 797 nach Wien” in our interview.

In addition to writing, Eltayeb also sporadically works as an artist. He began to paint in his student days as a way to unwind from his studies. By chance, he was able to draw the cover of the Arabic publication of *Städte ohne Dattelpalmen* (*Mudun Bila Nakhil*) in 1992 by chance, as there were delays with the planned artist's cover design. After this was a success, he did it again and eventually drew the cover of several versions of *Das Palmenhaus*. He has also had some small exhibitions of his paintings at the Amerlinghaus in Vienna, in a VHS and in Krems, Austria. He was also part of the exhibition *Bild und Schrift* at the gallery Atrium ed. Arte, which is dedicated to the connections between art and literature. (Eltayeb, 2023; Basis-Wien.at) Nowadays, Eltayeb works as an artist only in his spare time, but it is not his priority: "Yes, it was a pleasant time, but I still say I'm not a painter. I like to paint, I don't sell paintings."¹⁵ (Eltayeb, 2023)

2.2.2. Literary Works and their Themes

The author's literary themes are often based on repetitive patterns of people and society. The author believes that people do not learn from history, and therefore the topics the author writes about are often timelessly topical, according to Eltayeb himself. (Eltayeb, 2023) For example, in *Das Palmenhaus*, Eltayeb wrote about militias and militarization in Sudan, something very up-to-date in 2023. His novel *Das Palmenhaus* follows the story of Hamza that started in the previous novel *Städte ohne Dattelpalmen*. Hamza, who was born in Sudan, migrated to Vienna and tries to adapt to his new life and a new language while also having flashbacks about his past in Sudan. He meets Sandra and her cat Hakiema, who both serve as a kind of vessel for him to cope with his past. Vienna is in general described as a merciless and cold city that marginalizes people like Hamza, whereas Sandra functions as a positive example of the society and the cat Hakiema as a mediator. In a constant play with time and location, the novel is a collage of three different storylines: there are flashbacks to the past (the pretext for his voyage to Vienna), his current life in Vienna and his dreams. It is as much a love story as it is a story of migration, and one might even argue that it is a *Heimatroman*. The story of his father, great-grandfather and his history influence the author's literary themes. These experiences inspired the story of Hamza, since one sees the life in Egypt, Sudan and Vienna. The author himself came to Vienna without knowing the language and

¹⁵ "Ja, es war eine nette Zeit, aber ich sage noch immer, ich bin kein Maler. Ich male gern, ich verkaufe keine Bilder." (Eltayeb, 2023)

worked jobs such as a newspaper carrier and dishwasher, as does Hamza. The novel therefore carries autofictional elements. (Eltayeb, 2023)

In terms of literary themes, the novel displays different forms of violence, namely structural violence (struggles with language, Hamza's old and cold apartment), psychological violence (racial profiling in the supermarket and tram) and economic violence (poverty, Hamza's job as a newspaper-seller). Moreover, colonialism and the abuse of religion in order to gain power are discussed.

2.2.3. Literary Style and Genre

Tarek Eltayeb describes his own writing process as very slow, especially with novels. He usually writes a book in about six to six years, because the author needs longer periods of time to focus only on the novel to be able to work on it. Poems are created continuously and within a shorter time and are collected by the author. Usually, the poems accumulate in a time frame of two to three years in such a way that a poetry-collection can be created from them. In addition to his longer writing process, the author revises his texts numerous times. According to Tarek Eltayeb: "I do a lot of work on a book before it comes out. For example, now I have a novel, it's in its sixth revision."¹⁶ (Eltayeb, 2023)

Writing, however, is a constant companion of his everyday life: the author jots down all ideas and notes in a small notebook. After a time, further ideas for poems or prose texts can arise from these fragments. Whether a work of poetry or prose emerges, however, is initially secondary for the author; usually the genre is decided only later in the working process: "Actually, when writing, I find I don't distinguish so much between prose and poetry."¹⁷ (Eltayeb, 2023) His poetry contains elements of prose, such as stories and plot; according to the author, his prose works are characterized by lyrical-poetic passages.

The author reads very deeply into the topics he writes about. However, it is particularly important to him to have a clear and simple writing style and not to show the work behind it openly, either linguistically or thematically: "But basically, I like giving something color

¹⁶ "Ich arbeite sehr viel an einem Buch, bevor es herauskommt. Zum Beispiel, jetzt habe ich einen Roman, der ist zum sechsten Mal überarbeitet." (Eltayeb, 2023)

¹⁷ "Eigentlich, beim Schreiben finde ich, unterscheide ich nicht so viel zwischen Prosa und Lyrik." (Eltayeb, 2023)

without being a know-it-all in a novel”¹⁸ (Eltayeb, 2023) He thinks it is particularly difficult to write in a clear and simple style, especially when talking about complicated topics, but “writing something difficult or complicated is quite simple.”¹⁹ (Eltayeb, 2023)

His clear and simple style is especially apparent in *Das Palmenhaus* – even though the novel contains a lot of information on colonial histories, militarization etc., this doesn’t show up in the language. On the contrary, the language in the novel is often very satirical and funny, which makes it easier to follow the complexity of the different narrative strands.

Apart from novels, the author also composes a lot of short stories, which is a different kind of challenge for the author. He describes the process to me as finding the perfect “cut”²⁰ (Eltayeb, 2023), so that the reader can just about recognize the “material”²¹ (Eltayeb, 2023) from which the story is made. With writing novels this challenge doesn’t come up, as he feels like there is enough room to bring all of the different colors and materials together: “In a novel, as with a carpet, you can then weave everything together, all the colors and such, and then you can see it all from afar.”²² (Eltayeb, 2023)

2.3. Ishraga Mustafa Hamid

2.3.1. Biographical Information

Dr. Ishraga Mustafa Hamid is a writer, activist, translator, journalist and political scientist living in Vienna. She was born in 1961 in the Sudanese city Kosti. Growing up in a literary household, with her father motivating her to read and study, Hamid found her passion for literature and writing early on. The author started writing in her school years, first by composing love letters for her fellow students in exchange for sweets or breakfast. She took great enjoyment in creating different fantasies and taking on different positions in her writing. However, her encounters with activism shaped her writing even more. In our interview, Hamid recalls being particularly inspired by authors such as Nawal El-Sadawi, an

¹⁸ “Aber ich mag es ganz einfach, etwas eine Farbe zu geben, ohne dass man ein Besserwisser ist in einem Roman” (Eltayeb, 2023)

¹⁹ “Schwierig zu schreiben, kompliziert zu schreiben, ist ganz einfach.” (Eltayeb, 2023)

²⁰ “Schnitt” (Eltayeb, 2023)

²¹ “Stoff” (Eltayeb, 2023)

²² “Im Roman kann man wie bei einem Teppich dann alles verweben, alle Farben und so, und dann sieht man dann von weitem alles.” (Eltayeb, 2023)

Egyptian feminist writer. (Hamid, 2023) Her own activist work also started early on, with Hamid becoming a member of the Sudanese women's movement in her teenage years. After her graduation, Hamid studied journalism at the University of Khartoum, a Muslim state university, where she graduated on the June 29, 1989. Only one day later, a military coup took over and forced out the former ruling democratic government, imposing a military regime led by Omar al-Bashir. Even though Hamid then worked at a local radio station, she found herself unable to work as a journalist given the restrictions of free press that were implemented. Realizing she had to leave Sudan, Hamid emigrated to Vienna, Austria in 1993, where she is still living as of now. (Schmidt, 2011, pp. 71-73)

As her studies in Sudan weren't accredited in Austria, she enrolled in journalism and communication studies at the University of Vienna, where she earned her master's degree in 1997. She went on to pursue her PhD in political science with a dissertation about empowerment processes of Black women in Vienna, which she earned in 2006. The author also lectured at the institute for political science. (Schmidt, 2011, p. 73)

For Hamid, activism and writing go hand in hand. After immigrating to Austria, she initiated numerous different associations and organizations aiming to support mostly women*,immigrants and BIPOC. Hamid was a delegate for Arabic literature in the Austrian PEN Club, director of the literary committee in the Arab-Austrian house, and worked with several other institutions, such as the Frauensolidarität, WIDE and LEFÖ. She also founded other foundations like the NilDonau Verein, the Diaspora-Netzwerkkonferenz hosted by the VIDC (Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation) and many more. She is one of the co-founders of the Schwarze Frauen Community (Black Women's Community) in Austria, an initiative aiming to support Black women*, children and teenagers in Austria. (Schwarzefrauencommunity.at, n.d.)

Hamid currently works for her self-founded association "Arts of Banat Mendy", which aims to connect women from Sudan and/or from the diaspora with a history of emigration. The organization is named after Banat Mendy Bent El sultan Agabna, a Sudanese woman from the Nuba mountains who played an important role in fighting for freedom and anti-colonialism, however is now mostly forgotten in history. (Vidc,) The association is currently working on forgotten women in different countries. The author invited women from all around the world to write about women who have been ignored in the historical records. Hamid also held different writing workshops for women and young adults, such as the

workshop “Wir schreiben unsere Geschichte_n selbst” (We are writing our own stories/history) (Vidc, 2023), with the goal of motivating migrant women to write their own stories/history. The author held several writing programs in different countries, resulting in anthologies like “I am beautiful” and several other publications. She also created SIDRA or Arabic literature with German translations in Austria. (Hamid, 2023)

While Hamid started publishing in anthologies and literary magazines in Sudan and Austria (*Die Fremde in mir* (1999), *Die Sprache des Widerstandes ist alt wie die Welt* (2000), *Eure Sprache ist nicht meine Sprache* (2002), etc.), her first poetry collection of her own *Trotzdem singe ich* was published in 2013 in German, preceding the publication of the original version in Arabic by a few months. (Hamid, 2023) Her recent publications include the collection of poetry and short stories *Gesichter der Donau* (2014), the anthology *Nicht mehr mit uns. Sudanesische Frauen gegen Gewalt* in 2023 that she edited as well as three other collections of stories by women derived from her writing workshops. (Hamid, 2023)

Furthermore, Hamid works as a translator for both her own and other literary works. Recent translations include her German translation of *Alkchandris. Wer hat Angst vor Osman Bushra?* (2012) from the Sudanese-Austrian writer Abdelaziz Baraka Sakin, and the poetry collection *Symphonie der Rub Al-Chali* (2015) that she edited and translated. Moreover, Hamid is currently working on finalizing the German translation of her autobiography *Die Donau kennt mich*. (Hamid, 2023)

For her work and social commitment Hamid was awarded the Golden Decoration of Merit of the City of Vienna in 2020. The English translation from Arabic by Sawad Hussain of her work *Woman of the Rivers* received the PEN Translation Prize 2023, and was the first memoir by a Sudanese woman to be translated into English. (englishpen, 2023)

2.3.2. Literary Works and their Themes

For Ishraga Hamid, writing is directly integrated into her everyday life: she always has a notebook with her and draws a lot of inspiration from everyday situations, as is also evident in her work *Gesichter der Donau*. She often feels inspired to write by encounters with people and the themes of humanity and solidarity are also particularly present in her work. “And they also feed into my poems, these existential questions, philosophical questions, they all

already feed into my literature, either prose or poetry, you can already see that.”²³ (Hamid, 2023)

For example, the texts from *Gesichter der Donau*, which was published in 2014 and features a collection of prose and poetry, tell of these central themes. The texts are in German and translated by the author herself; some of the texts are also written in English.

For example, the stories *Das Boot ist nicht voll* and *Die 'blinde' Frau* are both in the collection and tell of two very different encounters. While the protagonist in *Das Boot ist nicht voll* meets her neighbor who confronts her with racist stereotypes, hidden under a mask of friendliness, in *Die 'blinde' Frau*, she meets a blind woman in the gym and they share a short but deep and inspiring conversation.

The two stories function as a kind of contrast, but also as a continuation of each other. *Das Boot ist nicht voll* ends with the wish to get to know each other better: “Willkommen an Bord zum besseren Kennenlernen!” (Hamid, 2014, p. 13)

This takes place in the second story, where the two characters get to know each other through actually listening and wanting to understand each other. It is the “blind” woman who turns out to being the one who can see clearly, as she gives new hope to the protagonist, who is not well. She stands in stark contrast to the neighbor in *Das Boot ist nicht voll*, who can physically see but ultimately turns out to be the truly blind one, because she does not reflect on her own prejudices. In both stories, the protagonist appears as a friendly but slightly detached person who displays stoic behavior even when confronted with verbal violence. She tries to help her neighbor by asking questions and by correcting facts about migration without lecturing her. Finally, the protagonist in *Die 'blinde' Frau* puts it as follows: “Wir erlaubten einander das Gefühl von Mitmenschlichkeit mitten im Alltag.” (Hamid, 2014, p. 18) Solidarity, compassion, humanity: this is what matters to Hamid and what also takes up a lot of space in her literary works.

2.3.3. Literary Style and Genre

Hamid predominantly writes in the Arabic language, but also sometimes in German. She translates her literary work to German herself. In terms of literary forms, she mostly writes

²³ “Und die fließen auch in meinen Gedichten ein, diese Existenzfragen, Philosophiefragen, die alle münden schon in meine Literatur, entweder Prosa oder Lyrik, das sieht man schon.” (Hamid, 2023)

poetry and short stories, as well as her autobiographies. She is currently working on her first novel, titled "Aminata". (Hamid, 2023)

For Ishraga Mustafa Hamid writing and activism are interconnected: she does not separate her work as an activist and as a writer: "Writing is also part of activism. I can't write without activism because writing for me means empowerment, empowerment for me and from others, the others with whom I feel this sense of belonging."²⁴ (Hamid, 2023) For her, writing is on the one hand an asset, as it encourages her and allows her to process her experiences. She also describes literature and activism as mirrors that help her deal with difficulties in her life. In addition, however, writing helps other people. By writing about topics that move her, she feels like she also inspires and empowers others.

Besides her short stories, she is especially known for her poetry, which for her is a very open literary form that allows her to connect with the unconscious. "Poems are this combination between unconscious and conscious. There's also something coming from my unconscious to my conscious that I then want to bring to the public."²⁵ (Hamid, 2023)

Hamid describes the aspect of freedom as one of the most important characteristics of her own writing, especially with poetry. She does not use a rhyme scheme because she feels she is limited by it:

These rhymes, I don't want that. These rhymes mean limitation for me, that restricts me. I want to write freely. And of course it's also in literary criticism: "Is this poetry? Or is that something in between? With prose?" And I say, "How you see it and how you feel about it and how you feel about it, that's not my problem. It's, I don't know."²⁶ (Hamid, 2023)

Her decision to start writing her autobiography at a very early age has been criticized by some, however, she says: "Writing about my autobiography, it has nothing to do with age, it has to do with events. And I've experienced a lot in this life. And so, I have that, that was

²⁴ "das Schreiben gehört auch zu Aktivismus. Ich kann nicht ohne Aktivismus schreiben, weil das Schreiben bedeutet für mich Empowerment, Empowerment für mich und von anderen, den anderen mit denen ich diese Zugehörigkeit fühle." (Hamid, 2023)

²⁵ „Gedichte sind diese Kombination zwischen unbewusst und bewusst. Da kommt auch was von meinem Unbewusstsein zu meinem Bewusstsein, das ich dann in die Öffentlichkeit einbringen möchte.“ (Hamid, 2023)

²⁶ "Diese Reime, das will ich nicht. Diese Reime bedeuten für mich Begrenzung, das schränkt mich ein. Ich will frei schreiben. Und natürlich ist es auch in der Literaturkritik: "Das ist Lyrik? Oder ist das etwas dazwischen? Mit Prosa?" Und ich sage, "Wie Sie das sehen und wie Sie das empfinden und wie Sie das fühlen, das ist nicht mein Problem." Es ist, keine Ahnung." (Hamid, 2023)

really a relief for me. And I also look at writing as therapy, self-therapy.”²⁷ (Hamid, 2023)
The first part of the autobiography, titled *Die Donau kennt mich* is currently being translated from Arabic into German by Hamid.

2.4. Mihret Kebede

2.4.1. Biographical Information

Mihret Kebede is a poet, performer, artist and PhD student. She was born 1978 in Dessie, Ethiopia and currently lives in Vienna. Kebede grew up in a nomad family and found her passion for poetry early on. She used to recite proverbs she heard in the neighborhood to her family, which were mostly satirical and funny poems. Later, she started to write her own poetry. (Kebede, 2023) She studied at the Addis Abeba University School of Fine Arts and Design, earning her master’s degree in painting in 2016. She has been working as an artist since then, creating multiple projects such as the *Slow marathon*. Resulting out of an artist residency at the Deveron Arts Institute in Scotland, Huntly, the project was first carried out in 2012 and has since become an annual event. *Slow marathon* is an accumulative marathon project carried out in Huntly and Addis Ababa concomitantly with the goal of reaching a distance of 5,850 miles together, which is the distance between Ethiopia and Scotland. It is an attempt to connect people without paperwork or border restrictions. Kebede is currently working on her PhD thesis on *Conversing with silence* at the PhD in practice program of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Beforehand, Kebede was working on her master’s project about silence and was invited to the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna after a joint workshop between the Academy in Vienna and Addis Abeba University. She liked the program because of its free structure and therefore applied after finishing her degree in Addis Ababa. The artist and author has been living in Vienna for several years. (Kebede, 2023)

Kebede is very active in the Ethiopian art and literature scene and founded several platforms, such as the video art festival Addis together with Ezra Wube. She is also a founding manager of the very well-received Tobiya Poetic Jazz, established in 2008. Mihret Kebede came up with the idea of creating a poetry and jazz event after being invited to read her poetry with “Hara sound band”, a group consisting of students she met in a joint course between Addis

²⁷ “Über meine Autobiografie zu schreiben, das hat nicht mit dem Alter zu tun, sondern mit den Ereignissen zu tun. Und ich habe viel erlebt in diesem Leben. Und daher habe ich das, das war wirklich für mich eine Erleichterung. Und ich betrachte auch das Schreiben als Therapie, Selbsttherapie.” (Hamid, 2023)

Abeba University and the Yared School of Music. After their invitation, she had the idea to “also invite other poets, so that we could create a collaborative performance with poets and jazz musicians.” (Kebede, 2023) She was also one of the founders of the Netsa Art Village, an art collective that was located in Addis Ababa.

Her poems have not yet been published in a collection of their own, but rather in many anthologies, literary magazines and online platforms. Recent publications include the VDC album, the first anthology of Ethiopian poetry in English *Songs we learn from trees*, and the experimental anthology in three languages *Wax and Gold*, “a result of our collaboration with the studio Olafur Eliasson since 2012 for seven consecutive years” (Kebede, 2023). She has also been published in the literary magazine *Lichtungen* (#167), as well as in online platforms like *Lyrikline* and *World Literature Today*. Kebede is currently translating her #evolutionarypoems into English with the translator Anna Moschovakis, to be published in the near future.

2.4.2. Literary Works and their Themes

#evolutionsgedichte58

Als du dir mein Bett klaustest... blieb ich stehen und träumte groß.

Als du mir dann mein Essen klaustest.... gab ich es dir, tat als würde ich fasten.

Aber bitte lass mir meine einzige Stimme... für sie werde ich kämpfen bis zum Tod.

Wie sonst könnte ich laut aufschreien und rufen: „Ich werde beraubt?!“

(Kebede & Scheffler (translator), n.d.)

This is one poem of the #evolutionarypoems series, which follows the political ecology in Ethiopia. Mihret Kebede is using poetry as a method for her PhD thesis and is composing a series of poems – as of May 2023, there are 205 poems in total under the title #evolutionarypoems. She is interested in the role of silence: “What is the agency of silence? When do people get silent? When are they being loud or responding to whatever is happening in the country?” (Kebede, 2023) The author wrote in the anthology *Wax and Gold*: “The limit of silence is the beginning of noise, the beginning of noise is for the revival of silence” (Kebede, 2020, p. 177) Kebede wrote these words for a project in Paris she did with two jazz musicians, Mélissa Laveaux and Nathalie Ahadji. She discovered that there is a certain cycle of silence: when the silence becomes very intense, you can expect something to happen, as is suddenly explodes in favor of demonstrations, noise and revolution. However, after this

period, the people in Ethiopia usually get silenced again and the process repeats itself. Her project then followed this process, as she still does now, with her PhD project.

Kebede's current writing project deals intensively with the question of silence and the political situation in Ethiopia. She says: "Most of the conflicts we are facing now are instigated because of the unresolved historical rhetoric we don't have a common consensus about. How history is written and who wrote it becomes a controversy." (Kebede, 2023)

In her opinion, the writing of history is always linked to power. This does not mean that all history should be ignored, but a new historiography is needed and justice must be brought into it. Poetry is a new and different way of creating an alternative archive and to bring in the justice she feels needed: "It doesn't have to be a formal way of writing history, this is poetry, but at the same time, I write it as neutrally as possible" (Kebede, 2023)

When writing the poems, she lets herself be guided by the current political situation in Ethiopia. She describes her own writing style as satirical and always infused with the technique of wax and gold, which is a style of writing that works with layered meaning. For her, wax and gold is the basis of writing. (Kebede, 2023) The technique has a long tradition in Ethiopia and refers to the process of gold purification: wax is produced in this process and has to be melted off the gold because it is covering it. In a literary context, the *Sena-ena-Werq*, the wax and gold, refers to a second, hidden meaning: "While the apparent meaning, on the surface, is known as *Sem* (=wax), the underlying true, and, at times, spiritual meaning, is known as *Werq* (=gold)" (Girma, 2010, p. 175)

Mihret Kebede is especially interested in the thought of connecting people. She explains to me: "It's through my art I am talking to you right now. It's through my work and it's through my artistic practice or poetry that I had a chance to be in another world and culture or to meet some people." (Kebede, 2023) Although there were political exchanges and visits between Ethiopia and Austria, the people of the respective countries did not get to know each other. This is exactly where she wants to focus her research and artistic practice: "This is the kind of missing point that I want to just, put something in between – I am just trying to find a way to connect people." (Kebede, 2023) She wants her work and projects back home to connect to other places and people, as there is a misconnection.

2.4.3. Literary Style and Genre

Mihret Kebede's work can best be described as multidisciplinary to its core. While the artist and poet uses poetry both as an artistic expression and a method in her PhD thesis, she is also working on other art practices, such as interventions, collaborations, performances or collages and installations. All of these practices serve the purpose of further investigating the topic of silence.

The poetry series #evolutionarypoems exists mainly to document and register the events in Ethiopia. The poet tries to maintain an objective perspective, as she wants the series to work as an archive, with her explaining that the works are “kind of ‘archiving imposed silences’ through these political dynamics.” (Kebede, 2023) She self-defines her work as learning by practice, since she understands the artistic process as a process of constant learning and evolving. She is often working on multiple different things at once, since this feels natural to her. Crossing boundaries and connecting different spheres is deeply integrated not only on a thematic level in her poems and projects, but also in her work process. Connection is the main theme that runs through all her artistic work, which is characterized by her as “collaborating across disciplines and cultures, not only locally but internationally, too.” (Kebede, 2023)

Orality is central to her literary work. The artist sees performance and writing as “alternative mechanisms that people try to communicate with each other”. That being said, she thinks that the performance contains additional elements, namely sound, appearance and movement, which add other elements to the poem. At the same time, the emotion and attachment of the artist can be conveyed more strongly. As a spoken word performer, however, the written part of composing still comes first for her; the performative part is added as soon as she prepares the poem for performance or collaborates with others. (Kebede, 2023)

2.5. Self-Positioning in the Discourse

2.5.1. Language and Silence

2.5.1.1. Language and the Austrian Literary Discourse

All the authors position themselves very differently in Austrian literary discourse. It is striking that language plays a significant role in the extent to which the authors feel seen or not seen. Mihret Kebede, for example, has a strong feeling of not being fully part of the

scene because of her poor knowledge of German: “I feel like I’m missing out. There is a nice poetry scene here, I’d love to listen, I would love to communicate. I am of course performing here and there, but still. [...] Yeah, I can understand some, but when it’s poetry, it’s something else.” (Kebede, 2023) Even though Kebede is invited to some literary events here and there, she feels like she only has a limited experience and is not able to properly connect with German-speaking authors and their literary work.

However, she feels that she participates in the literary discourse of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna: “But most of the literary discourse is related to my academy and the art practices, whenever there is a talk or some text that we’re given to read.” (Kebede, 2023) This is the discourse she is fully aware of and where she feels like she is engaging with the students who are all from different countries, since her PhD program is in English. She further explained that she is still learning about the Austrian scene and doesn’t feel like she is at a point where she knows it yet.

Tarek Eltayeb feels like his visibility as an author in the Austrian literary discourse is moderate. He also brings up the matter of language. Many of his books weren’t translated into German, which reduces his visibility, according to the author: “The older generation knows me better because I previously wrote six books that were released [in German; author’s note].”²⁸ (Eltayeb, 2023) Since his last work published in German was the 2019 *Podium Portrait*, a selection of previously published poems, his last German release of his own was the poetry collection *Er in Erinnerung*, which came out in 2012. The author thus links publications in the German language to visibility as an author in Austria.

Fiston Mwanza Mujila, on the other hand, is certainly the best known and most visible author in my selection. The literary scholar Wiebke Sievers attributes this to the language he writes in: “Mujila’s success in Austria is related to the fact that he writes in French, a dominant language in the world republic of letters.” (Sievers, 2018, p. 55) This is especially interesting, as the difference between self-perception and external perception becomes apparent, since Mujila himself relates his own visibility to him writing across all genres, the frequency of literary output, as well as his work as a mediator in the literary scene and his confidence as a writer:

²⁸ “Die ältere Generation kennt mich besser, weil ich habe früher sechs Bücher geschrieben, die sind herausgekommen.” (Eltayeb, 2023)

I think it's just my confidence as a writer. I came to Europe as a writer and I wanted to live as a writer. I work as a writer, I write novels and I write poetry, I write theater, I write libretti. There are few writers who write in so many genres. I write for performance, I'm on the road a lot with jazz musicians, so that just means I'm a craftsman. That's why it just comes from my work.²⁹ (Mujila, 2023)

While Mujila's creative output itself is certainly a major factor in his success, the role of the language he writes in cannot be dismissed either. Most of his works written in French are available in German-language translations, and the author also writes plays in German, the only one of the four authors to do so. In any case, this is at least something that facilitates the circulation of his works in Austria.

However, his most used language for writing, French, wasn't a free choice for the author: "But in French it was not a choice because my parents, grandparents were colonized, enslaved with this language."³⁰ (Mujila, 2023) He further explained that when he started writing, he linked the French language to violence, which is important to note. Nowadays, though, French has become a different language for him. Because the author is living in Austria he doesn't really speak French anymore; for him, French is now only a language of writing – a fictive language, as the author explains: "French for me has become like a fictional language because I rarely use it, but I speak that language and I always use it when I write."³¹ (Mujila 2023)

Tarek Eltayeb on the other hand chooses to write in his first language, Arabic, because he feels like the language provides him with the most creative liberty: "But in my mother tongue, I always say I'm on my mother's lap, I can do whatever I want [laughs]." (Eltayeb, 2023) He feels most free writing in Arabic and explains that he doesn't have this feeling in other languages, describing Arabic metaphorically as his roots and every other language as different branches: "I'm really rooted in Arabic and then I have branches like that for all the

²⁹ Ich glaube es liegt einfach an meinem Selbstbewusstsein als Schriftsteller. Ich bin nach Europa als Schriftsteller gekommen und ich wollte als Schriftsteller leben. Ich arbeite als Schriftsteller, ich schreibe Romane und schreibe Lyrik, ich schreibe Theater, ich schreibe Libretti. Es gibt wenige Schriftsteller, die in so vielen Genres schreiben. Ich schreibe für die Performance, ich bin viel unterwegs mit Jazzmusikern, das heißt ich bin einfach ein Handwerker. Deshalb kommt das einfach von meiner Arbeit. (Mujila, 2023)

³⁰ "Aber auf Französisch war es keine Wahl, weil meine Eltern, Großeltern wurden mit dieser Sprache kolonialisiert, versklavt." (Mujila, 2023)

³¹ "Französisch für mich ist wie eine fiktive Sprache geworden, weil ich sie selten benutze, aber ich spreche diese Sprache und ich benütze sie immer, wenn ich schreibe." (Mujila, 2023)

other languages [laughs]. [...] I can't do it in literature, writing in a foreign language."³² (Eltayeb, 2023)

Mihret Kebede, who also writes in her first language, Amharic, brought up the barriers languages can create, especially when not speaking German in Austria. However, she also sees language as a tool of connection that works even if you don't understand literally. In a poetry performance, for example, people can still hear the intonation, rhythm or sound, which helps with understanding. When Kebede was part of a writer's association in Huntly, Scotland, the author was usually invited to read in Amharic and people enjoyed it a lot, even though they didn't know the language. At the same time, she also enjoys listening to poetry in languages she doesn't understand, her thinking being that "Once you are in that understanding of what poetry, or performance means, it's not going to be a problem to relate." (Kebede, 2023)

Ishraga Mustafa Hamid, on the other hand, writes in Arabic and has had to deal with criticism on many occasions. Hamid explains that Arabic is often not associated with Africa. She was often accused, especially by Arab writers, of not being a "real Arab." (Hamid, 2023) The author, however, does not accept these accusations and debates about identity – for her, the matter is simple: "Yes, but unfortunately, I don't have another mother tongue. I only have Arabic. And my great-great-great fathers, mothers, grandmothers, all speak Arabic."³³ (Hamid, 2023) Arabic is her first language and her language of writing, she didn't choose it.

2.5.1.2. Languages in Other Languages

When talking about language, the following question came up in most of the interviews: what does it do with a language when another one is learned and added? Tarek Eltayeb recalls:

I came to Austria without German language, nothing at all. This language came on top of my language, really refreshed my language as well. It's not at all like my

³² "Ich bin wirklich verankert auf Arabisch und dann habe ich für alle andere Sprachen solche Zweige (lacht). [...] ich kann es nicht in Literatur, in einer Fremdsprache zu schreiben." (Eltayeb, 2023)

³³ "Ja, aber ich habe leider keine andere Muttersprache. Ich habe nur Arabisch. Und meine Ur-Ur-Ur-Väter, Mütter, Großmütter, alle sprechen Arabisch." (Hamid, 2023)

Arabic language is now dead and replaced by German or something, all languages really do more, more in the mind.³⁴ (Eltayeb, 2023)

It is interesting how Eltayeb stated very clearly that the German language was an enrichment for his Arabic language, since Ishraga Mustafa Hamid expressed it in almost in the same way: “But I think that every language I learn is an enrichment for me. It’s not a problem for me at all, on the contrary.”³⁵ (Hamid, 2023)

As already mentioned, the French language became a dead language for Mujila, since he doesn’t really speak it anymore living in Austria. On the other hand, there are some languages he doesn’t speak anymore that live on through other languages: “That’s why I can say I write in French, but French is like a dead language for me. But at the same time, I don’t speak Swahili or Lingala anymore, but those languages live in other languages.”³⁶ The languages that he no longer speaks are carried on in and through others, his language of writing therefore becoming a multilanguage. Thus, the German language can also be an African language, according to Mujila, if it is used by the author with his socio-linguistic background: “Because for me the German language is not only a German language, but an African language, it is shaped by African experience, African means.”³⁷ (Mujila, 2023)

In general, Mujila is very much concerned with the language in which he writes and with the question of in which language he feels that he can write. In particular, he is looking for a new language, a language that he also pieces together for himself in his writing: He is looking for “a language of it’s own, a new language, a flexible language. A language that lives.”³⁸ (Mujila, 2023)

The meaning and significance of language was also reflected upon by Hamid, who locates language in a political context in particular: “And that’s why I think language is important,

³⁴ “Ich bin nach Österreich gekommen, ohne deutsche Sprache, gar nichts. Diese Sprache ist auf meine Sprache gekommen, hat meine Sprache wirklich auch erfrischt. Es ist überhaupt nicht so, dass meine arabische Sprache jetzt tot und ersetzt von Deutsch ist oder so, alle Sprachen machen wirklich mehr, mehr im Kopf.” (Eltayeb, 2023)

³⁵ “Obwohl, ich finde, es ist auch jede Sprache, die ich lerne, für mich eine Bereicherung. Es ist für mich überhaupt kein Problem, im Gegenteil.” (Hamid, 2023)

³⁶ “Deshalb kann ich sagen, ich schreibe auf Französisch, aber Französisch ist für mich wie eine tote Sprache. Aber gleichzeitig spreche ich nicht mehr Swahili oder Lingala, aber diese Sprachen leben in anderen Sprachen.” (Mujila, 2023)

³⁷ “weil für mich die deutsche Sprache nicht nur eine deutsche Sprache, sondern eine Afrikanische Sprache ist, sie ist geprägt von afrikanischer Erfahrung, afrikanischen Mitteln.” (Mujila, 2023)

³⁸ “Eine eigene Sprache, eine neue Sprache, eine flexible Sprache. Eine Sprache, die lebt.” (Mujila, 2023)

not just to communicate, but it's just politics. Language is not just words, but language has meanings, metaphors, what do we imply, what do we do with it.”³⁹ (Hamid, 2023) She further states that every language also carries different stereotypes and forms of violence, such as racism and sexism. It is important to her to reflect upon this.

Hamid goes on to say that in general it would be best if everyone wrote in their mother tongues, referring to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Decolonizing the mind*. In this work, the author makes a connection between language and colonization. He argues that language was used as an instrument of power for colonialism, so in order for decolonization to take place, it is necessary to return to local African languages. This return to local languages has recently also happened in Mali, where French was dropped as an official language in the new constitution, following growing resentments in West Africa “due to its perceived military and political interference.” (Africanews, 2023) French has been the official language in Mali since 1960. In his view, languages are carriers of culture as much as they are carriers of communication. The author himself writes only in his first language, Gĩkũyũ. (Thiong'o, 2011)

However, there are over a hundred different languages in Sudan, which would make this endeavor very difficult, according to Hamid. Hamid believes that the market is still oriented towards colonial languages – “standard languages”, as she refers to them: “Because the market is so oriented toward these languages, toward the first world languages, these standard languages, as I call them.”⁴⁰ (Hamid, 2023)

2.5.1.3. “German Privilege”?

As already mentioned, most of the authors don't write in German and have a very different perception of how it feels like to write in this language.

For Eltayeb, German is still a language he doesn't feel like he is good enough in: “On the other hand, too, I still don't feel good enough in German. What I think in Arabic is by far really very high compared to German or English.”⁴¹ (Eltayeb, 2023) Apart from that, his experience of writing in German is the opposite of his experience writing in Arabic. While

³⁹ “Und daher ist die Sprache finde ich wichtig, nicht nur um zu kommunizieren, sondern es ist einfach Politik. Sprache ist nicht nur Wort, sondern Sprache hat Bedeutungen, Metaphern, was implizieren, was machen wir damit.” (Hamid, 2023)

⁴⁰ “Weil der Markt so orientiert ist nach diesen Sprachen, nach den ersten Weltsprachen, diese Normsprachen, wie ich sie nenne.” (Hamid, 2023)

⁴¹ “Auf der anderen Seite auch, fühle ich mich noch immer nicht gut genug auf Deutsch. Was ich auf Arabisch denke, ist bei weitem wirklich sehr hoch im Vergleich zu Deutsch oder Englisch.” (Eltayeb, 2023)

he compared writing in Arabic to sitting on his mother's lap, he associated writing in German with constantly having a teacher on his shoulders: "But when I write in German, the teacher immediately comes to me, immediately sits on my shoulders and says, "Not with 'dem,' but with 'der'.""⁴² (Eltayeb. 2023)

Mihret Kebede attests to the German language's great importance: she wants to make connections to the Austrian literary scene and Austrian people and feels like she can only do so by speaking German: "And I am also eager to understand what concerns them. What's their main cause, what are they talking about? That's why I'm being curious to learn the language and understand people better." (Kebede, 2023)

She further elaborates on the sense of isolation she experiences by not speaking German. Even though she does feel like she is part of the literary discourse in the academy, there are some obstacles connected to the German language: "In the academy, I found it very difficult to communicate, because everything is in German. The moment I get out of my PhD classrooms, everything is in German." (Kebede, 2023) Even though her PhD program is in English, she finds herself confronted with a barrier outside of the classrooms at the academy, starting with simple things, such as the German signs in the hallways that she can't read. This led her to planning an intervention to showcase her feelings, this however didn't happen because she was intimidated by someone. "I wanted to replace all the posters and the signs with the Amharic language, just for a day, I just wanted to record. Because that's exactly how I feel, I wanted to read it but it just, there is some kind of a language barrier." (Kebede, 2023) This barrier she describes is found on the structural level – even though the institution itself provides a space where communication is possible, a barrier in the form of language is still engraved in the fundamental structures, in the location itself. The fact that the intervention did not happen because an individual in the academy stood against it, raises questions of why this artistic intervention was hindered. However, while it does on one hand raise this valid questions, it is on other hand understandable, that the signs are not generally multilingual in a (for the most part) German-speaking country.

⁴² "Aber wenn ich auf Deutsch schreibe, kommt zu mir sofort der Lehrer, sitzt sofort auf meinen Schultern und sagt: "Nicht mit 'dem,' sondern mit 'der'." (Eltayeb. 2023)

Mujila, in contrast, explains that his writing in French wasn't a choice because the language was imposed through colonialism and describes his writing in German as a choice he made freely. He enjoys the process of writing in German, since it feels very free and adventurous to him:

Therefore, when I write in German, for me it is a language that is free, also a language of journey and adventure. When I write in German, I don't know where I'm going, what comes later, which words are important or not, or which words are right.⁴³ (Mujila, 2023)

Even though he personally finds a certain kind of freedom in writing in German occasionally, Mujila also relates speaking and writing in German in Austria to forms of privilege. The same way whiteness can be a privilege, speaking German can be too in Austria: "Although we live in a city, in cities, where people speak English, French, Dari and so on – but where it's about culture, it's all about the German language."⁴⁴ (Mujila, 2023) He thus refers to a system of power relations, as culture often seems to be reserved to the German language; those who speak or write in it can participate, but everyone else is excluded by this language barrier.

Eltayeb has also experienced this system. He states that his books are less visible due to the fact that they are translated, which has been pointed out to him before: "But a translated book already has little space, unfortunately. And every now and then people have also told me if it's written directly in German, or if I take away my wife's name and then write my name on it without her as the translator– [breaks off]"⁴⁵ (Eltayeb, 2023) The fact that it was actually suggested to him not to cite his wife as a translator in order to gain more visibility demonstrates the linguistic hierarchy perceived and experienced by the authors.

In preparing to move to Vienna, Hamid was advised by her grandmother to learn German quickly to avoid problems with first-language German speakers. However, Hamid did not follow this advice; her goal in learning the language was to create a better understanding, not to learn German out of fear of problems: "But then why should I learn this language to

⁴³ "Deshalb, wenn ich auf Deutsch schreibe, ist es für mich schon eine Sprache, die frei ist, auch eine Sprache der Reise und des Abenteuers. Wenn ich auf Deutsch schreibe, weiß ich nicht, wohin ich gehe, was später kommt, welche Worte wichtig sind, oder nicht, oder welche Worte richtig sind." (Mujila, 2023)

⁴⁴ "Obwohl wir in einer Stadt, in Städten, leben, in denen man Englisch, Französisch, Dari und so weiter spricht – aber wo es um Kultur geht, da geht es nur um die deutsche Sprache." (Mujila, 2023)

⁴⁵ "Aber ein übersetztes Buch hat schon wenig Raum, leider. Und ab und zu haben mir die Leute auch gesagt, wenn das direkt auf Deutsch geschrieben ist, oder ich den Namen von meiner Frau weggebe und meinen Namen dann drauf schreibe, ohne dass sie Übersetzerin- [bricht ab]" (Eltayeb, 2023)

avoid these problems? Why don't I learn the languages so that I can understand them better and understand myself better?"⁴⁶ (Hamid, 2023)

2.5.2. Translation

Since most of the authors interviewed do not write in German, translations of their literary works into German are an essential part of their accessibility to the broader Austrian public. However, I wanted to know about the author's own viewpoints and thoughts about translation, asking them about how they perceive the importance of translation, the role and definition of translation, and the connection between visibility and translation.

2.5.2.1. Translation as Communication and Transmission

When being asked about their understanding of translation, all the authors mentioned the communicative and mediating aspect of translation. Mihret Kebede explained: "So, we all have different backgrounds, and different understandings of this world, culturally, and politically. Through that translation process, we get to know each other more" (Kebede, 2023) According to Kebede, the power of translation lies in its mediating character. For the author, translation manages to create a connection between people, even if they live in different places. Instead of having a formal introduction, she also prefers to get to know artists through the process of collaborative translation: "When they speak about their poems, that's when you connect to their hearts, their understanding, their feelings, and also their cultural background, knowledge and how they see and how they understand this world" (Kebede, 2023)

Hamid also follows this understanding, stating: "And through that, I think we can understand each other better. And that's the goal of translation. Translation for me, I really do it out of passion."⁴⁷ (Hamid, 2023) Interpersonal and transcultural interconnectedness, or the understanding that emerges through translation, is central for the author.

Tarek Eltayeb mentions something similar, namely that the translation would open new windows, thus revealing something that was previously hidden or out of sight: "And I find

⁴⁶ "Aber warum soll ich dann diese Sprache lernen, um diese Probleme zu vermeiden? Warum lerne ich die Sprachen nicht, damit ich sie besser verstehe und mich besser verstehen?" (Hamid, 2023)

⁴⁷ "Und dadurch glaube ich, können wir uns besser verstehen. Und das ist das Ziel von Übersetzung. Übersetzung für mich, ich mache das wirklich aus Leidenschaft" (Hamid, 2023)

it opens new windows to the world.”⁴⁸ (Eltayeb, 2023) Fiston Mwanza Mujila also perceives the nature of translation as a form of intermediation that can build bridges between different people and worlds: “A translator – this is a work of mediators, they try to build a bridge between borders, between languages, between countries, between nationalities, between experiences, between stories.”⁴⁹ (Mujila, 2023) The translator thereby becomes a mediator as well as a writer in his own right.

Mujila further explains that he has great respect for translators – for him, their work goes far beyond a linguistic dimension: “I have great respect for people who translate. They don’t just translate a language or a text, they translate countries, they translate stories, they translate cultures, they translate experiences, they translate worlds, they translate character.”⁵⁰ (Mujila, 2023) Mujila’s understanding of translation here is very reminiscent of that of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, who argues that language is an essential carrier of culture and translation to be “the language of languages.”

For Mihret Kebede, translators are also translating an entire culture and context: “When you translate a poem, it’s not about ‘word by word’, it’s not only about translating the poem, you’re translating the whole culture, the whole cultural context of that poem.” (Kebede, 2023)

Hamid brings up the aspect of knowledge transmission through translation; the translator for her is someone who transmits and produces knowledge. She thus again draws a line to activism: “That means it’s not just about money, it’s also about passing on knowledge. [...] Yes, knowledge, rebirth of knowledge and producing knowledge, that’s activism again.”⁵¹ (Hamid, 2023) The circulation of knowledge is an activist form of practice for her, as is translation.

⁴⁸ “Und ich finde, es öffnet neue Fenster für die Welt.” (Eltayeb, 2023)

⁴⁹ “Ein Übersetzer und eine Übersetzerin – das ist eine Arbeit von Vermittlern, sie versuchen eine Brücke zwischen Grenzen, zwischen Sprachen, zwischen Ländern, zwischen Nationalitäten, zwischen Erfahrungen, zwischen Geschichten zu bauen.” (Mujila, 2023)

⁵⁰ “Ich habe großen Respekt für Leute, die übersetzen. Sie übersetzen nicht nur eine Sprache oder einen Text, man übersetzt Länder, man übersetzt Geschichten, man übersetzt Kulturen, man übersetzt Erfahrungen, man übersetzt Welten, man übersetzt Charakter.” (Mujila, 2023)

⁵¹ “Das heißt, es geht nicht nur um Geld, es geht auch um Wissen weitergeben. [...] Ja, Wissen, Wiedergeburt von Wissen und Wissen produzieren, das ist wieder Aktivismus.” (Hamid, 2023)

5.2.2.2. The Process of Translation

When speaking about the process of translation, all the authors approach the task differently, with many of them actively collaborating or translating their texts themselves.

Although Tarek Eltayeb worked as an interpreter and analyzes and teaches translation from German into Arabic at the University in Graz, when it comes to translating his own works from Arabic into a target language he feels like he needs a translator whose first language is the target language. He greatly appreciates when his translators bring this ability with them. He doesn't see himself as qualified to do his own translations into German, as he feels like his vocabulary is limited and he doesn't have as many linguistic solutions for handling difficulties in translation.

His German translations are usually done by his wife, Ursula Eltayeb. He describes this process as a collaborative one: "I always sit with her then and we work through it in great detail"⁵² (Eltayeb, 2023). He describes this process as a lengthy and strenuous one, however, he enjoys it that way: Eltayeb prefers to give the translators time for the process and he is happy to collaborate when he knows the language. He enjoys the translator's questions on the texts. Since Eltayeb's books are translated into German by his wife, Ursula Eltayeb, all the alterations in the translation are approved by him. However, there are differences between the German and English translation. For example, the subtitle of the English translation *The Palmhouse* reads: 'a modern Arabic novel.'. Thus a categorization is already present in the peritext.

When he is working with his wife on translations, they discuss everything. Sometimes they find themselves unable to translate certain passages. If this is the case with a poem, they just leave it untranslated, but with prose text they have to find solutions, which can be a difficult process. Ursula Eltayeb prefers translating poems. While he enjoys the process, he also sees some downsides to it: "But this process [...] is very interesting and very beautiful. But it really takes a lot of time."⁵³ (Eltayeb, 2023) This is also why his wife is currently taking a break from translations, as it is very intense. Even though he prefers the slow and detailed translation processes for his works, he would also like to publish more, especially in German.

⁵² "Ich sitze dann immer mit ihr und wir arbeiten das ganz genau ab" (Eltayeb, 2023)

⁵³ "Aber dieser Prozess [...] ist sehr interessant und sehr schön. Aber er nimmt wirklich viel Zeit ein." (Eltayeb, 2023)

Ishraga Mustafa Hamid, however, translates all her works by herself into German. This does take a lot of time and the process would be sped up if someone else did the translations for her, but the author however feels that she is best suited at transmitting her feelings into the German language: “I translate my own works alone because I think **I** am the only one capable of really transmitting my feelings. I leave those feelings with others who revise my translation. It is also important to me that my writing, my thoughts also come out well.”⁵⁴ (Hamid, 2023) While she translates herself, she does have all of her work, as it is important to the author to get the best outcome as possible.

Hamid was often confronted with the fact that the metaphors she uses would not have the same effect in German as in Arabic, which is a much more flowery language for her. She gives the example of horses and neighing, which in Arabic imply passion and strength, but which are more unusual in German. However, it is important to her that her images remain as they are - when editing, only the grammar is to be corrected by the publisher, not the literal images. If something is corrected that she does not want, the author discusses it with the publisher: for example, when she translated the poem "Das Meer lacht", she enforced that her metaphors remain. "And the colleague who edited the poem with me told me, "The sea doesn't laugh, Ishraga. That's is not correct here." I said, "Yes, but for us, it laughs! I want it to stay like that, so you know that for us the sea laughs and the sea cries and the sea dances and the sea does everything, it's like a human being, it has its life too.""⁵⁵ (Hamid, 2023)

Mihret Kebede works with translation in an entirely different way. In the project *Wax and Gold*, an anthology resulting from the collaboration between the Institut für Raumexperimente in Berlin and Tobyia Poetic Jazz, the participating artists create a space to translate in collaboration and exchange. The artists take around a week or ten days for the process of translation. This process is described by Mihret as a collaborative one:

⁵⁴ “Ich übersetze meine eigenen Werke alleine, weil ich bin der Meinung, **ich** bin die einzige, die wirklich meine Gefühle übertragen kann. Diese Gefühle lasse ich mit anderen, die meine Übersetzung überarbeiten. Es ist mir auch wichtig, dass mein Schreiben, meine Gedanken auch gut ankommen.” (Hamid, 2023)

⁵⁵ “Und der Kollege, der mit mir das Gedicht überarbeitet hat, hat mir gesagt, "Das Meer lacht nicht, Ishraga. Das ist so nicht korrekt hier." Ich habe gesagt, "Ja, aber bei uns lacht es! Ich will, dass es so bleibt, damit du weißt, dass bei uns das Meer lacht und das Meer weint und das Meer tanzt und das Meer macht alles, das ist so wie ein Mensch, das hat auch sein Leben."“ (Hamid, 2023)

“Sometimes four, three people or two people translate my poem and I also do the same with their poems, with others. So, we just discuss it, describe it, and then sometimes it just happens to be something else” (Kebede, 2023)

Kebede also chose a collaborative method of translation for her first book – she is currently translating the #evolutionarypoems series into English together with Anna Moschovakis. She also gets support from her Ethiopian poet friends. Concerning the process and the form of the poems translated, Kebede explains: “We’re just doing it a bit more experimentally. We try to translate it a bit, line by line, but it still has some notes, some footnotes, that are also beautiful when you just see it together.” (Kebede, 2023)

When translating, Kebede doesn’t work with the goal of perfection – to her, this is almost impossible “because we are from totally different worlds”. (Kebede, 2023) A successful translation is not a translation that is perfect, which is something that Tarek Eltayeb also mentioned – he doesn’t like the idea of a “perfect translation”.

5.2.2.3. The Translated Work – a Work of Its Own?

Mihret Kebede elaborates further on the collaborative aspect of translation, something she emphasizes in the project that resulted in the book *Wax and Gold*. The participating artists took about a week to translate each other’s texts in collaboration and in continuous discussions: “But we were just allowing it to have a different format. For example, when somebody is translating my poem, they’re transforming it or adapting it to a different presence. It has similarities but at the same time, if you allow it to exist in a different form or a different understanding, that works the most.” (Kebede, 2023) The artists allowed themselves a very free method of translation; the focus was on the translator’s own engagement with the source text.

Kebede gives the example of her poem “Tales of Silence”, which was translated into German by Rike Scheffler, a poet living in Berlin. Instead of translating it line by line, she translated the poem according to her own understanding: “But the way she translated it, is in her own way; it’s a kind of adaptation. [...] And I really love it!” (Kebede, 2023)

Sagen, über die Stille.

Dieses Gedicht. Dieses Gedicht handelt, ist

das Gegenteil und das Gleiche, wie Mihrets Gedicht: Inhalt und Veränderung werden vermischt. (worldliteraturetoday.org; translation from Amharic into German by Rike Scheffler)

Interestingly, Scheffler translated the poem from the English version (which was translated from Amharic by Nebiy Mekonnen and Eric Ellingsen) into German, thus creating a web of translations. The differences in the two versions are quite apparent:

Tales of Silence

For he who listens silently to silence, amidst serenity so tranquil,
amidst those silenced, and silence spoken through tales of how Menelik aptly said: silence has
its
own say! (worldliteraturetoday.org; translation from Amharic into English by Nebiy Mekonnen & Eric Ellingsen)

Another branch is added to this network of translations with Chris Beckett's translation of Scheffler's German version into English:

TALES ABOUT SILENCE

This poem is an act which is the opposite but also the same as Mihret's poem.
Stability and change are all mixed up in it. (Poetryinternational.com; translation from the German version into English by Chris Beckett)

The translator thus takes upon the role of a creator in their own right: the translated text becomes a work of its own, rooted in the source text, but inevitably a creation of the translators. This understanding of translators as creators themselves is also something Fiston Mwanza Mujila mentions:

When I am translated, I am aware that my novel in German is my novel, but at the same time it is not my novel. Because every translator has his sensibility, his language, his motivation, his style. If my characters are translated in Swedish, they speak better Swedish or Italian or Arabic than I do.⁵⁶ (Mujila, 2023)

The translated text is thus its own text, but infused with a new language, a new approach by another writer, which at the same time makes the text no longer the author's own.

⁵⁶ "Wenn ich übersetzt werde, ist mir bewusst, dass mein Roman auf Deutsch mein Roman ist, aber gleichzeitig nicht mein Roman ist. Weil jeder Übersetzer hat seine Sensibilität, seine Sprache, seine Motivation, seinen Stil. Wenn meine Charaktere auf Schwedisch übersetzt sind, sprechen sie besser Schwedisch oder Italienisch oder Arabisch als ich." (Mujila, 2023)

However, the author also sees himself as a translator of some kind:

But I as a writer, as an African writer, as a Congolese writer, am also a translator. Because my characters don't speak French. Many of my characters live on the margins of society, they speak Swahili or Lingala, but I translate these characters into French. I'm also a translator. But maybe an invisible translator.⁵⁷ (Mujila, 2023)

The image of the invisible translator that Mujila draws here is shaped by his identity as a Congolese writer and by the languages he knows. Although he doesn't write in Swahili or Lingala, these languages get carried on through his writing, making him a translator, albeit an invisible one.

5.2.2.4. The Joy of Translation

Probably one of the most central aspects of my conversation about translation with the authors was the joy felt towards translation that the authors conveyed to me. I expected many different outcomes when talking about this topic, but the joy of translation was one of the main and most unexpected elements that ran through all the interviews I conducted.

"I'm always really pleased about that. I never expected that from writing books."⁵⁸ (Eltayeb, 2023), said Tarek Eltayeb. The author is particularly grateful when the translations come about unexpectedly and by chance. He is happy when he gets invited to other countries to speak about his book through translation: "I then also get invitations in the country or also other countries and that is always very nice"⁵⁹ (Eltayeb, 2023) This joy is thus connected to aspects other than the translation itself: it is also a matter of the visibility in another literary space that is created through the process of translation and the new possibilities that come with it.

Mihret Kebede also appreciates and is very content when her works get translated, and wishes for even more translations in the future: "I want my works to be translated into different languages, as much as possible, so this for me is a step." (Kebede, 2023) Describing translation as a "step", she is especially excited about taking this step with German-language translations. "I am glad that my poems are being translated into German, getting published,

⁵⁷ "Aber ich als Schriftsteller, als afrikanischer Schriftsteller, als kongolesischer Schriftsteller, bin auch ein Übersetzer. Weil meine Charaktere sprechen kein Französisch. Viele von meinen Charakteren leben am Rand der Gesellschaft, sie sprechen Swahili oder Lingala, aber ich übersetze diese Charaktere auf Französisch. Ich bin auch ein Übersetzer. Aber vielleicht ein unsichtbarer Übersetzer." (Mujila, 2023)

⁵⁸ "Das freut mich wirklich immer sehr. Ich habe das nie erwartet vom Buchschreiben." (Eltayeb, 2023)

⁵⁹ "Ich bekomme dann auch Einladungen in dem Land oder auch anderen Ländern und das ist schon immer sehr schön." (Eltayeb, 2023)

here and there. I'm also getting invited to read them and sometimes to perform, to take part in festivals like this, not only here, but also in other European countries." (Kebede, 2023) Kebede too draws a connection between the joy of translation and invitations to literary institutions and, as a result, more visibility in the Austrian and European literary scene. Translation allows the author to participate in events and for her works to be published in spaces where her works in the Amharic original might not be.

As already mentioned, Mihret Kebede doesn't feel like she is very much connected to the Austrian literary scene because she doesn't speak German. However, she gets to take part in literary events, and thus also in the literary scene, through translation: "Since I am not understanding German well, it's really hard for me to say this or that. But I see a lot of events happening in the arts and in the literary sector, but the ones I am going to are mostly in English or with some translations, or some mixed, so I can attend those programs." (Kebede, 2023) Although during the interview Kebede repeatedly expresses the desire to improve her German in order to participate in the literary scene, she nevertheless recounts many events in which she has participated through the option of translation. One could therefore argue that translation lead to more opportunities and visibility for the author.

While all the authors expressed the desire or joy of having translations of their works, some also spoke about the difficulties of getting to translation. Tarek Eltayeb, for example, would like to publish more works in German, but the translation process with his wife takes a lot of time. Ishraga Mustafa Hamid, who also translates her works herself, also spoke about how she would like to see more of her works translated into German. These difficulties and the prolonged process of translation also occurred with Mihret Kebede, but not with Fiston Mwanza Mujila. The simple reason for this may be that the author is not as involved in translation processes as the other three, possibly also because it might be easier to find translators for literary texts in French than for texts in Arabic or Amharic in Austria.

2.5.3. The Question of Belonging: Identity, Hybridity and Nationality

2.5.3.1. Concepts of Identity

When I asked the authors about their understanding of identity, I was met with varying responses. However, all of the authors felt that identity was not a static concept and not something that could be defined in a rigid way.

For example, Mihret Kebede thinks of identity as being very dynamic. She also mentions that the understanding of something that might be relevant to identity varies greatly by location, as cultural and political backgrounds are different. So, something that might be a part of identity in some discourses might not be part of it or might be seen differently in another discourse. Identity can be different according to the context and also the individual that uses the concept. However, there are also silent identities, especially in the Ethiopian context: “There are certain identities that you cannot be explicit about and or find a term for, in our context. And in some places, location, geography, and cultural understanding matter, for example.” (Kebede, 2023). These are unspoken identities that can’t be named.

However, she went further and criticized the urge to define identity: she feels that people are desperate to always name and frame something. When people try to understand the literary work of someone, the question of identity often arises in the attempt to grasp and classify it. However, she wonders if this is really necessary and expresses her frustration, arguing that all people are different and people waste so much time with identity politics:

It’s [identity; author’s note] just how you want to use it, how you understand it, and how you want to manipulate it. So, I think we all should be aware of that and think beyond, there are a lot of things that we should deal with seriously. We’re just busy with this shit. Identity politics is hugely sensitive if not examined carefully and wisely.” (Kebede, 2023)

She also brings up the negative sides of it: identity has a great potential to be manipulated, to be associated with power structures, and thus to be exclusive. The author obviously seemed frustrated that so much energy is invested in negotiating identities, especially when it comes to ‘Afro-diasporic’ voices.

Tarek Eltayeb also understands identity as something that is constantly changing and evolving, while also pointing out the dangers in a rigid definition of identity: “Yeah, I think identity changes all the time, all the time. And if someone really has their identity or thinks they don’t change and stay that way, that’s dangerous.”⁶⁰ (Eltayeb, 2023) As soon as identity is no longer dynamic, he feels that something is wrong. He hopes that identity always evolves into something positive. There are constantly parts added and erased and put aside – he even compares identity to a living being. In order to exist, like all living creatures, it has to change:

⁶⁰ “Ja, ich finde Identität ändert sich dauernd, die ganze Zeit. Und wenn jemand wirklich seine Identität hat oder glaubt, er ändert sich nicht und bleibt so, das ist das gefährlich.” (Eltayeb, 2023)

“Identity is actually a part of me, what moves me, what also opens the world for me”⁶¹ (Eltayeb, 2023) For him, religion can be a part of identity, but not identity itself – this would also be a very reduced understanding of the concept.

Ishraga Mustafa Hamid brings this up as well: while she sees identity as a concept as something positive, she also feels as if it is reductive to a certain extent: “And so for me, identities are enriching on the one hand, but on the other hand, it’s compensated.”⁶² (Hamid, 2023)

Fiston Mwanza Mujila also feels like identity consists of multiple different aspects, both the past and the present: “For me the identity means...identity means our heritage or our genealogy, but identity also means present and future. And identity is personal, you can’t say there is a collective identity because this is about the experience of one person.”⁶³ (Mujila, 2023) In any case, it is interesting that while Mujila speaks of a certain genealogy and heritage that constitutes identity, he individualizes it: identity is seen as person-specific, even if it is shaped by collective experience, it is still inevitably an individual construction.

2.5.3.2. Being an ‘African’ Author in the Austrian Literary Discourse: Self-defined Identity and Nationality

Concerning the definition of one’s own identity, the framework of nationality was brought up by all authors, although all of them also strongly questioned it. While nationality thus provides a frame of reference, albeit a questioned one, self-definition as a writer is also important for most authors. It was interesting to see in which way the writers located themselves in the Austrian literary discourse.

Besides being an artist, translator and lecturer at university, Tarek Eltayeb sees his role as a writer as the most important one. However, for him living and surviving in Austria, his work at the university is the most essential. Tarek Eltayeb discussed the intersections between nationality and identity, stating:

As I said, I don’t like: okay, my father is from Sudan, my mother is from Egypt. Then I am Egyptian or Sudanese. No, there I say, I am all three, I am Egyptian and Sudanese, and also Austrian. And if I stay somewhere in a country for a long time,

⁶¹ “Identität ist eigentlich ein Teil von mir, was mich bewegt, was für mich auch die Welt öffnet” (Eltayeb, 2023)

⁶² “Und daher sind für mich Identitäten eine Bereicherung auf der einen Seite, auf der anderen Seite aber ist es auch kompensiert.” (Hamid., 2023)

⁶³ “Für mich die Identität bedeutet...Identität bedeutet unser Erbe oder unsere Genealogie, aber Identität bedeutet auch Gegenwart und Zukunft. Und Identität ist persönlich, man kann nicht sagen, es gibt eine kollektive Identität, weil es geht hier um die Erfahrung von einer Person.” (Mujila, 2023)

then I also get so much from there. And that is also a part of me. I can't ignore at all that I also stayed for three months in the USA, for example, for literature. That is imprinted on me. That is a permanent part of me.⁶⁴ (Eltayeb, 2023)

Eltayeb feels shaped by all the experiences and countries he has lived in or had a connection to. All this influences his self-definition of identity, which for him is multiple, composed of different aspects that can also change in a dynamic way. On another hand, he does feel like he is part of the Austrian, but also global literary scene. He sets himself on one line with other authors: "I have very good contacts with many authors, Austrians, also many worldwide, with artists. I really consider myself one of them."⁶⁵ (Eltayeb, 2023) His self-definition as an author is thus also connected to positioning himself alongside other authors and him feeling like one of them, identifying with sharing one aspect of their identities – being a writer. His identity as an author is thus asserted by placing himself in a network of other writers, just as he also asserts the identities of other authors.

Mihret Kebede also feels like all the locations she has lived in add aspects to her identity. Kebede was born in the small Ethiopian town Dessie. For her, moving has added layers to her identity: moving to Addis Abeba, added elements to her identity, just as when she moved to Vienna.

Mihret Kebede, however, is certainly the only one in my selection of authors who performs her role as an artist and poet in equal measure. Even though there are many overlaps between the two and poetry is also an expression or method of her artistic practice, two different discourses are nevertheless present: "Usually, since I'm also a poet, I have a different connection with the poets, with the poetry scene. And with the art scene, I have this connection with art collectives and others." (Kebede, 2023) Kebede describes feeling connected to both scenes, but does draw a line between them. This also has to be taken into account, since for Kebede not only the role of a poet, even more so of an artist adds to her self-definition and positioning.

⁶⁴ "Wie gesagt, ich mag nicht: Okay, mein Vater ist aus dem Sudan, meine Mutter aus Ägypten. Dann bin ich Ägypter oder Sudanese. Nein, da sage ich, ich bin alle drei, ich bin Ägypter und Sudanese und auch Österreicher. Und wenn ich irgendwo lange Zeit in einem Land sitze, dann bekomme ich auch so viel von dort. Und das ist auch ein Teil von mir. Ich kann überhaupt nicht ignorieren, dass ich zum Beispiel drei Monate in den USA auch literarisch gesessen bin. Das ist geprägt bei mir. Das ist fixer Teil von mir." (Eltayeb, 2023)

⁶⁵ "Ich habe sehr gute Kontakte mit vielen Autoren, Österreichern, auch weltweit viele, mit Künstlern. Ich betrachte mich wirklich als einer von denen." (Eltayeb, 2023)

In regards to nationality and identity, the aspect of performance is very important for Kebede, as she is doing many spoken word poetry performances. She describes that performing in Ethiopia and Austria feels different, since the location and the cultural differences add to the show: “So I always look at the idea of performance. When you perform it in Ethiopia – for example, when I read a poem in Ethiopia and here, it is different. So also locations, space, and cultural differences add to whatever you’re performing, that’s always like evolving and evolving and evolving.” (Kebede, 2023) Her performance, just like her understanding of identity, is therefore something that is always changing and influenced by experiences, cultures and locations.

However, Kebede repeatedly mentioned that she feels like Austria and it’s literary and cultural scene was not built for her, since there are many differences between Austria and Ethiopia, stating: “We are in a different world, because this is not built for me, this is another country.” (Kebede, 2023) She refers with this statement to her personal perception and feelings, but does not necessarily consider the scene in Austria to be generally excluding. I however now wonder after the interview: what would it need to be more accommodating?

Fiston Mwanza Mujila, however, does locate himself in the Austrian literary discourse, acknowledging that he is one of the more visible authors in Austria and also in Europe: “As a writer, I am perhaps one of the Austrian writers who are visible outside the German-speaking world.”⁶⁶ (Mujila, 2023) Mujila refers here to being an “Austrian author”, however also sees himself as a “Grazer writer”, a “new Austrian” and sometimes refers to himself as European, but also “Congolese writer”. (Mujila, 2023) He feels like identity nowadays is very variable and multiple and this is also what the meaning of being European is: having all of these different transnational identities. “I think identity has become more transnational, multiethnic, transnational, you can’t stay in one core.”⁶⁷ (Mujila, 2023)

He does not allow himself to be locked into one of these identities, but rather all of these identities are true and a part of him. It seems as if the author also chooses which identity he shares depending on the context and how he actively inscribes or excludes himself in some discourses with using concepts of identity. This is also something that Mihret Kebede mentioned: identity can also be changed and manipulated according to the contextual needs.

⁶⁶ “Ich als Schriftsteller bin vielleicht einer von den österreichischen Schriftstellern, die sichtbar außerhalb des deutschsprachigen Raumes sind.” (Mujila, 2023)

⁶⁷ “ich glaube, die Identität ist transnationaler geworden, multiethnisch, transnational, man kann nicht in einem Kern bleiben.” (Mujila, 2023)

Mujila's identity performance can be seen in the context of Cupach and Imahori's Identity Management Theory (1993). This theory describes how one's cultural and relational identities are performed and managed in interaction. It is assumed that there is a positive and negative face that is mutually affirmed in interactions, with the former reflecting the desire for recognition and the latter reflecting the desire for autonomy. Cupach and Imahori also specifically mention intercultural relationships, and distinguish between three phases: In the first phase, "trial," commonalities are sought and the boundaries of face threats are negotiated. In the second phase "enmeshment" the differences between each other are ignored and an understanding of relational identity is established. In the last phase "renegotiation" both cultures are validated, there is a good understanding of the different cultural identities, the relational identity is in the focus. (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2010, pp. 66-68) Depending on the context and interaction partner, identity is performed differently in order to protect the desires for positive and negative face. This can also help explain Mujila's different conceptions of identity.

Mujila further describes identity as individual and depending on one's own experiences and one's own characteristics: "For example, I as a person am educated and built intellectually or socially quite differently than my mother or my sister."⁶⁸ (Mujila, 2023) He further states that he also defines himself as Black: "But that's why, for example, I'm, I can say I'm Black."⁶⁹ (Mujila, 2023) Ishraga Mustafa Hamid also explains that she has several identities, describing herself as a "scholar, writer, Black Viennese"⁷⁰ (Hamid, 2023) The author shared that she often feels that certain identities have been imposed on her. She and her works are mostly seen and described in the context of migration, and the author perceives this as divisive: although her experience as a migrant was formative and she perceives it as an "opportunity for emancipation, for self-empowerment."⁷¹ (Hamid, 2023), it is not the only feature of her identity. She wishes there was no separation when it comes to literature: "Literature should be literature. Without this classification, without this categorization, without category."⁷² (Hamid, 2023)

⁶⁸ „Zum Beispiel ich als Person bin ganz anders gebildet und gebaut intellektuell oder sozial als meine Mutter oder meine Schwester.“ (Mujila, 2023)

⁶⁹ "Aber deshalb zum Beispiel bin ich, kann ich sagen, ich bin Schwarz." (Mujila, 2023)

⁷⁰ "Wissenschaftlerin, Schriftstellerin, Schwarze Wienerin." (Hamid, 2023)

⁷¹ "eine Chance, für Emanzipation, für Selbststärkung." (Hamid, 2023)

⁷² "Literatur sollte Literatur sein. Ohne diese Klassifikation, ohne diese Kategorisierung, ohne Kategorie" (Hamid, 2023)

It also makes a big difference that this identity and sense of belonging is ascribed to her from externally, which is something that she also relates to with other aspects of her identity:

I did not choose that. I was not actually born a woman but was made a woman. Not born Black with a capital 'S' ['Schwarz' in German; author's note] but made to be one. And that brings us back to politics and resistance from me and from other women. But I think these multiple identities also mean enrichment for me.⁷³ (Hamid, 2023)

Although Hamid did not choose to be a woman in society, to be Black, with all the expectations and stereotypes carried forward by these social constructs, she can still find something positive in it all: all the different identities and experiences also enrich her as a person and broaden her horizons.

However, Hamid experienced identity conflicts not only in Austria, but also in Sudan, where the questions like "Is it an Arab country, or an African country? We belong to Africa only geographically, or also to the culture? Does the language belong to Africa?"⁷⁴ were constantly being asked. (Hamid, 2023)

2.5.3.3. Defined Identity in Relation to Austrian Authors

As mentioned earlier, Mujila also uses identity concepts depending on the context. However, some of these concepts are also linked to a political dimension for him and are actively used to assert and occupy certain spaces:

For example, sometimes I say I belong to Austrian literature. But that's a statement, it's political. It has nothing to do with the fact that really I belong to it, it has to do with the fact that I can belong to Austrian literature. I have the legitimacy because I work here, I create here.⁷⁵ (Mujila, 2023)

It is interesting that Mujila speaks about having the legitimacy to be labeled an Austrian writer; after all, the author has lived in Graz for almost fourteen years and has the Austrian citizenship. (Pesi, 2022) However, linguistically he also withdraws this affiliation to some extent, after he suggests that this identity has nothing to do with him really being an Austrian

⁷³ "Ich habe das nicht gewählt. Ich bin nicht eigentlich als Frau geboren, sondern wurde zur Frau gemacht. Nicht als Schwarz mit großem S geboren, sondern dazu gemacht. Und das bringt uns wieder zu Politik und Widerstand von mir und von anderen Frauen dagegen. Aber ich finde, diese Mehrfachidentitäten bedeuten für mich auch Bereicherung." (Hamid, 2023)

⁷⁴ "Ist es ein arabisches Land, oder ein afrikanisches Land? Wir gehören zu Afrika nur geografisch, oder auch zur Kultur?" "Gehört die Sprache zu Afrika?" (Hamid, 2023)

⁷⁵ "Zum Beispiel, manchmal sage ich, ich gehöre zur österreichischen Literatur. Aber das ist ein Statement, es ist politisch. Es hat nichts damit zu tun, dass wirklich ich dazu gehöre, es hat damit zu tun, dass ich zur österreichischen Literatur gehören kann. Ich habe die Legitimation, weil ich arbeite hier, ich kreierte hier." (Mujila, 2023)

writer, creating some ambivalences. He draws a line here between perceived identity and identity as a statement, as something that is political and can also be used as such. By calling himself an Austrian author, the author actively positions himself in the Austrian literary field and also in its market, thus also creating a space and a place for himself in it.

Kebede on the other hand doesn't find it easy to relate to the Austrian poetry scene, since she doesn't speak a lot of German. However, she is very aware that she does live in an imperial city, historically speaking. While she feels like one has to be critical about this, she claims one also should ask oneself how to "extract something nice out of the city." (Kebede, 2023) When she did the project CultureXChange, she tried to do this by connecting Ethiopian and Austrian culture through coffee: They brought "Ethiopian coffee ceremony culture [together; author's note] with the Vienna coffee hype" (Kebede, 2023) because coffee shops are one part of Vienna she really loves and appreciates.

Tarek Eltayeb also frequently goes to coffee houses to write; he places himself within this Austrian literary tradition of writing in coffee houses: "And I sit there to write, read, meet friends, etc. The coffee house is my second home, so to speak."⁷⁶ (Eltayeb, 2023) On the other hand, the coffee houses also form a connection between Cairo and Vienna for him, even though the culture and conventions of how to act in coffee shops is vastly different. He enjoys both atmospheres.

However, the author does not place himself in an Austrian literary context only due to his visits to coffee houses:

I can compare myself with Austrian writers, with good texts that are really well written. Here in this country we have really great ones – Thomas Bernhard and Stefan Zweig and so. It's great when you read it like that. That's what I like very much, that's what I like and not to compare that someone from somewhere wrote something.⁷⁷ (Eltayeb, 2023)

Thus, he places himself in the genealogy of well-known Austrian writers and compares himself with them. By locating himself together with these authors, who are part of the national literary canon, he sees himself as part of it. His current contacts to authors in Austria

⁷⁶ "Und ich sitze dort zum Schreiben, lesen und Freunde treffen, etc. Das Kaffeehaus ist mein zweites Haus, sozusagen." (Eltayeb, 2023)

⁷⁷ "Ich kann mich vergleichen mit österreichischen Schriftstellern, mit guten Texten, die wirklich gut geschrieben sind. Hier im Lande haben wir wirklich großartige – Thomas Bernhard und Stefan Zweig und so. Toll, wenn man das so liest. Das ist, was ich sehr, das ist was ich gern mag und nicht, dass ich vergleiche, dass einer von irgendwo was geschrieben hat." (Eltayeb, 2023)

also came up, as already mentioned – in order to position himself as an author in Austria, this frame of reference is used.

Fiston addresses the issue of genealogy even more directly. It was important for him to understand the Austrian literary scene, the genealogy of writers and writing, but also to locate himself in this genealogy, just as he situates himself in the French and African literary genealogies:

I am in a genealogy of French and African writers. And then, in the German-speaking world, it was also important for me to find a genealogy. Then it was clear to me that Ingeborg Bachmann, Elfriede Jelinek, Peter Handke, are simply...I belong in this genealogy because they also work a lot with language. That was important for me. So maybe I have more to do with Peter Handke, in the way I use language, as I do with a Congolese writer.⁷⁸ (Mujila, 2023)

It is striking that the author here draws a connection to other Austrian authors, such as Peter Handke through the language of writing, although he rarely writes in German and mostly in French. On one hand, one might argue that his understanding of the use of language refers more to a stylistic level and to the importance the author gives to language. At the same time, as already mentioned, the author has the feeling that even if he writes in one language, he communicates in a multilingual way through his experiences in other languages, that is, all the other languages live on in the writing language.

On the other hand, the author also actively positions himself in a prominent position within the Austrian literary field. As he places himself alongside well-known and prestigious Austrian authors, he makes his position clear and thus also increases his own visibility. This becomes further apparent, when he also relates himself to Group 47: in the same way that the authors of this group searched for a new language after the Second World War and Nazism, Mujila states that he also feels the need to search for a new language. He views the Congo as comparable to Austria after the war and sees his role as a writer in finding a language that can narrate the country, the conflicts and the war. (Mujila, 2023) While Mujila can of course identify with these authors on a personal level, on a scholarly level, it is questionable to categorize him alongside authors like Handke or Gruppe 47 – after all, Mujila

⁷⁸ "Ich bin in einer Genealogie von französischen und afrikanischen Schriftstellern. Und dann, im deutschsprachigen Raum, war es für mich auch wichtig, eine Genealogie zu finden. Dann war für mich klar, dass Ingeborg Bachmann, Elfriede Jelinek, Peter Handke, sind einfach...ich gehöre in diese Genealogie, weil sie auch viel mit der Sprache arbeiten. Das war für mich wichtig. Deshalb habe ich vielleicht mehr zu tun mit Peter Handke, in dem wie ich die Sprache benutze, wie mit einem kongolesischen Schriftsteller." (Mujila, 2023)

hardly ever writes in German. Rather, the author's statements must be considered in the context of his active positioning for visibility in the Austrian literary discourse. Through comments like these, the author places himself in a certain discursive context, which is carried forward through reproduction (e.g. in interviews with the media). Thus, a certain image is created.

Instead of placing herself in a genealogy of Austrian writers, Hamid takes an entirely different approach: she feels that she cannot consider her history in Austria as her own, but rather only within the context of the genealogy of Africans in Vienna. Unlike Mujila, who sees identity as something personal, identity for Hamid is collective:

I actually see my story in this context. In the context of migrants, in the big context, really of the first Africans who came to Austria. And how they were exoticized, like a circus, like animals, my story starts here, doesn't start in 1993, after I came to Austria.⁷⁹ (Hamid, 2023)

Hamid and Mujila's two different understandings of history as individual and history as collective can also be placed in the context of marketing. Invoking individual identities has the outward connotation of self-empowerment, of a self-determining function. This conception makes it possible to play with identities in a particularly powerful way, since they can be individually defined and changed. Collective history and identity do not enable this marketing: if identity is placed in the framework of the many, there is no longer a possibility to highlight the individual identity so prominently.

2.5.3.4. Stereotypes and Problems

However, identity as a concept can also be very excluding, as Mihret Kebede points out several times: "So, I mean, I know sometimes it brings conflict or it instigates conflict among people when they try to come together to exclude the other or to protect what they think is theirs" (Kebede, 2023) In addition to sometimes creating conflict, the notion of identity, especially combined with certain nationalities, is often reductive: "So, I usually say, when I'm traveling from Ethiopia to another country, I become my country. No matter how successful I am individually, it's not about you. The first question, they are asking you is, 'Where are you from?', and then 'What's your name?'" (Kebede, 2023) The moment she

⁷⁹ "Meine Geschichte eigentlich sehe ich in diesem Kontext. Im Kontext von MigrantInnen, im großen Kontext, wirklich von den ersten Afrikanern, die nach Österreich kamen. Und wie sie damals so als Zirkus, wie Tiere, exotisch gemacht wurden, meine Geschichte beginnt hier, beginnt nicht 1993, nachdem ich nach Österreich gekommen bin." (Hamid, 2023)

says that she is from Ethiopia, the other person thinks of popular knowledge and stereotypes like war or famine and mixes this knowledge with whatever is actually happening or said. This deprives the author of the opportunity to define for herself who she is. This is an issue for her particularly because identity is easily misused to create hierarchies of power: “They want to use it in a way that makes it more comfortable for them to dominate, or to have power over others.” (Kebede, 2023)

Kebede’s experience of “becoming her country” is also reflected by other authors, with Mujila also bringing up preconceptions and stereotypical perceptions in relation to nationality. As a writer who was born in Africa and now lives in Europe, he gets confronted with a lot of questions and preconceptions. In a sense, he often becomes the country’s figurehead or spokesperson without choosing to do so. He told me: “As an African writer, you often get questions like ‘What do you think about the political situation in Congo?’ But as an Austrian writer, you never get questions like that.”⁸⁰ (Mujila, 2023)

So, there are certain preconceptions, and they are not only related to the author’s different identities and nationalities, but also directly linked to ideas of “African” literature, according to Mujila: “That is, there is this expectation and it is connected to what is called African literature.”⁸¹ (Mujila, 2023) Hamid also mentions this expectation and how Africa is still often perceived as a small village, with humans and animals looking alike. (Hamid, 2023)

Kebede also recalls experiencing racism in class when a teacher expressed unreflected and problematic stereotypes about Africa. When the group talked about the concept of Afropessimism, the instructor equated Africa with pessimism. The situation was uncomfortable in itself, but most difficult for Kebede was that she was implicitly selected by the group to speak out against it simply because she is from Africa:

And then, at the same time, what I was not comfortable with, just because I am from Africa, people were expecting me to react to it. I mean, I immediately responded to her, but why are people waiting for me to respond to that? Because that’s their [strong emphasis] problem! The problem is not only with her but also with my classmates! If they understand that something is wrong, they have to respond to it. (Kebede, 2023)

⁸⁰ “Als Afrikanischer Schriftsteller bekommt man oft Fragen wie ‚Was denkst du über die politische Situation im Kongo?‘ Aber als österreichischer Schriftsteller bekommt man nie solche Fragen.” (Mujila, 2023)

⁸¹ “Das heißt, es gibt diese Erwartung und die ist verbunden mit dem, was man afrikanische Literatur nennt.” (Mujila, 2023)

Mihret Kebede expressed a deep sense of frustration in our interview about these kinds of situations, as she was the one who had to speak up in this moment, no one else did. She was expected to deal with it. For her, the problem of racism lies with everyone who doesn't speak against it, since this is exactly what enables it in the first place. She also connects this thought to living in an imperial city – even though she generally feels comfortable in Vienna, she is still aware of imperial and racial power structures: “People have to change. You shouldn't be the only one who is always saying, you know this is not right, this is not right... people should school themselves and work on it too.” (Kebede, 2023)

Ishraga Mustafa Hamid is also of the opinion that one should deal critically with Austrian history and feels, however, that there are now more people who are willing to take a critical look at history and the present. While every language carries certain stereotypes with it, there are still very many forms of racism, especially in Austria, that are structurally and linguistically embedded, for example, in street names such as ‘kleine Mohrengasse’ or ‘große Mohrengasse’. The author asks: “Why is the racist history so anchored in Austria, why this is not changed?”⁸² (Hamid, 2023) Austria and its people have to address racism in the past and in the future in order to change something.

2.6. Conclusion Chapter 2

The chapter showed that all authors are highly engaged with the medium of language and that each language was perceived as a positive enrichment. At the same time, some of the authors addressed the difficulties of non-German language books in a German-oriented market. Translation is therefore essential for the authors and, except for Mujila, all authors actively participate in the process. Lastly, it was also shown that while all authors have different concepts of identity, all reject fixed concepts oriented towards nationality. Based on the author's identity conceptions, it was also possible to determine their positioning in terms of visibility in Austria. Whereas this chapter focused on the author's self-definitions and positions in relation to the categories language, translation and identity, the following chapter will connect the authors positions to another entity in the literary field: Institutions.

⁸² “Warum ist die rassistische Geschichte in Österreich so verankert, warum das wird nicht geändert?” (Hamid, 2023)

3. The Power of Institutions: Making African Diasporic Literature (In)Visible

Ich fühle mich von hier,
bin eine Schwarze Wienerin.

sie lacht
ihr weises Herz leuchtet
fragt nichts
über Schwarze Identität
die lange Geschichte
schwarzen Zorns
Revolution für gleiches Recht.

– Excerpt from *Ihr Lächeln* (Hamid, 2014, p. 25)

It was quite a surprise to see how the authors interviewed connected their own visibility to the participation in institutional discourses and events within the Austrian literary field. When asked about how they would position themselves and how they perceive their own visibility and invisibility in the Austrian literary field, most of the authors rated their visibility in relation to institutions within the Austrian discourse. Media coverage, publishing, participation in festivals and platforms, as well as the network of people surrounding these institutions, were named in order to speak about the individual visibility or invisibility in the discourse, as will be shown in this chapter. The following section will also introduce institutions that are significant to the authors and other authors of the African diaspora living in Austria.

3.1. Academia

Academia is a large institutional field in which authors' literature is negotiated and categorized. This field is too large to cover all aspects of it in this thesis, so I have focused on the issue of terminology of literature by authors of the diaspora and also discussed this issue in my interviews with the authors. The following subchapter will shed light on how to situate the authors within the academic discourse, as well as on terminological discourses and the authors' thoughts on them.

3.1.1. Migrant Literature? Questioning Concepts of National Literature

Literature written by authors with migratory experience has been labeled with many different terms over time in German-speaking countries: 'Migrationsliteratur' ('migration literature'), 'Migrantenliteratur' ('migrant literature'), 'Gastarbeiterliteratur' ('guest worker literature'), 'Exilliteratur' ('exile literature') or 'interkulturelle Literatur' ('intercultural literature'). However, all these terms have one thing in common: they are oriented toward concepts of national literature and describe a form of literature that deviates from it. While national literature was considered linguistically and culturally homogeneous in the 19th century, this changed with the emergence of literature by people with migratory experience in the 1980s. (Esselborn, 2009, p. 43) From the 1980s on, German-language literary studies became increasingly interested in this literature, which resulted in a wave of concepts and categorizations that will be explained and problematized in the following.

Stolarczyk-Gembiak writes that literature in this field is viewed in relation to a number of categories, often related to "Fremdheit oder Altärität" ("foreignness or otherness") (Stolarczyk-Gembiak, 2015, p. 188) in regard to what is considered to belong to one's own identity, culture and society and what is not. It is thus a criterion that cannot be viewed objectively.

In terminological history, Gastarbeiterliteratur appeared first, referring to literature between 1950 and 1970 written by the so-called 'Gastarbeiter' ('guest workers') in Germany. On an aesthetic level, the term referred to prose texts written in German on topics like foreignness and the acquisition of the new language German. (Stolarczyk-Gembiak, 2015, p. 188)

Migrantenliteratur, as opposed to Gastarbeiterliteratur, is a broader term for literature by immigrants that narrates the experience of immigration: "Der Begriff Migrantenliteratur macht die soziale Stellung der Autoren und das Herkunftsland zum grundlegenden Kriterium, weil der Migrationshintergrund entscheidend wird." (Stolarczyk-Gembiak, 2015, p. 189) The focus is on the actors, the authors and their country of birth are essential to the definition. In contrast, the term Migrationsliteratur can be used independently of actors and refers to texts that deal with the experience of migration. This literature thus finds its defining criterion in the thematic conception. (Stolarczyk-Gembiak, 2015, p. 189) Here, however, the question of definition still remains: while themes such as foreignness, identity conflicts and displacement, the confrontation with a new language and culture are usually

assigned to early Migrationsliteratur (around 1970) and Gastarbeiterliteratur, not all writing that moves between cultures and languages is necessarily migration literature. (Preschl, 2017, p. 166) At the same time, migration experiences vary and are also oriented on how culture and cultural spaces are defined.

In addition to Migrationsliteratur, there is also the concept of “Exilliteratur” (“exile literature”), which, however, differs from Migrationsliteratur mainly in the respect that the authors take their writing language with them into exile and that, according to Preschel, there is often some hope of returning to the abandoned homeland. (Preschl, 2017, p. 166)

Closely related to these conceptions of literature are the terms ‘Interkulturalität’ (‘interculturality’), ‘Multikulturalität’ (‘multiculturalism’) and ‘Transkulturalität’ (‘transculturality’). In the approach of interculturality, cultures are thought of as separate, distinct spaces that may have differences and similarities, but cannot merge. Exchange and communication between cultures is the goal. Multiculturalism refers to a similar understanding of culture and means the co-existence of two or more distinct cultures. With these two concepts, however, a certain hierarchization can often be observed, since the perception and valuation of one's own and the foreign culture is always from a subjective point of view and is usually made by those who belong to the “Mehrheitsgesellschaft” (“majority society”). (Disoski, 2011)

Transculturality goes beyond these two concepts and tries to disrupt these hierarchies. Culture is no longer located in a closed space, but allows for a third space: „dritten Raum, in dem es zur Verschmelzung und im Effekt zur Entstehung neuer Kultur kommen kann.“ (Stolarczyk-Gembiak, 2015, p.191) Conceptualized by Wolfgang Welsch, cultures nowadays are hybrid and intertwined, persisting across borders like nation states. While cultures have always been in constant state of change, transcultural exchange has also been particularly fueled by globalization. (Stolarczyk-Gembiak, 2015, p. 192) The concept of “third space” is described by Homi Bhabha and means a metaphorical space where cultures meet: a space, „der ein Schwellenraum ist, in dem Dichotomien zwischen den Kulturen aufgelöst werden, was zur kulturellen Hybridisierung führt.“ (Stolarczyk-Gembiak, 2015, p. 193)

However, terms such as ‘Migrantenliteratur’ and ‘Migrationsliteratur’, which are allocated within an intercultural conception, are often categorically rejected by writers. The division based on the country of origin of the author, as well as the connotation of the ‘other’ is considered uncomfortable. They reflect a categorization, that authors writing in their own country of origin do not have to experience. These terms operate highly on dichotomies and are rooted in the concept of national literature. Territorial spaces are thereby ascribed ideas like ‘homeland’. (Stolarczyk-Gembiak, 2015, p. 194)

Hamid also mentioned this in the interviews and reported feeling classified and categorized, since she is mostly seen as part of ‘Migrationsliteratur’, being a ‘migrant writer’. Even though this is a part of her and her writing, it isn’t her whole identity. She feels like there is a separation made through this classification: "as a migrant, of course that also feeds into my writing, but why is there this category, "You are a migrant.", and why this separation? Literature should be literature. Without this classification, without this categorization, without category".⁸³ (Hamid, 2023)

On a theoretical level, too, there is an increasing critical reflection on these terms, which are closely linked to the concept of interculturality. Many academics are also arguing for a dissolution of concepts shaped by dichotomy and the nation-state with regard to a transcultural conception of texts. (Stolarczyk-Gembiak, 2015, p. 198) Through concepts that attach themselves to the migratory experience of the author, a biographization of literature is also more frequently undertaken. Because of the possible autofictional elements, the literature is linked to the author as a person and thus also reduced, since other elements, such as aesthetic characteristics, are pushed into the background. (Disoski, 2011)

Moreover, these classifications are usually done by scholars or literary critics who are themselves part of the ‘majority society’ and determine the ‘other’ from this position. (Disoski, 2011) Through these terminologies, it is often possible to say more about a society or about an understanding of culture than about the literature it refers to. It is also apparent, as Disoski describes, that in literary studies research of this literature there is a definitive

⁸³ „als Migrantin, natürlich fließt das auch in mein Schreiben ein, aber warum gibt es diese Kategorie, "Du bist Migrantin.", und warum diese Trennung? Literatur sollte Literatur sein. Ohne diese Klassifikation, ohne diese Kategorisierung, ohne Kategorie“ (Hamid, 2023)

tendency to categorize: the engagement with this literature usually occurs in relation to issues of „Fremdheit‘, ‚Differenz‘, ‚Identität‘ und ‚Alterität“ (“foreignness,’ ‘difference,’ ‘identity,’ and ‘alterity’”) (Disoski, 2011) Categorization is also often undertaken as a marketing strategy in the literary world. While this does lead to increased visibility through, for example, the creation of prizes for authors with migratory experience, it also inevitably entails restriction.

The usage of terminology is closely connected to academia, which is for Kebede a very powerful institution, that often reproduces power structures and injustice: “Academia is the very center of it, because there is a lot of knowledge produced in academia, and also as you know, this knowledge is being produced by the powerful, even though you share a lot of knowledge within the academy.” (Kebede, 2023) People in academia who are in positions of power can easily get their knowledge published, whilst many students cannot make their knowledge available to a larger audience, because they lack the resources. The production and distribution of knowledge is distributed unequally.

3.1.2. Terminology Goes Transnational: Afro-European / Afro-Austrian / Afropolitan

Given that concepts that go beyond migration literature are now becoming more common in academic discussions of literary theory, new terminologies have emerged in this field as well. Among the most prominent of these is "new world literature". Assuming that literature can no longer be assigned to a single national literature with regard to its language, content, or even aesthetics in the age of globalization, this terminology invokes the concept of "world literature," which, with the addition of the ‘new’, is meant to represent a more inclusive terminology. (Stolarczyk-Gembiak, 2015, p. 194) "World literature" had previously come under repeated criticism, since the terminology speaks of world literature, but the canonization of this literature is often oriented on a eurocentric and male perspective. Or, as Venkat Mani simply put it: World literature is about “borrowing privileges”. (Mani, 2013, p. 241)

While the terms presented previously have also been used to refer to authors of the African diaspora, the following section will address selected terminology used specifically for literature by this group of authors. Since the term diaspora has already been discussed, it will not be further explained in the following.

While terms such as migration literature or exile literature refer in their semantics to the country of origin of the literature, terms such as Afro-European establish a double sense of location. It is neither one nor the other, but the double meaning, the combination of this spatiality as a carrier of meaning for a perceived identity and belonging. These terms are therefore located in the context of transculturality, as will be shown below. There is a range of different terms that serve in the academic field both as the name of a field of study, an identity concept, as well as a genre of literature: African European, Afroeuropean, Afropean, as well as Black European. However, all of these terms are conceptualized differently and lay the focus of attention on different aspects.

3.1.2.1. Afro-European Literature(s)

African European studies can be definend as a transdisciplinary project, that especially references off diaspora studies, postcolonial studies, African Studies and Afropolitanism. (Garrido et al., 2020, p. 10) Whereas postcolonial studies focus on showcasing how colonial power-relations are still present in every aspect of human lives, especially when it comes to the production of knowledge, Black studies focus on the “discrimination against and empowerment of Black people” (Garrido et al., 2020, p. 10), especially in the US-context, with the goal of also changing hegemonic racist power structures.

Crumly Deventer and Thomas argue in their article “Afro-European Studies: Emerging Fields and New Directions”, that in order to define Afro-Eurpeanness and the academic field of Afro-European Studies, one has however to first look at conceptions of Europeanness and Africanness. When defining Europe, there are two main sides of conceptualization, with one leaning towards an inclusive concept of European identity “as the result of constitutive formations structured around existing demographic, historical, and cultural modalities” (Crumly & Thomas, 2011, pp. 336-337); and the other side defining Europe focused on exclusion and non-belonging. In this process of determining who and what is European (or not), racialization plays an essential factor. (Crumly/Thomas, 2011, p. 336) Garrido et.al. argue, that this racialization is predominantly seen through the politics of white supremacy in Europe, which is upheld by individuals, but also on different structural levels – from institutions to nations to supra-national institutions like the EU:

European publics engender and naturalise normative whiteness while subjecting people of colour, irrespective of their social status or class, to a *politics of contingent*

belonging – a conditional belonging that is strategically granted *and* revoked, meted out by ‘white Europe’ when useful to its own interests (Garrido et al., 2020, p. 2)

These politics have existed for a long time, legitimizing European imperialism, colonialism and also the transatlantic slave trade. Since Europeanness and European culture is constructed along whiteness, being white is seen as the norm, subsequently othering everything else than whiteness, specifically Blackness. This puts all people who are BIPOC at risk for racial violence, since they are challenging the concept of Europe being white through their very existence. (Garrido et al., 2020, p. 3)

This shows, that discussing terms like ‘Afro-European’ also means talking about racialization in general. Through terminology like this, the relationship between Africa and Europe, between concepts of Blackness and whiteness, is always addressed. Furthermore, the need for the addition of ‘African’ to ‘European’ always refers to an apparent incompatibility, since it implicates that the term European excludes everything African.

This is also something that the author’s interviewed pointed out. Terminology such as Afro-European Literature, that was designed to create visibility, can according to the authors thus also have a limiting effect or can implicitly suggest that this kind of literature is somehow a gradation of ‘normal’ literature. These types of terminology can have a separating function, as Tarek Eltayeb points out. He doesn’t like the separation: "But overall, I don't like divisions that much. Because literature is literature. Somebody wrote about humanity in Africa. Where in Africa, in Somalia, in Sudan, in Morocco, it doesn't matter."⁸⁴ (Eltayeb, 2023)

Mihret Kebede also feels like terminology such as Afro-European, or Afro-Austrian strengthens pre-consumed understandings, that people might have: “Although it is critically important to acknowledge and respect who you are, the moment you say 'Afro-Austrian', people have an understanding of that knowledge accumulated from the mainstream media or other sources about what 'Afro' means or what 'Africa' means” (Kebede, 2023) Mujila is also of this opinion, having the feeling that this categorization reduces writers to only one aspect: "And many of these terms are very political, but they can also reduce writers, the writers remain pigeonholed."⁸⁵ (Mujila, 2023)

⁸⁴ “Aber im Großen und Ganzen mag ich Trennungen nicht so sehr. Weil Literatur ist Literatur. Einer hat geschrieben über die Menschheit in Afrika. Wo in Afrika, in Somalia, im Sudan, in Marokko, ist egal.” (Eltayeb, 2023)

⁸⁵ „Und viele von diesen Begriffen sind sehr politisch, aber sie können auch Schriftsteller reduzieren, die Schriftsteller bleiben in Schubladen.“ (Mujila, 2023)

Another issue, that some of the authors brought up concerning terminology that already came up discussing 'Migrationsliteratur' is, that this terminology is mostly attributed externally and not something the authors use to refer to themselves: "African literature in European languages started in the colonial period. And this literature does already have terms, for example Black Literature, so 'Littérature Nègre', so these terms have always been very political. And it has remained that way until today, everything that comes from Africa is almost exotic."⁸⁶ (Mujila, 2023) Mujila feels like there is a certain exotification within this terminology, that is – with some exceptions – mostly coined and used by academic scholars, not the author's themselves.

Mujila personally doesn't like the term Afro-European literature, since he thinks the experience of living in different nations is not comparable: "Being Black in Austria is not like being Black in France or in Belgium. I can say there is an Afro-Germany or Afro-Austria because it has to do with how you live the history of Black people in Austria".⁸⁷ (Mujila, 2023) For him, being Afro-European is connected to the experience of being Black and that experience varies depending on the country you live in. It is connected to the history of Black people in the specific country and how one experiences and lives this history personally. (Mujila, 2023) This however is something, that is well-known and thought about in academic discussions.

'Europe' and 'Africa' are very broad terms and the situation of African-diasporic people in different European countries vary greatly. However, scholars like Blakely argue, that there is an increased diasporic community building, so referring to Afro-Europe as a discursive category still does make sense and can be productive. (Crumly & Thomas, 2011, p. 338) Sabrina Brancato also sees great potential in the term 'Afro-European literature(s)', since it refers to the plurality and heterogeneity within this framework. She questions if we can refer to literature of the African diaspora as a unified corpus of texts. Afro-European people and

⁸⁶ "Afrikanische Literatur in europäischen Sprachen hat angefangen in der Kolonialzeit. Und diese Literatur hat schon Begriffe, zum Beispiel Schwarze Literatur, also 'Littérature Nègre', also diese Begriffe waren immer sehr politisch. Und das ist es auch bis heute geblieben, alles, was aus Afrika kommt, ist fast exotisch." (Mujila, 2023)

⁸⁷ "Schwarz zu sein in Österreich ist nicht so wie Schwarz zu sein in Frankreich oder in Belgien. Ich kann sagen, es gibt ein Afro-Deutschland oder Afro-Österreich, weil es zu tun hat damit, wie man die Geschichte von Schwarzen Leuten in Österreich lebt" (Mujila, 2023)

authors are not homogenous, as they connect to Europe and Africa and their histories differently - they have different roots. (Crumly & Thomas, 2011, p. 337)

Exploring Afro-European literature(s) comparatively therefore means tracing diachronic and synchronic connections that reveal new configurations across linguistic and national boundaries. The texts themselves are transnational and transcultural and foreground a comparatist perspective where Africa and Europe and Africa in Europe are continuously set against each other in an effort to problematize what the two continents mean to each other, how they interact and give place to new syncretic cultural formations (Brancato, 2009, p. 12)

Sabrina Brancato further argues in her well-received paper “Afro-European Literature(s): A New Discursive Category?”, that the emergence of Afro-European literature(s) does not necessarily mean the emergence of a new field, but a more systematic way of pointing out what has been neglected before. It highlights the influences both sides had on each other, the intertwined histories, their interactions, making texts of a African-European corpus transnational and transcultural by definition. (Crumly & Thomas, 2011, p. 340)

Terminology like that can thus also help making literature and it’s history visible, whilst automatically situating it in a transnational context. Crumly and Thomas also see potential in the use of the category: “Thus, as a distinct grouping, Afro-European writing can be useful in order to compare works produced in different national contexts while also allowing us to situate findings within a broader European framework.” (Crumly & Thomas, 2011, p. 340)

All of the author’s also agreed on advantages of using this terminology, since terminology can be a very powerful and necessary tool to ensure understanding. Mihret Kebede thinks, that while terms can be a restriction and can bring preconceived images to people’s minds, she understands, that people operate with systems to make sense of the world, since all people have to use them to a certain extent: “it’s important to frame some things because that’s how the world is fighting you, so you have to fight back with certain systems” (Kebede, 2023) But it’s still giving her uncomfortable feelings, as she has the impression that people are desperate “to give a name, to frame”. (Kebede, 2023)

Tarek Eltayeb has a similar opinion concerning the use of terminology: He thinks, it can be very useful, especially in academia, to define the subject one is working on. It is also useful in discussions or when doing surveys, as terminology like this allows one to name very precisely what one is talking about. This is something that all of the author’s interviewed

agreed about. What's striking however is, that besides this, there were no positive remarks about terminology at all.

Contingent belonging can however also be sought through self-positioning, as Ignatius Sancho suggested. Instead of trying to belong to a white hegemonic society, he rejects these racialized systems of classification towards self-agency and empowerment. This kind of "contingency from below" (Garrido et al., 2020, p. 3) has the power to resist and question common forms of identity and can make space for new conceptions of identity as diverse, ever changing and plural. These forms of self-agency also showcase the instability of essentialist European notions of belonging that were formed on racism and hierarchisation. (Garrido et al., 2020, p. 4)

These forms of self-agency and empowerment is also something that the authors interviewed are seeking, since they don't agree with the terminology often ascribed to them. They prefer to define themselves, as especially Hamid said. The author recalled a situation, where she was introduced as a "Sudanese author" in contrast to the other (Austrian) author present, who was properly introduced. "At that time, I said, "First of all, I'm not a lady. I am not in a literary salon. My name is Dr. Ishraga Mustafa Hamid. I'm a scientist, a writer, a Black Viennese." And then I start to introduce myself properly, the way I want."⁸⁸ (Hamid, 2023)

Mujila also points this out: Even though one person might identify with a certain term, another person might not, which is why he argues, that everyone should speak for themselves. As already mentioned, when talking about African literature, people should thus always explain why they use the terminology they're using.

3.1.2.2. Afropean Literature

However, one example of terminology that wasn't directly coined by academia is 'Afropean'. The term was initially used by the musicians David Byrne and Marie Daulne in 1991 and found its way to literature through the works of Léonora Miano, who used it in the title of a collection of short stories (2008). (Hitchcott & Thomas, 2014, p. 3) Popularized

⁸⁸ "Damals sagte ich, "Erstens, ich bin keine Dame. Ich bin nicht in einem Literatursalon. Mein Name ist Dr. Ishraga Mustafa Hamid. Ich bin Wissenschaftlerin, Schriftstellerin, Schwarze Wienerin." Und dann beginne ich mich richtig, wie ich will, vorzustellen." (Hamid, 2023)

by Johny Pitts literary work *Afropean. Notes of Black Europe* (2019) and his blog 'Afropean.com', the terminology quickly became popular. Pitts' work is a travel account of his voyage through Europe, a project that "connected and presented Afro-Europeans as lead actors in our own story" (Pitts, 2019, p. 2) The term 'Afropean' initially filled the author with an almost euphoric feeling "as whole and unhyphenated". (Pitts, 2019, p. 1) For him, the terminology was "as space where blackness was taking part in shaping European identity at large", there was no longer a separation between the two constructs, but the idea of being both at once. (Pitts, 2019, p. 1) However, through his travels, Pitts reflected upon this understanding of the category and came to realize that he had initially only seen the positives, wanting to showcase Black success stories, not problems. He saw it as an "utopian alternative" (Pitts, 2019, p. 2) until he realized, that being Black means different things in Europe. Especially considering migration, the situation of Black people varies greatly in different European countries and it is not only unrealistic, but also not helpful to only depict stories of people who 'made it'. Terminology like this has seen great popularization in academia, since they provide new ways to conceptualize literature of the African diaspora: "Recourse to new critical categories, such as Afro-Europeanism or Afropeanism, can therefore assist us [...] in circumscribing the cultural, political, and social changes shaping literary production." (Thomas, 2014, p. 7)

3.1.2.3. Afropolitanism

Whereas Mihret Kebede doesn't like the concept Afropean or Afro-European, she personally sees the term "Afropolitanism" positively, describing it as a concept „that seems to be a more open direction to look at things, that you can be an 'Afropolitan', who live in multiple places, still express your own identity and embracing others.“ (Kebede, 2023) Afropolitan is a neologism formed from the two words 'African' and 'Cosmopolitan'. Coined by writer Taiye Selasi and later, Achille Mbembe, the term is characterized by its inscribed mobility, which can signify both intra-African mobility, as well as mobility in and with places on other continents. (Eze, 2016, p. 114)

However, Afropolitanism is also heavily criticized in academic literature, since crossing borders is not something that everyone can do, it is a privilege. Furthermore, "there is a danger of foregrounding experiences of 'successful' cosmopolitan migrants who criss-cross borders effortlessly". (Garrido et al., 2020, p. 11) The concept is thus nevertheless important, showcasing a side that terms like 'Migrationsliteratur' diminish.

3.1.3. The Selected Authors in the Academic Discourse

First, it must be noted that all four authors have received higher education and are or were themselves active members of the academic field. Mihret Kebede is currently doing her PhD at the Akademie in Vienna, Ishraga Hamid studied political and communication science, has a doctoral degree from the University of Vienna where she also taught for some time, as well as conducting studies. Fiston Mwanza Mujila taught literatures at the University of Graz and Tarek Eltayeb also holds a lectureship in Krems, Graz and Vienna, as well as a doctoral degree in social sciences and economics. They are and were thus active members of the greater academic discourse, producing knowledge. In return, scholar papers are also published on their literary works, making their literature an object of research, especially in literary and linguistic studies.

Considering English, German and French academic texts, the largest academic discourse can be found on Fiston Mwanza Mujila, whose literary works (especially his debut novel *Tram 83*) is the subject of numerous papers, published mostly in English and French. The subjects of the scholarly discussion are varying, with many papers focusing on musicality (e.g. Ravi, 2015), spatiality and movement (e.g. Fyfe, 2022 / Tidmarsh, 2019) found in his literary work, as well as the question of genre (e.g. Poier-Bernhard, 2019). However, there have also been critical receptions about the images of women as sex objects in the novel *Tram 83*, most notably from literary critic Ikhede Ikheloa, who strongly criticized the portrayals of women and saw the book as ‘poverty porn’ that, in addition to being full of sexism, only reproduced stereotypes about Africa. She particularly mentions stereotypical images of a nightclub, where only sex workers and criminals of different sorts meet and argues that the bar in *Tram 83* can be read as such a place. (Ikheloa, 2017) At the same time, there are also counter-positions: some scholars, such as Gehrmann or the author Zukiswa Wanner, who was on the committee of the Etisalat Prize, see the quality of the work precisely in the striking portrayal of capitalist, sexist structures, which makes the novel a “social critique”, rather than a misogynist novel according to Gehrmann. (Gehrmann, 2022, p. 169)

Tarek Eltayeb's work haven't been discussed as much in the academic discourse. Two older master's theses (Pfeisinger, 2012 / Bauer, 2018) and interview publications (Malina, 1997 / Etwebi, 2010) are available on Tarek Eltayeb. Bauer's thesis studies Adichie's *Americanah*

and Etayeb's *Das Palmenhaus* in comparison, focusing on the depictions of transcultural identities and experiences of migration, whilst Pfeisinger locates the novels *Das Palmenhaus* und *Städte ohne Dattelpalmen* in the context of sudanese-arabic and egyptian-arabic literature, analyzing images of the Sudan in the literary works.

However, the lack of research about austrian African-diasporic authors is especially evident among the female authors: While an interview has been published on Hamid (Christiansen & Englert, 2010) and a paper on Kebede (Blamberger, 2023), there is no real literary scholarly discussion of the authors' work. It is also apparent, that Hamid is in media and interviews more frequently seen in an activist context, than in a literary context, whilst Kebede is more often seen for her work as a visual artist.

3.2. Literary Platforms

“As an artist, you have to find a way, once you graduate you have to have a studio, and if you don't have a studio, there is nothing that supports you.” (Kebede, 2023) Even though Kebede is talking about fine art here, she raises an essential point: there is a need for structures, spaces, and platforms that artists can use to position themselves within the literary discourse and to be able to work at all. The importance of platforms for literary writing was emphasized by many of the authors, which I will show in more detail in the following.

For Tarek Eltayeb, literary platforms are a space that give him as an author the opportunity to write, network, and participate in events such as readings and discussions. In our interview, he specifically mentioned the Amerlinghaus in Vienna as an example of such a platform, which will be further discussed below. Hamid also mentioned these aspects, especially emphasizing above all the need for networking and exchange, giving the example of her own online platform, “Arts of Bahnat Mendy”. A literary platform can thus be an organization or association in a physical space, but also virtually, that helps to promote literature and supports writers.

While Eltayeb emphasized the benefits of these platforms from the position of an author, during our interview the other three writers positioned themselves primarily in a mediating role and thus also spoke from this position. Ishraga Hamid, Fiston Mwanza Mujila and Mihret Kebede also see great importance in literary platforms, which is why they initiated or are taking part in literary platforms themselves.

This is also something Kebede mentioned: she sees herself as someone who can be a bridge, who can connect people. The poet thinks that connection is possible through institutions, namely festivals or cultural platforms, which is why she plans on initiating something in Austria in the future, after already creating various art and literary platforms in Ethiopia: “Just to make it broader in a way, maybe I will have a cultural center there [Vienna; author’s note.], maybe I can create some kind of bridge.” (Kebede, 2023) For Kebede, literary platforms should also have a positive effect: “I always want those platforms to bring about some positive change. I’m not a peace preacher, but this is the very basic thing that we usually fail to understand.” (Kebede, 2023) Literary platforms can thus not only be a space for authors, but also for readers and other actors of the literary field.

In the following chapters, I will present a selection of platforms in Austria that are especially aimed at literature from the African diaspora.

3.2.1. Forum Stadtpark

“Forum Stadtpark was one of those institutions I loved to visit to understand the city, or at least the meaning of the city.”⁸⁹ (fistonmwanzamujila.com, n.d.), writes Fiston Mwanza Mujila in a statement on his website after being announced as the new literary commissioner for this cultural association. Initiated in 1959, the Forum Stadtpark arose from the idea to use the then vacant building of the Café Stadtpark in Graz for cultural events. One year later, the Forum Stadtpark association was formed.

Today, the Forum is a non-profit association by and for artists and scientists, whose premises in Graz are also made available to external artists. The association is structured in three levels: the board of directors, the various Program Forum commissioners, which include Mujila in the literature section, as well as regular staff and a small music team. In the literature section, the forum organizes various events such as readings, book presentations, discussions, and festivals. These include, for example, the literary festival Weltwortreisende, a transnational literary festival initiated by Mujila in 2021 to promote local and international literature, especially that of the Black diaspora. (forumstadtpark.at, n.d.) The festival understands itself as a crossroads for literature of different languages and cultures, aiming

⁸⁹ “Das Forum Stadtpark war eine jener Institutionen, die ich gerne besuchte, um die Stadt oder zumindest den Sinn der Stadt zu verstehen.” (fistonmwanzamujila.com)

to promote literary diversity and to create encounters between people of different backgrounds.

3.2.2. PEN-Platform “literatur*grenzenlos”

Ishraga Mustafa Hamid has initiated many literary initiatives and platforms, but one of the most well-known is the platform Literatur*grenzenlos, which she founded while working in the Austrian part of the PEN club. She then was the literary representative for Arabic literature within PEN and had the idea to create a platform after realizing in 2015 that many refugees came to Vienna who were writers in their country of origin, especially many young women. This was the reason she started the platform: to support these literatures following a different, more activist approach: “My concept was not just to do readings, but to do more activism, more discussions.”⁹⁰ (Hamid, 2023) Literatur*grenzenlos is described on the club’s website as a space for writers with and without migrant experience, wanting to “uncover literature in the times of migration”. (penclub.at)

The club offered Hamid and her project a space, not only for her initiatives as a literary mediator, but also for her own literary works: “In PEN I found a space, a protected space, worked there, as the first African woman. And that with Arabic literature, globally and locally; and my books also had access to being published. In that position, three books were published, and those three books I co-edited.”⁹¹ (Hamid, 2023) The platform thus was of dual importance: it provided a safe space and facilitated the process of publication. As a PEN member, Hamid had had the opportunity to publish her own works within the series “edition pen” by the Viennese publisher Löcker and also co-published anthologies such as *Wir, bewegende Steine* (2018) or *Türen. Anthologie der Plattform literatur*grenzenlos* (2019). A literary platform can therefore also facilitate access to publication. Hamid is now no longer an active PEN member, but the platform remains.

⁹⁰ “Mein Konzept war, nicht nur Lesungen zu halten, sondern mehr Aktivismus, mehr Diskussionen zu machen.” (Hamid, 2023)

⁹¹ “Im PEN habe ich einen Raum gefunden, einen geschützten Raum, dort gearbeitet, als erste Afrikanerin. Und das mit arabischer Literatur, global und lokal; und meine Bücher hatten auch einen Zugang, veröffentlicht zu werden. In dieser Funktion wurden drei Bücher veröffentlicht, und diese drei Bücher habe ich mitherausgegeben.” (Hamid, 2023)

3.2.3. VAW - Vienna Austrian Writers

The VAW – Vienna Austrian Writers – is a platform founded by Prof. Dr. Adams Bodomo from the Department of African Studies at the University of Vienna that aims to support African writing. Defined as “any form of writing or related form of literary arts that addresses and expresses African themes and conditions” (AfriEurotext, VAW, n.d.), the platform wants to connect writers who live in Vienna or Austria. The organization holds regular meetings, a monthly poetry slam and publishes a quarterly newsletter, the Daworo. However, during the COVID 19-pandemic, all meetings of the organization came to a hold, with the first public gathering being three years after the start of the pandemic. In May 2023, the first poetry slam after the long break was held at the Institute for African studies. Being a platform rooted in academia, it mostly attracted students and staff members from the Department of African Studies, but also some members of the public. However, the open organizational structure as well as it being free of charge allows everyone to participate in meetings and poetry slams in an uncomplicated way and to talk with other writers about their own texts. The writer Ada Diagne, who won the Young Storyteller Award from the online writing platform Story.One in 2021, was also present, reading from her debut collection of short stories “Menschen”. (own notes, 24.5.2023) After this long break, however, it remains to be seen whether and to what extent the organization will establish itself as a literary platform.

3.2.4. Amerlinghaus

The cultural center “Spittelberg in the Amerlinghaus”, often referred simply to Amerlinghaus, is located in the seventh district in Vienna. Founded in 1975 with support of the city of Vienna, the organization is now a self-governed cultural and communication center.

The location sees itself as a necessary, non-commercialized space and makes its premises available for individuals and groups in need. As a result, various different projects take place in the house and the organization itself is involved in the areas of culture, politics and social issues with events, workshops and mediation work. (amerlinghaus.at, n.d.)

The Amerlinghaus in Vienna was and is an important place for Tarek Eltayeb. He often made use of the space to create his literary works and wrote many texts there, such as a majority

of his novel *Das Palmenhaus*. Furthermore, he frequently used the location for his translation work together with his wife: “In the house I translated a lot with my wife.”⁹² (Eltayeb, 2023) The Amerlinghaus doesn’t only provide a space to write, but also tries to actively promote literature and authors. This is something that Eltayeb greatly appreciates, being himself regularly invited to book presentations and readings. He also likes to be there as a guest to listen to readings by others. His first exhibition of paintings was also presented at the Amerlinghaus.

It is thus simultaneously a stage and a networking platform through which contacts and new opportunities arise, as well as a quiet, safe, and accessible place to write.

For Tarek Eltayeb, literary platforms also play a role in the sense that they were ultimately decisive for his works to be published in German. After a reading at the former Afro-Asian Institute in Vienna, he was approached by people in the audience and asked about publishing a book. The former Afro-Asian Institute was a Catholic foundation for developmental politics and education, aiming to create encounters between people of different cultural and religious backgrounds. Located in the ninth district, the institute had event rooms, a dormitory and cafeteria – thereby also functioning as a kind of platform for the promotion of literature.

Literary platforms were thus an important step in establishing Eltayeb as an author within the public discourse, showing him that people in Austria are interested in his literature, as well as providing the author with a space to write.

3.2.5. Writing Workshops – „Wir schreiben unsere Geschichte_n selbst“

However, as already mentioned, literary platforms don’t have to be a physical space; they can also be a network, as shown by Ishraga Hamid. The activist and author regularly holds writing workshops, such as the workshop “Wir schreiben unsere Geschichte_n selbst”, conducted in 2020 in collaboration with ISOP (Innovative Sozialprojekte) in Graz. The workshop was aimed at immigrants and refugees and was free of charge, in order to be accessible for everyone. (isop.at, n.d.)

Hamid wants to motivate migrant women in particular to write their own story, since everyone is different and has experienced different things in their lives. In her opinion, it helps people to cope with what they’ve experienced. Writing is thus a technique for migrants

⁹² “Im Haus habe ich viel übersetzt mit meiner Frau.” (Eltayeb, 2023)

to both claim space for themselves, to step out of the external ascriptions with which they are often confronted, and to write their own history and identity as they perceived them to be. However, being able to write one's own story is not the only thing the workshops accomplish for Hamid: they are also a driver of culture and literature, as art is created within these structures: "And this has to do with creating culture, I've come to a point now, of not helping the other migrant women, because I don't like the word 'help.' I often use 'solidarity,' 'support,' but that's mutual."⁹³ (Hamid, 2023) The platform is thus a structure that provides the space for this mutual support and facilitates writing.

She also frequently assists the participants of her workshops with publishing their stories by raising money together with the participants, which can be used for the publication of a later work. In addition to the workshops in Austria, Hamid also did workshops with young men and women in Sudan, which resulted in the book *Writings for social change*⁹⁴. Whereas many NGOs and initiatives start their projects in the capital city, the centers of Sudan, she took her project to the periphery to reach young people who are often overlooked: "And that's why I started in marginalized areas, for example. And that's also a political message. I now want these young people to have their say as well."⁹⁵ (Hamid, 2023)

3.3. Literary Festivals

In addition to literary platforms in Austria, the authors also frequently mentioned literary festivals as important literary institutions. In contrast to platforms, such events are limited to a certain period of time and often bring together people from different contexts and places. The interactions and connections made can be very beneficial, as many of the authors point out. Kebede especially appreciates the exchange with other people: "So, those kinds of literary events to me are the best platforms to bring that kind of connection. More than those political or academic discourses, because it's just heart-to-heart, it's a direct connection." (Kebede, 2023) According to the author, issues can be discussed much better in settings like these, since people from different backgrounds can all participate in the discourse equally.

⁹³ "Und das hat mit Kultur schaffen zu tun, ich bin jetzt zu einem Punkt gekommen, nicht den anderen Migrantinnen zu helfen, weil das Wort „Hilfe“ mag ich nicht. Ich verwende oft 'Solidarität', 'Unterstützung', aber das ist gegenseitig." (Hamid, 2023)

⁹⁴ The title of the book (Arabic) was translated by the author herself during our interview.

⁹⁵ "Und daher habe ich zum Beispiel in marginalisierten Gebieten begonnen. Und das ist auch eine politische Botschaft. Ich will jetzt, dass diese Jugendlichen auch zu Wort kommen." (Hamid, 2023)

Mujila sees particular advantage in getting to know various writers. In his festival “Unerhörte Poesie,” which he curates every year in a different city, his goal is to connect the authors, people who have never met before and most likely wouldn’t meet without the event. Festivals are also essential in the sense that they give authors a safe place to share and exist. Hamid also recognizes this as particularly important and therefore plans to host a conference for women on self-empowerment via literature in Vienna in October 2023. While the event should have a diverse program, it is important to her that the women are also given plenty of space to be with each other and decide for themselves how to spend their time – they should have “their own space.”⁹⁶ (Hamid, 2023)

In addition to Mujila and Hamid, Kebede has also previously organized a festival for culture and arts in Vienna that aimed to facilitate exchange between the Ethiopian and Austrian literary scene. In the project ‘Culture X Change: Ethio Austria’, Ethiopian artists came to Austria and met with artists poets and researchers from the academy in Vienna. The project connected them through coffee by meeting in a Viennese café, since the beverage is an important part of both cultures, albeit in different ways. In return, four Austrian artists traveled to Ethiopia to join the Addis video art festival. (Kebede, 2023)

Eltayeb and Hamid address another significant function of these events: they enable exchanges with publishers and translators, thus facilitating publication. In our conversation, Eltayeb recalls several encounters with translators at literary festivals that eventually led to publication. This also happened with his latest translated publication: “For example, the last translation I had was from a man from Belgium, a writer. We met in Iraq at a festival. And I gave him this book here, this portrait [Podium Portrait 97; author’s note].”⁹⁷ (Eltayeb, 2023) The translation only came about through the encounter at the festival. Hamid also remembers such instances, recounting meeting a publisher at a literary festival: “I was very happy when a publisher came to me in 2021, a German publisher. I met him in a literary conference and

⁹⁶ “ihren eigenen Space“ (Hamid, 2023)

⁹⁷ “Zum Beispiel die letzte Übersetzung, die ich gehabt habe, von einem Mann aus Belgien, einem Schriftsteller. Wir haben uns im Irak bei einem Festival getroffen. Und ich habe ihm dieses Buch hier gegeben, dieses Portrait. (Podium Portrait 97).“ (Eltayeb, 2023)

he told me he was interested in publishing the book, *Die Donau kennt mich*.”⁹⁸ (Hamid, 2023) The conference thus enabled her to publish the German translation of her memoir.

While exchange and networking can in general happen at any literary festival, there are a few festivals in Austria that specifically target and promote literature of the African diaspora. Besides the festival *Weltwortreisende*, organized by Mujila through the institution Forum Stadtpark, there is above all the CHIALA – days of African literatures festival in Graz. Since 2021, Klagenfurt has also been the location of the annual “African Diaspora Festival”, which aims to represent different artists of the diaspora in Austria, as well as give them a space to perform. (Africandiasporafestival.com, n.d.) There are also several other literary festivals, such as the poetry festival “Schamrock”, that focus in some editions on these literatures. Of course, regular Austrian literature festivals also offer a platform for authors from the African diaspora, but they mostly do not center them.

In the following, the literary festival CHIALA, which focuses on African and Afro-diasporic literature, is presented as a representative example.

3.3.1. CHIALA – Tage der Afrikanischen Literaturen in Graz

CHIALA is an association that was founded in Graz in 2012 as a successor of the cultural center *Chiala'Afriqas*. CHIALA – the word for main square in the language Baham, spoken in West Cameroon, understands itself as a “place of encounter and exchange of people with and without migration experience”⁹⁹. (chiala.at) The association is active in different focus areas, one of which is culture. Since 2021, the association has organized the festival “Tage der Afrikanischen Literaturen” (“Days of African Literatures”) as an annual format, which highlights literature by African and Afro-diasporic writers through readings, workshops and discussions.

The event is curated by a different literary actor each year – including Fiston Mwanza Mujila in 2022, and the current writer-in-residence for Graz, Abdelaziz Baraka Sakin, in 2023. CHIALA aims to bring together people from different areas: the Graz audience meets writers and poets both from the African and European continents. People from academia were present in the 2023 edition well, since the event was moderated by Ass. Prof. Dr. Rémi

⁹⁸ “Uch habe mich sehr gefreut, als 2021 ein Verleger zu mir gekommen ist, ein deutscher Verleger. Ich habe ihn in einer Literaturkonferenz getroffen und er hat mir gesagt, ihn interessiert das Buch, ‘Die Donau kennt mich’, zu veröffentlichen.” (Hamid, 2023)

⁹⁹ “Ort der Begegnung und des Austauschs von Menschen mit und ohne Migrationserfahrung” (English translation by the author)

Tchokothe. As part of his university course “Mapping ‘African-Diasporic’ Literary Voices in the Austrian Cultural Scene” in the summer semester 2023, I also participated in the festival with my fellow students as part of the course. Free of charge, the Days of African Literatures are accessible to all people interested and enables exchange across different groups.

The festival further manages to do justice to the diversity of literature from an entire continent, as well as the diaspora. In the selection of authors, attention was paid to gender balance and to consider writers of different genres. Held multilingually in English with simultaneous English-German interpretation by Julia Kölbl, the authors also read and performed in their chosen languages of writing and/or performing. To ensure understanding, recitals of the German translation of the texts were provided by Ninja Reichert.

By offering readings and performances, as well as discussions, a workshop and a book table with the authors’ works on sale, the festival manages to cover many of the points mentioned by the authors in the interviews: promotion of the literature, socializing and exchange with other authors, as well as different actors of the literary and academic field, and – as Kebede, who was also present at the 2023 edition of the festival, mentioned – forming real connections. (Kebede, 2023)

3.4. The Publishing Market

The publishing industry is probably the most essential institution in the literary business. Although oral literatures also have a certain visibility in Austrian literary discourse through poetry slams and spoken word events, written and published literature is clearly dominant. Institutions such as libraries, bookstores, literary events and media coverage are strongly linked to the availability of a printed and published book. The publication of literature is thus essential for authors, which is why the following chapter is devoted to this entity. The authors talked to me about their search for a publisher, the importance of publication and about the difficulties and opportunities that come along with it.

3.4.1. The Importance of Publication

The authors attach different importance to the publication; however, it can be said that all of them feel that publication generally brings about visibility. All of the authors started with publishing in literary magazines, as well as anthologies, which can lead to the promotion of the literature and facilitate the search for a publisher, as Mujila stated. This is also why he

edited the anthology “*Kontinentaldrift. Das Schwarze Europa*” featuring texts in German translations by Black writers living in Europe. At the time of publishing, “Most of my poets had not yet been translated into German. But now three or four of these poets have been translated into German.”¹⁰⁰ (Mujila, 2023) In his opinion, anthologies like this can help to promote writers: “I just wanted to put the spotlight on a picture or faces of this poetry.”¹⁰¹ (Mujila, 2023), said the author. He felt like Black European authors were seldomly named as Europeans, and it was in his interest, to change this and to “build a cartography.”¹⁰² (Mujila, 2023) The author further curated a special issue of the Austrian literary periodical *Lichtungen*, dedicated to authors of the African diaspora in Austria, which was the first extensive collective publication or “cartography” of this literature. Some of the authors included in the magazine were rarely published in German at the time, and the periodical thus greatly contributes to their visibility.

Kebede and Hamid also see great importance in anthologies and literary periodicals, with Kebede having co-edited the anthology *Wax and Gold* and Hamid consistently working as an editor for literary anthologies of her writing workshops and other literary projects.

Tarek Eltayeb also puts great emphasis on publication. He even stated that he does not write primarily for his readers, but for his publisher and to have his book published. He is happy about everything that happens to the book after the publication and when it is read and successful, but this is not his focus. “I write that a publisher will publish my book and what happens after that doesn't interest me so much”¹⁰³ (Eltayeb, 2023) The way he describes it, there is a certain separation for him between the book that is being written and the finished book, to which he holds distance. Once it is published, the author accepts that he will no longer have any control over the book; one could say that he hands it over to the readers’ control.

Mihret Kebede does not put so much importance on the publication of her works. Although she was repeatedly asked by friends and teachers if she would publish her poetry, this was

¹⁰⁰ “Fast die meisten von meinen Dichtern waren noch nicht auf Deutsch übersetzt. Aber jetzt sind drei oder vier von diesen Dichtern auf Deutsch übersetzt worden.” (Mujila, 2023)

¹⁰¹ “Ich wollte einfach ein Bild oder Gesicht dieser Lyrik ins Rampenlicht stellen.” (Mujila, 2023)

¹⁰² “eine Kartografie zu bauen” (Mujila, 2023)

¹⁰³ “Ich schreibe, dass ein Verleger mein Buch herausbringt und was danach passiert, interessiert mich nicht so sehr.” (Eltayeb, 2023)

not her focus or desire for a while: “But for a long time, I was not interested in publishing a book or something, I was very busy with writing, performing, and organizing other art festivals. So I was not giving that much attention to the publication.” (Kebede, 2023) She then went on to relate the idea of publishing to the aspect of performance, stating “to me, most of my performances are like publishing in people’s minds.” What interests her most is not the kind of art she is doing – whether she is doing a performance or poetry or something else – but the connection she can create: “I am always interested in connecting people through my art, in different worlds, and diverse cultures.” (Kebede, 2023)

3.4.2. Publishing Houses - The Road to Getting Published

Since Kebede did not see publication as the goal of her literary work, she did not search for a publisher for a long time. She however was repeatedly contacted by anthologies and magazines: “Most of the publications happened to me by invitation, so I was not like, looking for something.” (Kebede, 2023) The only exception to this was the anthology *Stille Macht*, edited by Emily Ngubia Kessé. Since Kebede is working on the topic of silence, she was interested in the publication and sent an abstract in order to be included in the collection. She also states that after moving to Vienna, more opportunities for publications in translation came about, mostly in German and in English. (Kebede, 2023) The author however now has changed her mind and is currently working on her first book, containing the #evolutionarypoems she wrote for her thesis.

Literary and cultural institutions are of great importance to her: “So yes, I think they [institutions, author’s note] are very, very important. As we said, the more resources and money you have, the more publications you have, that’s a given (laughs).” (Kebede, 2023) It is very interesting how the artist linked resources and money directly to publication, whilst also stating that institutions are very important. This suggests, to use Bourdieu’s concepts, that publication can be accessed through economic capital, but also through other resources, like different forms of cultural capital or social capital. This shows the interconnectedness of institutional entities within the literary field – the more capital one has, the more options to publish one has, leading to more opportunities. This is also important considering publication is one of the most important aspects for gaining visibility, thus symbolic capital, but in order to get to publication, different possessions of capital (e.g. social capital) are already required.

Ishraga Mustafa Hamid also remembers being encouraged by a friend to publish her poems. Eventually she did, and her first collection of poetry *Trotzdem singe ich* was published in the German translation by the publisher Milena in 2003 – just a few months before her book appeared in the original Arabic in Cairo. This resulted in the rather rare phenomenon of the translation preceding the original. Hamid explained that with the Austrian publisher she did not have to pay for the publication and had a small income from the book, whereas this was not the case with the publication in Arabic, where she had to pay the publisher. This is why the process of was faster for the translation. (Hamid, 2023)

The access to the publishing house Milena was made possible for her by the feminist magazine and platform *Frauensolidarität*, for which she repeatedly wrote articles at the time. Before her first book, she got published in several anthologies of the publisher, such as *Eure Sprache ist nicht meine Sprache*, which helped her in making connections to Milena. Although the publishing house does not usually publish volumes of poetry, Hamid's work was accepted, and the first publication took place. (Hamid, 2023)

Mujila spoke on the difficulties of finding a publisher. He was looking for a publisher in Europe, and he has the impression that there is a certain expectation regarding African writers and literature: "There is already an expectation from some European publishers. They have an expectation of what an African writer should be, what an African book should be."¹⁰⁴ (Mujila, 2023) This has not made it easy for him, a young writer from Congo, to find a publisher. The process of finding a publisher for his poetry was quick, but for him the process took very long for his prose work, which is why he was helped in this process by an agency. (Mujila, 2023) The author's works in German translations are now published by the well-known Austrian publisher Zolnay, his poetry in translation at Ritter and his theater plays at Fischer Theatermedien. The author is thus published by major and established publishers.

Tarek Eltayeb had a similar impression; it was difficult for him as a new and unpublished writer to find publishers and it took him some time. "In the beginning, when you are new, it is so difficult to get to a publisher."¹⁰⁵ (Eltayeb, 2023) However, he has the impression that

¹⁰⁴ "Es gibt schon eine Erwartung von manchen Europäischen Verlegern und Verlegerinnen. Sie haben eine Erwartung davon, was ein afrikanischer Schriftsteller sein soll, was ein afrikanisches Buch sein soll." (Mujila, 2023)

¹⁰⁵ "Am Anfang, wenn man neu ist, ist es so schwer zu einem Verlag zu kommen." (Eltayeb, 2023)

once you have published some works and are well-known, publishers start waiting for the next one and speed up the process of publication: “When you are well-known, the publisher is like, ‘Give me your book’ and produces it so quickly.”¹⁰⁶ (Eltayeb, 2023) It is, however, important to him not to rush this process, and he still takes time for revisions.

3.4.3. Difficulties with Publishing

Apart from the difficulties in finding a publisher, the authors also encountered other problems with this institution. Tarek Eltayeb had some experiences with censorship when publishing some of his works in Arabic. He told me that his book *Die Reise 797 nach Wien*, which is not translated into German, was banned for some time. The book centers around the story of a married woman falling in love and desiring someone who isn’t her husband. However, he doesn’t let these attempts at censorship affect him, since his freedom of writing is the most important to him: “That [ban, author’s note] really doesn’t interest me, I write what I want”¹⁰⁷. (Eltayeb, 2023)

Ishraga Hamid also had a relatable experience with the topics she is often writing about. Because she is also writing in Arabic about taboo subjects like female desire, sexuality and love, as well as female genital mutilation, her texts were often not accepted and criticized. She also published a lot of texts online on Sudanese websites and feels that “some of my poems were not well received”¹⁰⁸ because of the topics. (Hamid, 2023) She also recalls, that she was recently supposed to be interviewed at an international literary event, but she was informed before the interview, that she was not allowed to talk about feminism and politics. For her, however, literature is characterized by freedom, which is why she replied to the request: “Then you really have lost your way. That’s not me. I can’t talk about literature without bringing in my perspectives as a feminist, as a political woman, political activist. I can’t.”¹⁰⁹ (Hamid, 2023) Literature and her perspective as a woman, as an activist are interconnected and she won’t accept censorship, be it in an interview or be it in her writing.

¹⁰⁶ “Wenn man bekannt ist, sagt der Verlag so: ‘Gib mir dein Buch’ und produziert das so schnell.” (Eltayeb, 2023)

¹⁰⁷ “Das [Verbot, author’s note] interessiert mich wirklich nicht, ich schreibe was ich will.” (Eltayeb, 2023)

¹⁰⁸ “dass meine Gedichte zum Teil nicht gut angekommen sind.” (Hamid, 2023)

¹⁰⁹ “Dann haben Sie wirklich den Weg verloren. Das bin ich nicht. Ich kann nicht über Literatur reden, ohne meine Perspektiven als Feministin, als politische Frau, politische Aktivistin einzubringen. Das kann ich nicht.” (Hamid, 2023)

However, the author also encountered difficulties in the Austrian publishing scene. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, Hamid's method of translation and the subsequent revision by the publishers repeatedly resulted in a divergence in the images, formulations and metaphors to be used. She repeatedly encountered difficulties with the rephrasing that was brought to her by the publisher or by editors. While she wants to have a text edited linguistically, she is against changes in metaphors or phrasings in the peritext that are contrary to her activist work. She told me about a discussion with a publisher who wanted to use the word "illegal migration" in her book, which made her very angry:

Why does he rewrite what the European Union, the migration policy simply tells us?
Just repeating this without thinking about it. From what perspective is this illegal?
It's illegal from their perspective, but not from our perspectives. I remember, that day, I was really, really angry.¹¹⁰ (Hamid, 2023)

However, after talking to him, he understood her concerns and she wrote the text for the book herself. Hamid states that she always tries to communicate when difficulties arise and that most issues can be resolved through communication.

Even though the other authors didn't talk about any difficulties concerning translation with the publishers, this doesn't automatically mean that there are none. The situation of the other authors is different in the sense that they do not work directly with their publishers for translations: Mujila is not involved in the translation process, Eltayeb discusses issues of translation with his wife and Kebede also translates her works in a collaborative process with her translator.

3.5. Literary Prizes and Scholarships

All of the authors except for Mihret Kebede have been awarded literary prizes or grants in Austria. The following subchapter is intended to provide information about what prizes and grants mean for the literary work of the writers, as well as about common policies of funding in Austria. Finally, a few programs and awards that have stood out in promoting Afro-diasporic literature will be presented as examples.

¹¹⁰ "Warum schreibt er nach, was die Europäische Union, die Migrationspolitik uns einfach sagt? Einfach das zu wiederholen, ohne sich Gedanken zu machen. Aus welchen Perspektiven ist das illegal? Es ist illegal aus ihrer Perspektive, aber nicht aus unserer Perspektiven. Ich erinnere mich, in diesem Tag war ich wirklich sehr, sehr wütend." (Hamid, 2023)

All of the authors spoke about the joy they feel when being awarded a prize, albeit they gave different reasons for this. To Hamid, funding and literary prizes are a form of acknowledgement – she feels happy about receiving funding, even if it isn't much. On the other hand, they are an essential part of her work as an activist and writer. For example, Hamid is currently working on a project with women writing about forgotten women in history and the participating writers from Sudan were granted scholarships by the German association "Afrikanische Perspektive". (Hamid, 2023) Without this scholarship, her work wouldn't be possible.

Hamid also told me that some literary prizes can significantly increase the visibility of an author. She felt this after the English translation of her autobiography *Woman of the rivers* by Sawad Hussein won the PEN translate prize: "All of a sudden I'm a good writer. All of a sudden I get so many requests, 'When is the next book coming?,' 'We want to publish this,' 'We want to invite you.'"¹¹¹ (Hamid, 2023) The prize thus gave her international visibility, although it was not even her prize, since it was awarded to the translator and the publisher, not the author. Hamid did not receive any money, but she feels that her books were promoted as a result. In addition to visibility, the award proved, as Hamid put it, her validity as a good writer. Prizes can thus not only increase an author's visibility, but also prove their status as a "good" artist. Eltayeb and Mujila agree with this – Mujila stated that a "prize brings the book into the spotlight, it is read and translated more, it is more visible. Yes, I can say from my perspective that a literary prize helps to be more visible, but as a writer you don't work in a bank either. So the book can also just help financially, you have some financial resources to write for a few months without stress."¹¹² (Mujila, 2023) Prizes can therefore be particularly important for the financial aspect of a literary career.

However, the authors attach different importance to this financial aspect. For Eltayeb, for example, it is important not to be financially dependent on prizes and grants to preserve his literary freedom. He is of the opinion that one should not want to receive a prize only for money. He also rejects it when literary prizes demand that the submitted texts be subject to certain themes or agency:

¹¹¹ "Dann bin ich auf einmal eine gute Schriftstellerin. Auf einmal kriege ich so viele Anfragen: 'Wann kommt das nächste Buch?', 'Wir wollen das veröffentlichen.' 'Wir wollen dich einladen.'" (Hamid, 2023)

¹¹² "Preis bringt das Buch ins Rampenlicht, es wird mehr gelesen und übersetzt, es ist sichtbarer. Ja, ich kann sagen von meiner Perspektive, dass ein Literaturpreis hilft, um sichtbarer zu sein, aber als Schriftsteller arbeitet man auch nicht in einer Bank. Also das Buch kann auch einfach finanziell helfen, du hast ein paar finanzielle Ressourcen, um ein paar Monate zu schreiben ohne Stress." (Mujila, 2023)

I'm not against prizes, I like them, I got some too, but if certain conditions for writing a novel – “But please not something with religion, please not about sexuality, please not about politics.” – and then you already become like that, you have censorship in your head when sitting, when working itself.¹¹³ (Eltayeb, 2023)

The author thus finds overly restrictive guidelines limiting and not beneficial to his literary work.

Since the authors mainly do not write in German, we also talked about the importance of language for funding. Mujila, however, is critical of the situation surrounding literary prizes in Austria, since a large part of the prizes are directed only at original German-language literature. “Those who speak German well would have a prize, or those who write well in German. If I write very well, but not in German, I can't get that prize.”¹¹⁴ (Mujila, 2023) He would like to see a change at that level. Two of the most influential book prizes in Austria continue to be awarded only to original German-language works: The Bachmann Prize requires prose texts written in German that have not yet been published; translated texts are not eligible. Likewise, the Austrian Book Prize, only allows literary works originally written in German to be submitted. (Bachmannpreis 2023 / Österreichischer Buchpreis, n.d.)

However, the scholar Wiebke Sievers believes that Mujila and his literary success have already brought about changes in the Austrian literary scene: “His literary works have moved Austrian institutions to open their policies on awarding funding and prizes to include an author who resides in Austria but writes in French.” (Sievers, 2018, p. 53) Mujila was the first African Stadtschreiber (“writer-in-residence”) for the city of Graz and also received the prestigious Peter Rosegger Literature Prize, which was founded in 1951 and has been awarded for literary debuts since 2011. He was the first author who was not, or not primarily, writing in German at the time of receiving the prize. However, the genealogy of prize winners also includes the Hungarian-Austrian author György Sebestyén, who wrote in Hungarian at the beginning of his career, then switched to German and received the prize in 1989. Thus Mujila is the only author in this genealogy who did not write in German at the

¹¹³ “Ich bin nicht gegen Preise, ich mag das, ich habe auch was bekommen, aber wenn bestimmte Bedingungen für einen Roman zu schreiben – ‘Aber bitte nicht etwas mit Religion, bitte nicht über Sexualität, bitte nicht über Politik.’ – und dann wird man schon so, hat man beim Sitzen, beim Arbeiten selber die Zensur im Kopf.” (Eltayeb, 2023)

¹¹⁴ “Die, die gut Deutsch sprechen, sollen einen Preis haben, oder die, die gut Deutsch schreiben. Wenn ich sehr gut schreibe, aber nicht auf Deutsch, darf ich diesen Preis nicht bekommen.” (Mujila, 2023)

time of receiving the prize, but here, too, it can hardly be said that the rules of granting the prize were changed for him.

The literary scholarships of the Federal Ministry and the project scholarships for literature of the City of Vienna are also not bound to a language, only to residence in Austria or main residence in Vienna. For example, Eltayeb received the Arbeitsstipendium (work grants) from the Federal Chancellery as early as in 1996, and Mujila received the Dramatikerstipendium (playwright's grant) from the Federal Ministry in 2014. (Bmkoes.gv, n.d. / wien.gv, n.d.) Although Mujila is the first African-diasporic author in Austria with a very high level of success, he can't necessarily be considered a 'pioneer' for whom the rules of literary prizes have been changed. Thus it can also be said that there are funding opportunities in the field of literature through the Austrian Ministry of Arts, Culture, Public Service and Sports as well as from the federal capital Vienna.

Mihret Kebede also perceives the funding opportunities provided by the state and various cultural institutions in Austria as positive and supportive. She says that in Ethiopia she had no access to funding or grants in the cultural scene; publication is expensive. "And like, you have everything here right, there are a lot of galleries, over eighty, and over 40 cultural institutes, and also you have all the funding and the resources for the art scene, I'm not sure if that is accommodating everyone but still, that's something I like about Vienna and the attention it gives to the arts." (Kebede, 2023)

In terms of specific literary prizes, there are no prizes for authors of the African diaspora in Austria. However, there are some literary prizes that seek to fund non-German literature in Austria, as well as prizes and funding with a more open policy.

3.5.1. Grazer Stadtschreiber*in scholarship

Since 1988, the city of Graz has awarded this scholarship to one writer each year. Created as a reinterpretation of the traditional city scribe and minute taker in the Middle Ages, the scholarship is aimed at national and international writers in order to promote the exchange of the local and international cultural scene. The awardees receive an apartment on the Schlossberg and a monthly allowance for the period so that they can write in comfort and engage with the local cultural scene. (kultur.graz, n.d.) The scholarship intentionally has no

national restrictions: “The submission deliberately does not provide any regional restrictions for the applicants, in order to make intercultural discourse between European and non-European writers possible.” (kulturserver-graz, .n.d.) The prize is awarded by the city of Graz after the evaluation of a jury, consisting of authors and literary scholars and the cultural office.

This funding is thus also particularly valuable for authors from the African diaspora. Fiston Mwanza Mujila, for example, was appointed the first African writer in Graz in 2009/2010, and now, more than ten years later, Abdelaziz Baraka Sakin, another Afro-diasporic author, holds the position in 2022/2023.

3.5.2. Elias Canetti scholarship

The Elias Canetti Prize is an annual scholarship and is awarded by the city of Vienna to four authors each year, with the possibility of renewal for up to three years. Initiated in memory of the Nobel Prize winner for literature, Elias Canetti, the award has been presented since 1982.

The aim of the prize is to support already established authors with major book projects over a longer period of time. The prize is awarded by the current City Councilor for Culture and Science after an evaluation of the literary quality by a jury (appointed by the mayor). Eligible are people of full age with main residence in Vienna; the language of writing is not relevant. (wien.gv, n.d.) Tarek Eltayeb received this grant in 2005. (geschichtewiki.wien.gv, n.d.)

3.5.3. Exilliteraturpreis

The Exilliteraturpreis has been awarded since 1997 by the Association Exil in cooperation with the Amerlinghaus, the wiener wortstaetten and the grazer autor*innen autorenversammlung. The initiative aims to pave the literary way for authors who do not speak German as their first language, but who choose to write in German. It is especially targeted at writers who are just at their literary debut or not yet well established within the Austrian literary field. The publishing house Exil also offers intensive support with publishing and editing for these writers and wants to enable them to subsequently find a larger publishing house.

Three prizes are awarded annually for prose texts, and there is a poetry prize, a prize for young writers, a prize for submissions from school classes, and a prize for a writer with German as a first language. In addition, a playwright prize is awarded every three years. A

jury of three for each prize selects the winners. Prerequisites are that the text submitted must be written in German and that the author must reside in Austria. The prize texts are published in an anthology of the publishing house. (editionexil, n.d.) The prize is thus not open to authors of not writing in German, but it supports all writers who choose to write in German despite having a different first language. In 2020, the Austrian-Nigerian poetry slammer and poet Precious Nnebedum received the prize and thus gained greater recognition outside the slam scene. (editionexil, n.d.)

Since 2009, a prize with a similar approach is awarded every two years in Hohenems by the city to “German-speaking authors of non-German first language” (“deutschsprachige Autor*innen nichtdeutscher Erstsprache”). The town in the Austrian federal state Vorarlberg is located at the “Dreiländereck,” the triangle of borders between Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and has thus always been a place of cultural exchange, which is to be remembered and carried forward by this award. (hohenems.at)

3.6. Library and Bookstores

The importance of the library is analyzed by Venkat Mani in his paper “Borrowing Privileges.” Although he refers primarily to libraries, his concepts can also be applied to bookstores. Often forgotten, libraries are essential to creating what is understood by “world literature.” Mani states, that “world literature is conceptualized through circulation, distribution, and reception in translation” through a “system of center-peripheral relations” and “institutional histories/pedagogical practices” (Mani, 2013, p. 239) However, as already problematized in this thesis, discussions about terminology all take part in the academic field, while ignoring the power of institutions such as the public and private library, which play an essential role in defining what “world literature” is. In this discussion, virtual libraries are also becoming more and more important. (Mani, 2013, p. 241)

Through the acquisition, categorization and provision of literature, libraries do form images of the world; they contain the zeitgeist. Individual books serve as the formative units: “Libraries are rife with the politics of literacy and sanctioned illiteracy, historical contingencies that condition accumulation and classification, circulation and distribution, patronage and accession, orderly organization and disorderly contention.” (Mani, 2013, p. 243)

The library and bookstores are therefore also an essential part in making African diasporic literatures (in)visible. They have the power to assert them to a specific canon or to exclude them from it. They are thus essential for the (re)production of terminologies and classification systems and spread them into the public consciousness.

3.6.1. AFRI-EUROTTEXT

AFRI-EUROTTEXT is a bookshop located in the second district of Vienna that focuses on literatures of the African and European continent, as well as literature that revolves around countries of the Global South. The bookshop was founded by Dr. Phil. Daniel Bithouh, who also runs the cultural foundation AFRIEUROTTEXT. The association understands itself as a “literatur-, kultur- und kunstkritisches Forum” (“literary-, cultural- and art critical forum”) (afriurotext.at, n.d.), aiming to bring texts with a connection to Africa to the Austrian audience. With the belief that literature can provide an insight into the realities of life and societies, the Forum sees itself as a form of mediating body between Europe and Africa. The association uses the term “text” as a broad concept, which means not only written, but also spoken and various relations of and in everyday life. In order to achieve the intended exchange, the bookstore regularly hosts book presentations, discussions and other events. However, the organization wants to actively go beyond a literary-artistic approach and is also active questions of global and local asymmetries. For example, the revenues from the bookstore are used to finance the Kilet Kiass (“our bread”) bakery, which provides training and work for young women in Cameroon who have dropped out of the regular educational system. (Kilet-Kiass, n.d.)

Together with the online magazine “fresh” and the “Weltmuseum” in Vienna, the organization and bookshop also initiated the “project 3RRR – restitution, rehabilitation and reconciliation,” aiming to inform the Austrian public, government and institutions about the need for restitution. In 2022, the first 3RRR-symposium “On the return of illegally acquired African artifacts in Austrian museums” (3RRR, n.d) was held in Vienna, with Achille Mbembe participating as a guest of honor. In November 2023, the second symposium will be held on the topic of “The significance of restitution in Africa and for the diaspora using the example of the Benin Bronzes.” (3RR, n.d.)

Since the bookstore is almost exclusively managed by the founder Daniel Bitouh, the store has only very limited opening hours and a reduced selection of books compared to other independent booksellers. Therefore, it must be said that the popularity of the bookstore in

Vienna is not particularly high. Nonetheless, through providing a physical space for African literatures in Vienna, as well as organizing numerous events, the bookshop is an essential part in supporting and increasing the visibility of these literatures.

3.6. The Danger of a Single Story: Representation in the Media

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED talk "the danger of a single story" (2009) raises an issue that is particularly evident in media and literary contexts. According to the author, when we are confronted with only one narrative about a particular subject, this is a dangerous starting point for stereotypes and generalizations. As we learn more stories, our picture becomes more complex; otherwise, we tend to interpret a single story as the complete truth. (Adichie, 2009) As already mentioned in the previous chapters, there has been a repeated devaluation and creation of single story images of African diasporic people in the Austrian media, especially in the boulevard – for example, that of the "African drug dealer." In the following, a brief discussion of the media representation of the authors, as their perception of the importance of media, will be presented. However, since a detailed discussion of the topic "Afro-Diasporic Authors in Austrian Media Discourse" would go well beyond the framework of this thesis, only a brief insight will be given here.

It turns out that especially in literary criticism, epitexts such as interviews are published much more frequently about literature(s) of the African diaspora, as the literary scholar Albert Gouaffu noted. He showed that between July 20, 1960, and January 20, 1989, a total of 32 interviews and conversations with authors of the African Diaspora were printed in five German-language newspapers; in contrast, only 15 reviews of actual works appeared during the same period. (Loimeier, 2006, p. 11) Since this is an older study and refers to the literary field in Germany, it is of course not possible to say whether the media representation of Afro-diasporic authors in Austria is similar. However, it is an important and interesting indication that could be explored in follow-up studies, especially in regard to Adichie's idea of the danger of single story narratives.

The visibility of the authors in the Austrian media discourse is difficult to compare, as not all authors publish regularly on the German-language book market. While Eltayeb was interviewed by various well-known newspapers following the publication of the books *Städte ohne Dattelpalmen* (*Cities without Date Palms*) and *Das Palmenhaus* (*The Palm*

House) (e.g. Wiener Zeitung, 2004/DerStandard, 2004), things have now quieted down around the author. His last publication was the Spanish-language translation *Estaciones*, which, however, was not featured in any major Austrian daily newspaper. Being mentioned in the media is a marker of visibility for Eltayeb, who mentions positive literary criticism of his works as something that signifies visibility for him in the Austrian literary field: “I keep getting invitations, I keep reading nice reviews, last week I also had a reading, it was very good, also positive reactions from people.”¹¹⁵ (Eltayeb, 2023)

Hamid has also not produced any publications in German recently, which is why she has received little media coverage for her literary work. However, she receives frequent media interest for her work as an activist. (e.g. Interview with Mtui, 2022) After the autobiography of the author won the PEN translate award 2023, it was only reported in the online magazine ‘Blackaustria.info’ which also contains a portrait written by me on the occasion of the visit of the author in the course “Mapping ‘African-Diasporic’ Literary Voices in the Austrian Cultural Scene.”

Mihret Kebede is almost invisible in Austrian media discourse, except for a few interviews in smaller Austrian media (Radio Grille, 2022). However, the fact that the two women in particular have such low media visibility cannot be sufficiently attributed to the category of gender; rather, other factors (hardly any or no German-language publications, focus on other areas of life besides writing (activism and PhD) probably also play a role here.

Of all these authors, Fiston Mwanza Mujila is probably the one who has the most visibility in Austrian media. His works are reviewed and discussed frequently; in addition, there are numerous interviews of the author. This may be due to his literary productivity – as the author states – but certainly also to his active positioning in the Austrian literary field, his mediation work, as well as through prestigious literary prizes being awarded to the author. Also, his writing languages – French and German – are probably more accessible to the public in Austria than the languages of other writers (Arabic and Amharic).

Just this year (2023), his play *Après les Alpes* premiered at the Volkstheater and was reviewed in numerous media outlets, such as in the newspapers DerStandard (Pohl, 2023), in the Salzburger Nachrichten (APA, 2023b) and the Kleine Zeitung (Götz, 2023). In

¹¹⁵ “Ich bekomme immer wieder Einladungen, ich lese immer wieder schöne Kritik, letzte Woche habe ich auch eine Lesung gehabt, die war sehr gut, auch positive Reaktionen von den Menschen.” (Eltayeb, 2023)

addition, one of the named newspapers (DerStandard: Affenzeller, 2023) also conducted an interview with the author.

Since none of the other authors published a German-language work in 2023, a direct comparison is impossible and also not meaningful. Nevertheless, it can be said that Mujila is a very prominent author in Austria who successfully locates himself in Austrian literary traditions and is also perceived as such.

3.7. Conclusion Chapter 3

This chapter showed that all of the authors rated institutions as very important to promote literature by authors of the diaspora. Whenever we spoke about literature in the discourse and themselves as authors in this very discourse, institutions were mentioned. The significance of them was further established by most of the authors actively seeking a mediating role in the Austrian literary discourse, trying to give literature by authors of the diaspora more visibility, and to mediate between different literary discourses. They use their position as mediators in different ways, but always in an institutional context: as editors, organizers of festivals and platforms or writing workshops, but also in teaching.

4. Conclusion

Alles, was dir jemals in diesem Land gehören wird, ist deine Geschichte, das schwöre ich dir. Du musst sie dem Ungeheuer Schayar [from the tales of the 1001 nights, author's note] dieses Landes erzählen, bevor es dir deine Seele rauben kann. Versuch, es mit deiner Geschichte abzulenken, damit es eine Zeit lang seine Bösartigkeit vergisst, die tief in ihm schlummert.

– Excerpt from *Das Palmenhaus* (Eltayeb, 2007, p. 87)

The aim of this thesis was to discuss the discourse in Austria surrounding authors from the African diaspora. After conducting four interviews with authors from the African diaspora living in Austria, analyzing the material with discourse-analysis and moving through their literary works with a short narratological analysis, the two research questions were answered, as will be explained again in the following.

- 1) What place(s) do the selected writers occupy in the Austrian literary scene?

The first research question was discussed in chapter two of this thesis. In terms of self-positioning, the authors were asked questions during the interview that address subjects that are often mentioned in the context of diaspora authors. These categories are language, translation, identity, and nationality.

It was shown that language is a significant factor for the authors in terms of perceived visibility. While Mihret Kebede for example feels, that she is largely excluded from the literary field due to her lack of knowledge of German, Eltayeb also attributes his visibility in Austria to his publications in German translation. Briefly, there was also some talk about the idea of a ‘German privilege’: literature written in German in Austria has a clear competitive advantage, while translated works are seldomly eligible for literary prizes, for example.

For Mujila, on the other hand, the language of writing does not play such a major role in visibility, but it is relevant in that for the author the independent choice of language is crucial: while for him the French language thus contains connotations of colonialism, German, in contrast, is a free language. Hamid also mentions that for her, Arabic was not a choice, but it is the only language in which she is able to write. Eltayeb also feels the most comfortable in his first language, Arabic, and doesn’t feel like he could change his language of writing. However, languages are perceived as enriching in every way, as Hamid, Mujila, and Eltayeb in particular mentioned: each language would open up a new aspect for them and would also prove enriching for the languages they already speak. This aspect of ‘languages in other languages’ was further elaborated by Mujila, who feels like the languages he speaks are all echoed in his writing languages.

With regard to translation, the authors also took on different roles. While all of them are very content about translations of their works happening, a majority of the authors (all of them, except for Mujila), also actively participate in the process of translation: Hamid translates her works by herself, Kebede and Eltayeb work together with a translator, which in Eltayeb’s case is his wife. The translated work is seen by all of the authors as an independent creation that, while closely related to the work, is not the same. Hamid, in particular, also mentioned problems in translation: it often happens to her that linguistic images are changed according to the publisher. However, the author wants these to remain, as this is the only way to convey the essence of the text. Austrian readers should also be confronted with unfamiliar images and she does not consider it her job to explain her literature to readers. Translations are

further seen as adding to the promotion of the author's literatures: They can enhance visibility in other literary spaces, thus create new possibilities.

Related to identity, the authors also adopted different positions, however, the authors all rejected static concepts of identity, since they feel like they are reductive and often come with preconceptions. Some of the authors also expressed their frustration about continuous racist structures in Austria. It was also brought up that identities can be changed and manipulated: While Mujila uses and recognizes the advantages of an active and political self-positioning in the Austrian discourse, Hamid finds it important to see herself in the collective history of Afro-diasporic people. Eltayeb and Kebede see identity as multifaceted and changeable and reject rigid concepts of identity, especially if they are oriented towards nationality. This rejection is particularly evident at the institutional level, as became apparent in chapter three:

- 2) What roles do institutions play in their reception and visibility?

This question was pursued in chapter three, where both the author's positions in relations to various literary institutions in Austria were discussed, as well as some important institutions were presented. The discourse was mapped on the different categories academia, literary platforms, literary festivals, publishing, literary prizes, library / bookstores and the media.

On the level of academia, it was first of all noted, that all of the writers selected have either played or still play an active role within the academic field. In terms of terminology, all four authors categorically reject the much discussed concepts of 'migration literature' or 'Afro-European literature'. For the authors, these categories imply a limitation and a devaluation in contrast to literature that has no conceptual addition. Only in the context of research, or to clearly define groups of people or literature, do the authors see a benefit. It was striking, that no other positive remarks were made about this terminology. It is important, as a scholar, to recognize one's own responsibility here as well. If the authors have such strong opinions against these concepts, why do we use the terms? While literary studies must exist independently of authors' opinions and should not merely replicate them, they must not be ignored either.

Literary platforms, festivals and prizes, however, were consistently perceived as positive by the authors. According to the authors, they would contribute to visibility and are also regularly used by them. It was shown, that literary platforms, as well as literary festivals provide important spaces for networking: Some of the authors have reported connecting with publishers there. Literary festivals are also enabling exchange between authors and make their literature accessible to new audiences. Three of the four writers are also active themselves as mediators in institutions – Fiston Mwanza Mujila is the literary delegate at Forum Stadtpark, Kebede initiated the project ‘Culture X Change’, Hamid regularly conducts writing workshops.

In the area of publishing, it was shown that the writers went through a similar path to find a publisher. While it took a while for all four, they now all have a publisher. For three of the authors, publishing is also particularly important, while for Mihret Kebede it plays a rather subordinate role. This may also be due to the fact that she is more active in poetry slam. Hamid also reported on some difficulties concerning publication: In the past, she has repeatedly experienced literary images being altered for Austrian audiences, which she disapproves of.

Finally, on the topic of the institutions libraries and media, a brief insight into relevant institutions, such as the bookstore AFRIEUROTEXT was given. It was further shown, how important libraries and bookstores are for the (re)production of terminologies and classification systems, which is also something that applies to media.

Especially on the level of the media, however, further research would be fruitful, especially since the question arose, whether interviews are the most common form of reporting on African diasporic authors in Austria. In this context, it would also be interesting to work with content analysis methods to analyze the topics discussed in the media in relation to literature of the authors of the diaspora. Further research is also possible in academia: Specifically regarding Kebede and Hamid, there are also no extensive literary analyses of their works yet. Comparative research on translations would also be an interesting approach, since translated works in several languages exist for all authors. Also, the importance of the institutions could be depicted in more detail – in particular, their interconnectedness can be further investigated. In general, it can be said that this field is still very unexplored – this thesis describes only four authors. Thus, it is to be hoped and expected that a change will

take place in this research field in the coming years and that this master thesis was able to make a contribution to this.

5. References

5.1 Primary Literature

Eltayeb, T. (2007). *Das Palmenhaus*. (U. Eltayeb Trans.) Schiler.

Eltayeb, T. (2000). *Städte ohne Dattelpalmen*. (U. Eltayeb Trans.) edition selene.

Kebede, M. (2020). Reflections. (M. Sanaga Trans.) In: Institut für Raumexperimente & Tobiya Poetic Jazz (eds.): *Poetry Jazz. Wax And Gold*. (pp. 177-179). König, Walther.

Kebede, M. (2018). Die Anhörung des Schweigens. In: E. N. Kessé (ed.): *Stille Macht. Silence und Dekolonisierung; Silence, Wissen und Machtstrukturen* (pp. 89-114). w_orten & meer.

Kebede, M. (n.d.). #evolutionarypoems58. (R. Scheffler Trans.) *Lyrikline*. <https://www.lyrikline.org/de/gedichte/evolutionarypoems58-16474> (last access: 23.7.2023)

Kebede, M. (n.d.). The Planner. (U. Wolf Trans.) *Lyrikline*. <https://www.lyrikline.org/de/uebersetzungen/details/23237/16503> (last access: 23.7.2023)

Kebede, M. (n.d.). Tales of Silence. A Poem in three languages. (N. Mekonnen & E. Ellingsen & R. Scheffler Trans.) *World Literature Today*. <https://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/2018/september/tales-silence-poem-three-languages-mihret-kebede> (last access: 23.7.2023)

Kebede M. (2020). Tales about Silence. (C. Beckett & A. Tebeje Trans.) *Poetry International*. https://www.poetryinternational.com/en/poets-poems/poems/poem/103-30182_TALES-ABOUT-SILENCE (last access: 23.7.2023)

Mujila, F. M. (2016). *Tram 83*. Librairie Générale Française-

Mujila, F. M. (2018). Zu der Zeit der Königinmutter. In: U.B. Carstensen & S. von Lieven, & B. Neu & B. Walther & F. Emmerling (eds.): *Theater Theater* 29. (pp. 173-219) Fischer Theater-

Hamid, I. M. (2017). *Das Weibliche der Flöte*. Löcker.

Hamid, I. M. (2014). *Gesichter der Donau: Lyrik und Prosa*. Löcker.

5.2. Secondary Literature

Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The Field of Cultural Production. Essays on Art and Literature*. Polity Press.

Brancato, S. (2008). Afro-European Literature(s): A New Discursive Category? *Research in African Literatures*, 39 (3), pp. 1-13.

Christiansen, E. & Englert, B. (2001). „Zimt duftet in Wien“. Ishraga Mustafa Hamid im Gespräch mit Elke Christiansen und Birgit Englert. *Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien* 1(2), pp. 87-95.

Craith, M. N. (2015). 'Migrant' writing and the re-imagined community: discourses of inclusion/exclusion. *German Politics and Society*, 33 (1), pp. 84-99.

Cupach, W.R. & Spitzberg, B.H. (2010). Identity Management and Competence in Interpersonal and Intercultural Relationships. Scholarly Contributions of Tadasu Todd Imahori. *Human Communication Studies*, 38, pp. 61-72.

Disoski, Meri (2011): Im Dazwischen Schreiben. *Migrazine*. <http://www.migrazine.at/artikel/im-dazwischen-schreiben> (last access 14.8.2023)

Esselborn, K. (2009): Neue Zugänge zur inter / transkulturellen deutschsprachigen Literatur. In: H. Schmitz (ed.): *Von der nationalen zur internationalen Literatur. Transkulturelle deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur im Zeitalter globaler Migration. Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik* 69. (pp. 41-68). Brill.

Etwebi, A. (2010): Tarek Eltayeb: Kommunikation in Echtzeit. Interview. *Iowa Writing University*, <https://writinguniversity.org/content/tarek-eltayeb-kommunikation-echtzeit-0> (last access: 8.12.22.)

Eze, C. (2016). "We, Afropolitans." *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 28(1), pp. 114–119. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24758437>

Fohrmann, J. & Müller, H. (eds.) (1988): *Diskurstheorien und Literaturwissenschaft*. suhrkamp.

Foucault, M. (1991). *Die Ordnung des Diskurses*. Fischer.

Garrido, F. E. & Koegler, C. & Nyangulu, D. & Stein, M. U. (2020). Introduction. African European Studies as a Critique of Contingent Belonging. In: F.E. Garrido & C. Koegler & D. Nyangulu & M.U. Stein (eds.): *Locating African European Studies: Interventions, Intersections, Conversations*. (pp. 1-28). Routledge.

Gilroy, P. (2005). A Cat in a Kipper Box, or “The Confessions of a Second Generation Immigrant” In: S. Ponzanesi & D. Merolla: *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe*. (pp. 79–92). Lexington Books.

Girma, M. (2011). Whose Meaning? The Wax and Gold Tradition as a Philosophical Foundation for an Ethiopian Hermeneutic. *SOPHIA* 50, pp. 175–187. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11841-010-0201-9>

Grabovszki, E. (2009). Österreich als literarischer Erfahrungsraum zugewanderter Autorinnen und Autoren. In: H. Schmitz (ed.): *Von der Nationalen zur Internationalen Literatur: Transkulturelle Deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur im Zeitalter globaler Migration*. (pp. 275-292.) Rodopi.

Hamid, I. M. (2003). Die Situation afrikanischer Frauen in Wien. In: E. Erwin (ed.): *Afrikaner in Wien. Zwischen Mystifizierung und Verteufelung. Erfahrungen und Analysen*. (pp. 26-31). LIT.

Hafez, F. (n.d.). Black Lives Matter – In Austria Too. *Botstiber Institute for Austrian-American Studies*, <https://botstiberbiaas.org/black-lives-matter/> (last access: 23.9.2023)

Hitchcott, N. & Thomas, D. (2014). *Francophone Afropean Literatures*. Liverpool University Press.

Innes L. & Stein, M. U. (eds.) (2008). *African European*. Special Issue, *Wasafiri: The Magazine of International Contemporary Writing* 23(4).

Kajetzke, L. (2008). *Wissen im Diskurs : Ein Theorienvergleich von Bourdieu und Foucault*. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Lichtungen (2021). *Lichtungen. Zeitschrift für Literatur, Kunst und Zeitkritik. Schwerpunkt: Afrikanische Präsenz in der österreichischen Literatur*, 167.

Loimeier, M. (2006). *Die Macht des Wortes. Das journalistische Interview als Rezeptionsform afrikanischer Literaturen*. Bayreuth African Studies Series 79. Thielmann & Breitingner.

Loimeier, M. (2002). *Wortwechsel. Gespräche mit afrikanischen Autorinnen und Autoren*. Horlemann.

Mani, V. (2013). Borrowing Privileges: Libraries and the Institutionalization of World Literature. *Modern Language Quarterly*, 74(2), pp. 239–260. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1215/00267929-2073007>

Nehl, M. (2016). The Concept of the African Diaspora and the Notion of Difference. In: *Transnational Black Dialogues: Re-Imagining Slavery in the Twenty-First Century* (pp. 39-54). transcript Verlag. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839436660-003>

Preschl, J. (2017): Sprachnomaden. Statt einer Migrationsliteratur: Literarische Entdeckungsreisen und transkulturelles Schreiben. *ZiG* 8, pp. 165-175.

Salisu, A. (2013). *Being Afro-Austrian: Theories & Practices of Black Austrian Identity*. public book media.

Sauer, W. (2007a). Angelo Soliman. Mythos und Wirklichkeit. In: W. Sauer (ed.): *Von Soliman zu Omofuma. Afrikanische Diaspora in Österreich. 17. Bis 20. Jahrhundert*. (pp. 59-96). Studien Verlag.

Sauer, W. (2007b): Afro-österreichische Diaspora heute. Migration und Integration in der 2. Republik. In: W. Sauer (ed.): *Von Soliman zu Omofuma. Afrikanische Diaspora in Österreich. 17. Bis 20. Jahrhundert.* (pp. 189-232). Studien Verlag.

Sauer, W. (2014). *Expeditionen ins afrikanische Österreich. Ein Reisekaleidoskop.* Mandelbaum.

Schmid, U. (2010): Diskurstheorie. In: U. Schmid (ed): *Literaturtheorien des 20. Jahrhunderts.* (pp. 246-265). Reclam.

Schmidt, E. (ed.) (2011): *Weg-Kreuzungen. Zwischenkulturelle Texte.* Edition Volkshochschule.

Seljak, A. (2010): Literatursoziologie. In: U. Schmid (ed): *Literaturtheorien des 20. Jahrhunderts.* (pp. 223-245). Reclam.

Sievers, W. (2018): From Monolingualism to Multilingualism? The Pre- and Post-monolingual Condition in the Austrian Literary Field. *Austrian Studies*, 26, pp. 40-56.

Spanbauer, V. (2022) Schwarze Menschen in Österreich in widerständigen Kontexten – ein chronologischer Überblick. *Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien*, 22(43), pp. 7-31. doi: 10.25365/phaidra.367_02

Stiegler, B. (2015). *Theorien der Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaften : eine Einführung.* Fink Schöningh.

Stolarczyk-Gembiak, A. (2015): Migrationsliteratur als transkulturelle und transnationale „andere Literatur“ oder ‘neue Weltliteratur‘? Der Forschungsstand. *Konińskie Studia Językowe* 3 (2), pp. 187-201.

Taylor, S. (2013). The Challenges of Discourse Analysis. In: *What is Discourse Analysis?* (pp. 67–76). Bloomsbury Academic. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781472545213.ch-005>

Thomas, D. (2014). Introduction: Afroeuropean Cartographies. In: D. Thomas (ed.): *Afroeuropean Cartographies*. (pp. 1-15). Cambridge Scholars.

Van Deventer, A. & Thomas, D. (2011). Afro-European Studies: Emerging Fields and New Directions. In: A. Behdad & T. Dominic (eds.): *A Companion to Comparative Literature*. (pp. 335–356). Wiley.

Wa Thiong'o, N. (2011). *Decolonizing the mind. The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Boydell & Brewer.

Zezeza, P. T. (2005). Rewriting the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic. *African Affairs*, 104(414), pp. 35–68. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3518632>

5.3. Websources

Adichie, C.N. (2009). The danger of a single story. Video. *TED Global*, https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story (last access: 20.9.2023)

Adk (n.d.). Berlin-Stipendium 2017 – Literatur: Fiston Mwanza Mujila. *Akademie der Künste*, https://www.adk.de/de/akademie/junge-akademie/berlin-stipendium/2017/Fiston_Mwanza_Mujila.htm (last access: 23.7.23)

Affenzeller, M. (2023). Autor Fiston Mwanza Mujila: "Manchmal ist es nicht Rassismus, sondern Ignoranz" *DerStandard*, 16.2.2023, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000143588132/fiston-mwanza-mujilamanchmal-ist-es-nicht-rassismus-sondern-ignoranz> (last access: 23.9.2023)

Afrieurotext – Website (n.d.). <https://www.afrieurotext.at> (last access: 20.9.2023)

Afrieurotext (n.d.). Kilet Kiass. *Afrieurotext.at*, <https://kilet-kiass.afrieurotext.at/de/> (last access: 20.9.2023)

Afrieurotext (n.d.). Project 3RRR - Restitution. *Afrieurotext.at*, https://www.afrieurotext.at/?page_id=5280 (last access: 20.9.2023)

Afrieurotext (n.d.). VAW Club. *Afrieurotext.at*, https://www.afrieurotext.at/?page_id=1270 (last access: 20.9.2023)

Afrika Club (2023). Diaspora-Engagement in Österreich. Rückblicke und Perspektiven. Bericht vom Afrika Club vom 17. Jänner 2023. *VIDC*, https://www.vidc.org/fileadmin/franz/2023/bericht_afrika_club_17.01.23_logo.pdf (last access: 26.7.2023)

African Diaspora Festival – Website (n.d.). <https://www.africandiasporafestival.com/about> (last access, 24.9.2023)

Africanews Rédaction (2023). Mali drops French as official language. *Africanews*, 26.7.2023, <https://www.africanews.com/2023/07/26/mali-drops-french-as-official-language/> (last access: 20.9.2023)

APA (2023a). Milo Rau gastiert bei Festival „Tangente 2024“. *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 10.3.23, <https://www.sn.at/kultur/allgemein/milo-rau-gastiert-bei-festival-tangente-st-poelten-2024-135824086> . (last access: 23.7.23)

APA (2023b). Volkstheater widmet sich der Ausbeutung der Alpen. *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 18.2.2023, <https://www.sn.at/kultur/allgemein/volkstheater-widmet-sich-der-ausbeutung-der-alpen-134220118> (last access: 23.9.2023)

Basis Wien (2005). Bild und Schrift. Galerie Atrium ed. Arte, Wien / Österreich. *Basis Wien*, 9.11.2005, <https://www.basis-wien.at/db/event/62712;jsessionid=FA49BFB5E459F8F515747B79C7224BE5?wicket:pageMapName=orgWitzmann&lang=de> (last access: 27.7.2023)

Blackvoices Volksbegehren – Website (n.d.). <https://blackvoices.at> (last access: 23.7.2023)

Bmkoes (n.d.). Stipendien für Literatur. Förderungen im Bereich der Abteilung IV/5. *Bmkoes.gv*, <https://www.bmkoes.gv.at/Kunst-und-Kultur/literatur-buechereien-bibliotheken/foerderungen/stipendien.html> (last access: 20.9.2023)

Daniszewski, John (2020). The decision to capitalize Black. *Blog.AP*, 19.6.2020, <https://blog.ap.org/announcements/the-decision-to-capitalize-black> (last access: 20.7.2023)

Edition Exil (n.d.). Exil-Literaturpreise 2023 einreichen. *Editionexil*, <https://www.editionexil.at/exil-literaturpreise2023-einreichen> (last access: 20.9.2023)

DISRUPT. Verein zur Verein zur diskriminierungs- und rassismuskritischen Bildungsarbeit und für politische Teilhabe - Website (n.d.). <https://www.disruptverein.at> (last access: 30.8.2023)

Dokustelle Österreich – Website (n.d.). <https://dokustelle.at> (last access: 23.7.2023)

English Pen (2023). PEN Translates winners announced. *English Pen*, 31.1.2023, <https://www.englishpen.org/posts/news/pen-translates-winners-announced-2/> (last access: 20.7.23)

European Union Agency for fundamental Rights (2019). *EU MIDIS II. Being Black in the EU. Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey*, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-being-black-in-the-eu-summary_en.pdf (last access: 30.8.2023)

Fiston Mwanza Mujila's Website (n.d.). <https://www.fistonmwanzamujila.com> (last access: 23.7.23)

Geschichtewiki (n.d.). Elias Canetti Stipendium. *Geschichtewiki*, <https://www.geschichtewiki.wien.gv.at/Elias-Canetti-Stipendium> (last access: 20.9.2023)

Gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft - Website (n.d.).
<https://www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.gv.at> (last access: 30.8.2023)

Gmünder, S. (2004) “Es geht um Macht” Interview mit Tarek Eltayeb. *DerStandard*, 5.10.2004, retrieved from: <http://www.eltayeb.at/presse-interviews-1.html> (last access: 21.9.2023)

Götz, T. (2023). Im Volkstheater gibt's Gerechtigkeit für einen Heizstrahler. *Kleine Zeitung*, 18.2.2023, https://www.kleinezeitung.at/kultur/festspiele/6253455/Premierenkritik_Im-Volkstheater-gibts-Gerechtigkeit-fuer-einen (last access: 23.9.2023)

Hamid, I. & Schmidjell, F. (2021). Fraue für den Frieden am Horn von Afrika. Bericht von der Diaspora Netzwerkkonferenz vom 10. - 12. Juni 2021. *VIDC*, <https://www.vidc.org/detail/frauen-fuer-den-frieden-am-horn-von-afrika> (last access: 10.7.2023)

Hdgoe (n.d.): Schwarze Geschichte ist österreichische Geschichte: Eine Übersicht. Eine Sammlung von Beiträgen. *Hdgoe*, https://hdgoe.at/black_history (last access: 30.9.2023)

Hohenems (n.d.): Hohenemser Literaturpreis. *Hohenems.at*, <https://www.hohenems.at/services/kultur-in-hohenems/literatur/hohenemser-literaturpreis/> (last access: 20.9.2023)

Huber-Lang, W. (2019). Hintergrund von „Zu der Zeit der Königinmutter“ von Fiston Mwanza Mujilas. *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 18.2.2019 <https://www.sn.at/kultur/theater/hintergrund-zu-zu-der-zeit-der-koeniginmutter-von-fiston-mwanza-mujilas-65938621> . (last access: 23.7.23)

Ikheloa, I. R. (2017): Mujila Fiston Mwanza's Tram 83: Requiem for the African writer, and again, the balance of today's stories. *Xokigbo*, 16.4.2017, <https://xokigbo.com/2017/04/16/mujila-fiston-mwanzas-tram-83-requiem-for-the-african-writer-and-again-the-balance-of-todays-stories/> (last access: 23.9.2023)

Ingeborg-Bachmann-Preis (2023): Statuten des Bewerbs 2023. *Bachmanpreis.orf*, 24.4.2023, <https://bachmannpreis.orf.at/stories/3204438/>

Isop (2020): Schreibwerkstatt mit Ishraga Mustafa Hamid: „Meine Worte sind frei, sich zu bewegen, wohin sie wollen!“ *Isop*, 14.10.2020, <https://www.isop.at/2020/schreibwerkstatt-mit-ishraga-mustafa-hamid-meine-worte-sind-frei-sich-zu-bewegen-wohin-sie-wollen/> (last access: 24.9.2023)

Kids of the Diaspora – Website (n.d.). <https://kidsofthediaspora.com> (last access: 30.8.2023)

Kieselbach, S. (2017). Fiston Mwanza Mujila: "Für mich ist Literatur eine Brücke zwischen Afrika und Europa". Interview. *DW*, <https://www.dw.com/de/fiston-mwanza-mujila-für-mich-ist-literatur-eine-brücke-zwischen-afrika-und-europa/a-39565787> (last access: 7.12.22.)

Krone (2018). La Strada in Graz. Eine Straßenoper über die Konsumgesellschaft. *Krone*, 30.7.2018, <https://www.krone.at/1747315> (last access: 24.9.2023)

Kulturen in Bewegung (2019): Culture X Change #Äthiopien: Kafa in Vienna. *Facebook*, 21.10.2019, https://www.facebook.com/events/545280412886027/545280452886023/?locale=it_IT (last access: 23.9.2023)

Kultur Server Graz (n.d.): Grazer Stadtschreiber:in. *Kultur Graz*, <https://www.kultur.graz.at/kulturamt/33> (last access: 24.8.2023)

Moment (n.d.). Black Lives Matter. *Moment*, <https://www.moment.at/tag/black-lives-matter> (last access: 25.9.2023)

Mtui, B. (2022): "Wo Widerstand und Willenskraft aufeinandertreffen, ist der Handlungsspielraum groß" Ishraga Mustafa Hamid. *Moment*, 16.2.2022, <https://www.moment.at/story/ishraga-mustafa-hamid> (last access: 23.2.2023)

Pesl, Ma. T. (2022). Fiston Mwanza Mujila. “Heute geht die Literatur über Grenzen, sie hat keine Nationalität.” *Buchkultur*, 8.4.2022, <https://www.buchkultur.net/fiston-mwanza-mujila/> (last access: 25.7.2023)

Österreichischer Buchpreis (n.d.). Teilnahmebedingungen. *Österreichischer Buchpreis*, <https://oesterreichischer-buchpreis.at/teilnahmebedingungen/> (last access: 24.9.2023)

OTS (2022). Black History Month: Weltmuseum Wien widmet sich im Februar ganz Schwarzer Geschichte und Gegenwart. Presseaussendung OTS, 28.1.2022, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20220128_OTS0088/black-history-month-weltmuseum-wien-widmet-sich-im-februar-ganz-schwarzer-geschichte-und-gegenwart-bild (last access: 27.9.2023)

Pohl, R. (2023). Jelinek und Mujila im Volkstheater: Bergwelt mit Rokoko-Punk-Fee. *DerStandard*, 18.2.2023, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000143697248/jelinek-und-mujila-im-volkstheater-bergwelt-mit-rokoko-punk-fee> (last access: 23.9.2023)

Schlösser, H. (2004). Der Schriftsteller als Vermittler. Interview mit Tarek Eltayeb. *Wiener Zeitung*, 8.10.2004, retrieved from: <http://www.eltayeb.at/presse-interviews-2.html> (last access: 20.3.2023)

Schwarzefrauencommunity (n.d.): Über uns. *Schwarzefrauencommunity*, <https://www.schwarzefrauencommunity.at/ueber-uns> (last access: 7.7.2023)

Statistik Austria (2022): *Migration und Integration. Statistisches Jahrbuch 2022*. https://www.statistik.at/fileadmin/publications/Migration_Integration_2022.pdf (last access: 30.8.2023)

Statistik Austria (2023): *Pressemitteilung: 13 082-110/23*, 01.01.2023. <https://www.statistik.at/fileadmin/announcement/2023/05/20230601Demographie2022.pdf> (last access: 30.8.2023)

Sultanija, I. & Hofbauer, L. (2022). Sound of Silence – Mihret Kebede. Radio-Interview. *Radio Grille*, <https://cba.fro.at/545871> (last access 7.12.22.)

Tarek Eltayeb's Website (n.d.). <http://www.eltayeb.at/biografie-lang.html> (last access: 25.7.23)

Universitätsbibliothek Wien (n.d.). Ausstellung: CLAIMING SPACES. Eine Ausstellung als Plattform für rassismuskritische Initiativen und Kunstwerke. *Bibliothek.univie*, <https://bibliothek.univie.ac.at/events/007318.html> (last access: 24.9.2023)

U:find (2023). 135814 KO Mapping "African-Diasporic" Literary Voices in the Austrian Cultural Scene (2023S). *U:find, Universität Wien*, <https://ufind.univie.ac.at/de/course.html?v=135814&semester=2023S>, (last access: 20.9.2023)

Wien.gv. (n.d.): Elias Canetti Stipendium. *Wien.gv*, <https://www.wien.gv.at/amtshelfer/kultur/projekte/subventionen/elias-canetti-stipendium.html> (last access: 24.8.2023)

Wien.gv. (n.d.). Projektstipendium Literatur – Förderantrag. *Wien.gv*, <https://www.wien.gv.at/amtshelfer/kultur/projekte/subventionen/projektstipendium-literatur.html> (last access: 20.9.2023)

ZARA (2023). Rassismus Report 2022. Analyse zu rassistischen Übergriffen & Strukturen in Österreich, 3.2023, https://assets.zara.or.at/media/rassismusreport/ZARA-Rassismus_Report_2022.pdf (last access: 20.9.2023)

6. Abstracts

6.1. English Abstract

Lately, public discourses on diversity have changed. Social movements such as ‘Black Lives Matter’, as well as the engagement of literary institutions has led to new visibility of literature by authors of the African diaspora in Europe. Even though this new wave of interest has also been largely welcomed in Austria, literature(s) of the African diaspora in Austria still remain largely unexplored.

Therefore, the aim of my master’s thesis is to analyze discourses about authors of the African diaspora in Austria. Starting from selected literary works and their themes methodologically, four semi-structured interviews with African-diasporic authors were carried out and analyzed comparatively, utilizing discourse analysis. These authors from the Austrian literary scene write in German, French, English, Arabic and Amharic: Fiston Mwanza Mujila (Democratic Republic of Congo/Austria), Tarek Eltajeb (Sudan/Egypt/Austria), Ishraga Mustafa Hamid (Sudan/Austria), Mihret Kebede (Ethiopia/Austria). Based on the interviews and locating them alongside literary institutions, the discourse in Austria was approached on the two dimensions of “authors” and “institutions” and thus “mapped,” answering the following questions: 1) What place(s) do selected writers occupy in the Austrian literary scene? 2) What roles do institutions play in their reception and visibility?

Essential to my analysis is the question of self-perception versus external perception, positioning in the discourse, as well as visibility and invisibility. Making use of the categories *language, translation, identity and nationality*, the author’s way of taking up space in the discourse was discussed comparatively. It became apparent that the authors all situate and define themselves differently. However, a strong and categorical rejection of terminologies such as ‘migration literature’ or ‘Afro-European literature’ was expressed by all of them. Divided in the sub-categories of *academia, literary festivals, literary platforms, literary awards, the publishing market, libraries/bookstores and media*, discursive interconnections on the level of institutions were also drawn out. It was shown that institutions were perceived to play a vital role in making these literatures (in)visible, which was also reflected in the fact that the majority of the authors take on an active mediating role within these institutional frameworks.

6.2. German Abstract

Veränderte Diskurse über Diversität, Antirassismusbewegungen wie "Black Lives Matter", aber auch das Engagement von Literaturinstitutionen haben in den letzten Jahren zu zunehmender Sichtbarkeit der Literatur von Autor_innen der afrikanischen Diaspora in Europa geführt. Obwohl sich dieses Interesse auf institutioneller Ebene auch vermehrt in Österreich zeigte, sind Literatur(en) der afrikanischen Diaspora in Österreich noch weitgehend unerforscht.

Ziel meiner Masterarbeit ist es daher, Autor_innen der afrikanischen Diaspora im österreichischen Diskurs zu untersuchen. Ausgehend von ausgewählten literarischen Werken und deren Themen, wurden vier semi-strukturierte Interviews mit afrikanisch-diasporischen Autor_innen durchgeführt und mittels Diskursanalyse vergleichend ausgewertet. Die ausgewählten Autor_innen sind Teil der österreichischen Literaturszene schreiben auf Deutsch, Französisch, Englisch, Arabisch und Amharisch: Fiston Mwanza Mujila (Demokratische Republik Kongo/Österreich), Tarek Eltajeb (Sudan/Ägypten/Österreich), Ishraga Mustafa Hamid (Sudan/Österreich), Mihret Kebede (Äthiopien/Österreich). Der Diskurs in Österreich wurde, basierend auf den Interviews, auf den beiden Dimensionen "AutorInnen" und "Institutionen" analysiert, wobei folgende Fragen beantwortet wurden: 1) Welchen Raum bzw. welche Räume nehmen die ausgewählten Autor_innen in der österreichischen Literaturszene ein? 2) Welche Rolle spielen literarische Institutionen für ihre Rezeption und Sichtbarkeit?

Wesentlich für meine Analyse ist dabei die Frage der Selbst- und Fremdwahrnehmung, der (Selbst-)Positionierung im Diskurs sowie der Sichtbarkeit und Unsichtbarkeit. Anhand der Kategorien *Sprache*, *Übersetzung*, *Identität* und *Nationalität* wurden die Positionierungen der Autor_innen im Diskurs vergleichend diskutiert. Dabei wurde deutlich, dass sich die Autoren alle unterschiedlich verorten und definieren. Eine starke und kategorische Ablehnung von Terminologien wie "Migrationsliteratur" oder "afro-europäische Literatur" wurde jedoch von allen geäußert. Aufgeteilt in die Unterkategorien *Wissenschaft*, *Literaturfestivals*, *Literaturplattformen*, *Literaturpreise*, *Verlagsmarkt*, *Bibliotheken/Buchhandlungen* und *Medien* wurden auch diskursive Verflechtungen auf der Ebene der Institutionen herausgearbeitet. Es zeigte sich, dass Institutionen eine wichtige Rolle bezüglich der Sichtbarkeit dieser Literaturen spielen, was sich auch darin

widerspiegelt, dass die meisten der ausgewählten Autorinnen und Autoren eine aktive Vermittlerrolle innerhalb institutioneller Rahmen suchen.