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Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah* and Tarek Eltayeb’s *Das
Palmenhaus*”

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1. Introduction

The term African Diasporic Literature is used to describe literary texts from writers of African descent living outside the African continent. Among these writers are Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who was born in Nigeria and moved to the U.S., and Tarek Eltayeb, born to Sudanese parents in Kairo and moved to Austria. Both writers themselves form part of different African diasporas and their literature deals with stories of people who emigrate from the African continent to the west.

Hence, this thesis aims to investigate the development of a transcultural identity through migration into a different cultural environment. In this respect, two novels, Adichie's *Americanah* and Eltayeb's *Das Palmenhaus* are analyzed and similarities and differences in their transcultural experience are presented.

The theoretical framework provides an overview of relevant identity concepts, for example by Stuart Hall (1993), Antohny Appiah(2006) and Bernd Simon (2004), and puts them into relation. These concepts are further connected to globalization processes and multicultural environments, as they challenge traditional understandings of culture and identity. In this respect, it is suggested that there is an interconnection between all cultures in a globalized world, which means that we are all hybrid beings as we are all influenced by a global as well as by a local culture. Then, the development of a transcultural identity, based on Berry's concept of acculturation (2005) is explained, as well as struggles like acculturative stress and illnesses that can appear due to migration and the social changes connected to it. Subsequently, the forming of a multiple consciousness through seeing oneself as a citizen of the world is presented on the basis of Appiah's cosmopolitanism (1997, 2006) and Selasi's model of the Afropolitan (2005), which specifically addresses people of African descent in a globalized world. Furthermore, a closer look is taken on the African Diasporas in the U.S., Europe and Austria to explore the history of people of African descent on these continents and establish similarities and differences among them. Studying diasporas leads to a shift in our perspective and understanding of our own and the culture and identities of others. Lastly, opinions and definitions of terms such as 'African Literatures' and 'Transcultural African Literatures' are discussed, as current developments show, that many writers, especially from the African continent, transcend national boundaries. They do not fit into established genres like migration

literature as they tell multiple stories that revitalize Africanness, as holds true for the novels *Americanah* and *Das Palmenhaus*.

The first analysis presents the development of a transcultural identity in *Americanah*'s main character Ifemelu, based on the theoretical basis given. In the beginning, Ifemelu's expectation of America in comparison to the actual reality that waits for her is explained. Secondly, her struggles within the new cultural environment such as unemployment and imposed black identities are examined. The third section analyzes her acculturation strategies, based on Berry (2005) and the influences of her crosscultural relationships. Lastly, it is shown how she developed a multiple consciousness through her transcultural experience.

The second part of the literary analysis deals with Hamza, the main character of *Das Palmenhaus* and his transcultural identity. Again, his expectations of the new home are discussed as well as his shifting between realities through his daydreams about his past. Then, the struggles he encounters are presented, which again are unemployment and imposed identities on foreigners. Next, his acculturation strategies are demonstrated as well as his crosscultural relationship to Sandra, his garden in paradise. As a last point, his multiple consciousness is illustrated and further compared to Ifemelu's development of a transcultural identity.

2. Theoretical Background: Concepts of Identity

The question of identity has become a pertinent issue due to migrational movements, multicultural environments and a world that is becoming more and more globalized. The large interest in the topic is characterized by “the process of accelerated modernization and globalization” and most of our behavior is based on our identities (Simon 1). Furthermore, identity plays a crucial role in the social life as it “results from interaction in the social world and in turn guides interaction in the social world” (Simon 2).

Different conceptualizations of identity in different academic disciplines are very heterogeneous. First of all, Stuart Hall and his three different conceptions of cultural identity needs to be mentioned. He describes the identity of the “enlightened subject”, the identity of the “sociological subject”, and the identity of the “post-modern subject”. In this respect, the identity of the “post-modern subject” is the one that is relevant in this context as it is “formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addresses in the cultural systems around us” (Hall, “Question” 277). Hall (“Cultural Identity” 393) also presents two ways of defining “cultural identity”, whereas one refers to the collective identity in which culture codes and historical experiences are shared, and the other one emphasizes differences and captures the past as well as the future of our existence. This means that cultural identity is not developed in a continuous process, but is marked by discontinuity, which holds especially true for people who have experienced colonialism, displacement or slavery. These people had different countries of origin, languages and beliefs but were “unified” as they were separated from their past lives (Hall, “Cultural Identity” 395-96).

More recently, Horatschek and Pistor-Hatam (1) have come to explain Identity as a continuity that sustains changes over time, an integration of inner and outer perspectives, an effect of previously given characteristics or as individual achievement to be accomplished. Omoniyi and White (1) have additionally described identity as “non-fixed, non-rigid and always (co-)constructed by individuals of themselves or by people who share certain core values or perceive another group as having such values”. This has also been articulated by Hall (“Cultural Identity” 395), as he states that it does not have “a fixed origin” and it is “always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth”. All definitions and descriptions of identity help to

understand the complexity of the concept and serve as a basis to examine identity in our post-modern world.

Identity is fluid as we adapt our language, gestures and behavior to different contexts (Bradatan, Popan and Melton 176). In a contemporary understanding of “identity” social factors such as ethnicity and race, gender, family, socio-economy, nationality and religion play an important role. These factors are all part of a collective dimension of identity which categorizes people into groups of “kinds of person” and puts labels on them. Once these labels are applied, others have certain expectations of people’s identities and behavior, which is not necessarily in agreement with a person’s actual identification (Appiah “Ethics” 65-66). In the development of identity, also changes due to migration and acculturation are involved (Bhugra 135). As collective identities provide a model and norms for how people of a “certain kind” should behave, it has an impact on their personal identity development, especially in societies where not all individuals are treated with equal dignity (Appiah “Ethics” 108).

Another important factor in the discussion of identity is the role of nations, which are described as “imagined communities” (Anderson in Simon) or social constructions. Traditions, symbols and rituals that have been developed in a nation therefore also have an influence on our actions and self-conceptions. Bradatan, Popan and Melton (170) explain that in the Western nations “national identity is based on “common historical memories, myths, symbols and traditions”, which lead to the assumption that a foreigner or immigrant who adopts to their norms will be recognized as a “member of their nation”. Yet, it is discussable whether being a member of a nation equals a person’s cultural identity. In an interview with TEDGlobal Taiye Selasi discusses why she does not agree with defining a human being through a nation. Her argument is that countries are invented concepts that can disappear, appear and fail, so they cannot be “a basis for understanding a human being”. Rather, according to Selasi (2014), is it the local experience of each individual that defines where one is from, influenced by history and culture. Moreover, cultural identity often transcends national borders, as Triandis (511-12) records:

Culture is to society what memory is to the person; specifies designs for living that have proven effective in the past, ways of dealing with social situations and ways to think about the self and social behavior that have been reinforced in the past. It includes systems of symbols that facilitate interaction [...], rules of the game of life that have been shown to “work” in the past. When a person is

socialized in a given culture, the person can use custom as a substitute for thought, and save time.

Moreover, modern nation states are characterized by flows of migration throughout their histories which makes it impossible to define a culture within national boundaries, as the relationship between the local and the global cultures is too complex (Bhatia and Ram 11). Even the idea of a common identity for example in Europe becomes more complex through the presence of non-EU-migrants, which make the continent even more socially, culturally and linguistically diverse (Gebauer & Schwarz Lausten 1). Therefore, in a globalized world, cultural exchange and mutual understanding of nations holds an important position as people of different nations interact in social situations and have to negotiate meaning and develop common symbols and rules. Already Stuart Hall (299) has talked about “integrating and connecting communities and organizations in new space” that make the world more interconnected.

Nevertheless, in a more interconnected world the society becomes a “complex and multifaceted mosaic of interdependent but highly differentiated parts”, which results in an equally differentiated and complex social person with multiple identities and multiple sets of structured role relationships (Simon 23). Simon (25) assigns five characteristics of identities: First, they are relational, meaning that they “reflect people’s differentiated positions”. Second, they are socially constructed as there is a constant negotiation of meaning through social interaction. Third, they are structured by the social context they reflect. Fourth, “people typically have multiple identities”, which reflect multiple and differentiated roles available. And fifth, as already mentioned before, identities have social consequences as they are a “source of motivation, shape social interaction, direct individual and collective behaviour and can thus also impact on social structure”. Simon’s concept serves as a bridge between the social structure, society, and the social person, referred to as the self. Keeping in mind that each individual holds multiple identities can improve our understanding of transnational identities and identities in an intercultural context, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

2.1. Globalization, Multiculturalism and Identity

As already touched on in the previous section, culture and identity are strongly related and their relation becomes more complex when two or more cultures are in contact. Culture is understood “a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group,

or humanity in general” (Williams 90). Initially it referred to “human activities through which nature was controlled”, but through encounters between cultures the term started to be applied to specific groups of people (Mikula 42). Humans create and transmit culture through the creation and use of symbols that convey a shared idea. Culture therefore is concerned with the meanings that are produced, circulated and exchanged (Thwaites, Davis & Mules 1).

Globalization has a strong impact on our understanding of culture and how identities are shaped in a multicultural environment, especially because the new immigrants are very diverse in terms of culture, religion, language, race and ethnicity (Grace 10, Suarez-Orozco 173). Most non-Westerners see globalization “as a form of westernization of the globe and a phenomenon threatening to destroy cultural diversity” (Ojaide 45). However, there are always two sides to diversification: on the one hand, it brings the danger of intolerance and conflict, on the other hand it allows unity between individuals and societies of different cultures (Suarez-Orozco 196).

2.1.1. Multiculturalism vs. Transculturalism

Multiculturalism shows the relations within societies and is understood as a kind of “next to each other” of different cultures. In a multicultural and multiracial society organizations and institutions reflect the social structure which often results in inclusion or exclusion due to race (Stolarczyk-Gembiak 193, Omoniyi and White 14). This is connected to “the structural imposition of white supremacy” that “gave whites a head-start in multiracial societies” which Salisu argues is “creating an illusion that civilization, development, modernization, progress, advancement, etc. means to catch up with whites”. But catching up with whites is not leading towards a better future, but it is necessary for non-whites to find their space and work towards their own future without supporting whiteness (Salisu 35). Since the Renaissance Europeans saw themselves as racially dominant, supported by the economy, science and politics, whereas Africans were always on the bottom of hierarchical constructions (Asante 2009).

As globalization increases the diversity of western societies one needs to understand that “the man in the street” is no longer white and male (Cooper 7). People connect with people from different origins, which is not only based on “human universal”. It needs to be understood, that those who are part of the cross-cultural conversation need to find out what they have in common and as a next step discover in what they

differ (Appiah "Cosmopolitanism" 97). Cultural contacts across national borders allow the development of transnational communities. No culture can be understood as an isolated construct, but there are threshold spaces and interconnections between all cultures. Hybridization of cultures is an ongoing process which decreases the boundaries between the own and the other culture (Stolarczyk-Gembiak 190-93).

In Africa, ethnicity plays a more important role than race, as since the end of the nineteenth century homogenous ethnic kingdoms no longer exist and the created nation states are ethnically diverse. African culture can therefore be understood as a "mosaic of multiculturalism" (Grace 138). The ethnical heterogenization within the states resulted in competition and distrust between different ethnic groups, the creation of immigrant communities and consequently an "ethnic minority" identity phenomenon (Omoniyi and White 15). These developments can be compared to racially white mainstream in European and North American cities.

It is emphasized by Grace (11) that through migration and globalization our "traditional concepts of home/abroad, global/local and national/international are being made obsolete". Zygmunt Baumann (4) argues that "being local in a globalized world is a sign of social deprivation and degradation". In order to become a global citizen, Suarez-Orozco (174) formulates traits such as code-switching, bilingualism, cognitive flexibility and the ability to "move fluidly from context to context" (188).

In this matter, the internet plays an important role, as it connects people all over the world and facilitates communication across the world. It makes so called "cybermobility" possible as it allows exchange of ideas, images and celebration of the self (Gehrmann 63). Technical devices as well as people become more and more "detached from particular physical spaces" (Gumbrecht 231 in Frank 108). Also, global media, global marketing and global brands drive the adoption of a global identity (Suarez-Orozco 196). This can affect especially people living in villages, who feel threatened by the changes of their lifestyles due to globalization. They have to realize that there is no such thing as "cultural purity" (Appiah "Cosmopolitanism" 113). According to Appiah ("Cosmopolitan" 11) every human already lives "a cosmopolitan life, enriched by literature, art, and film that come from many places, and that contains influences from many more". In his perception of the cosmopolitan it is best to "agree to differ" (Appiah "Cosmopolitanism" 11) and not forget that "each human being has responsibilities to every other" (Appiah "Cosmopolitanism" xiv). For Appiah

("Cosmopolitanism" 146), the cosmopolitans think that they "might learn something even from those [they] disagree with. [They] think people have a right to their own lives".

However, the more connected people are via social media and the internet, the more isolated they become in real life and many experience some kind of "dis-placement". Thus, being "at home" in the sense of a national belonging also seems to be erased and people become "non-citizens". The idea of cosmopolitanism tries to capture these changes, which can be liberating but also threatening (Grace 12). Appiah describes a form of "rooted cosmopolitanism" ("Patriots" 618), which means that if one decides to move, he takes the cultural practices, the roots, with him. He defends "the freedom to create oneself" as the fundamental thought of the cosmopolitan model (625). The Afropolitan model, which is also based on rootedness and mobility, derives from this idea and will be dealt with in section 2.2.4.

Through globalization, travelling has become a lot easier, especially for citizens of Europe and the USA. Hence, it is easier to approach different cultures all around the globe and become also more sensitive to other cultures. The Nigerian writer Chris Abani illustrated in an interview how we all are somehow transnational:

We are more transnational than we believe. We are more peripatetic than we believe; we are more nomadic in that sense. We are more mongrelized than we would ever like to accept [...] We're all transnational, either in the real sense of a passport, where you've lived in different countries and have spent life migrating through different continents, or in the way in which culture mixes" (Aycock 5,7).

His statement captures our contemporary lives, as all citizens enjoy the comfort of mobility and being able to move freely from one place to another. Through that we allow features of other cultures and nationalities to become part of our own and making us transcultural beings. Still, there is a difference between visiting another cultural environment or moving to another cultural environment as the latter demands to take in traits of the foreign culture. Moreover, identifying as a transnational being depends on the group, the host country and on the historical period as well as on the combinations between them. In earlier times, immigrants were forced to adapt quickly to the new culture and to integrate to the new society, but "contemporary migrants" can stay connected to their social networks in their country of origin which allows them to "navigate between two worlds" and feel sense of belonging in two cultures (Bradatan, Popan and Melton 171, 175). Being transnational is what Marks (78 in Cooper 7-8)

also describes as being “created in translation and transcultural movement”. Transnationalism is a known phenomenon; however, “contemporary transnationalism” is described to have “more rapid and dense linkages between immigrants and the countries of origin”. New communication and transportation technologies facilitate transnational connections and also allow immigrants to still contribute to the development of their country of origin (Konadu-Agyemang, Takyi and Arthur 274).

2.1.2. Developing a transcultural identity

First, the terms transnational and transcultural need to be distinguished. Transnational has been used as an anchor term for the relationship of migrants to their nation-states of origin. It is related to the crossing of borders, although at the same time it dissolves the border and establishes a connection between the nation-state of origin and the nation-state of destination (Vargas-Silva 69; Glick Schiller et al. 49). Vargas-Silva (70) further points out that transnational “implies the ‘translation’ of national cultures”, which, as discussed earlier, is a problematic term, because a national culture is non-existent, but rather do countries consist of different cultural groups. Transcultural therefore refers to the relationship of person/ migrant to their own culture and the new cultural environment that leads to the development of a transcultural identity.

Identities in a transcultural context are elaborated by Simon (134-135) who notes an increase of cultural contact through immigration in the US and Western Europe. Still, the US as well as Western Europe discriminate against people of color and the new immigrants are confronted with prejudice and social exclusion. (Suarez-Orozco 181). This can have positive and negative effects on the social life according to the intergroup contact hypothesis by Allport (1954/1979), which says that intercultural contacts can reduce negative stereotyping, prejudice and intergroup discriminations. In this case, groups must have equal status and must strive for working and living together. Unfortunately, in reality the groups only rarely are of equal status and consequently the conflicts predominate (Allport 1954/1979 in Simon 135-140).

Acculturation, a concept that has been proposed by Berry (e.g., Berry 1980, 1997, 2005) describes the “dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (Berry “Acculturation” 698). Importantly, Berry (699) mentions that it is a process that does not stop at one point but “continues for as long as there are culturally

different groups in contact” and that the adaptations should be mutual. Nevertheless, one culture is often dominant which leads to assimilation only on the side of the inferior one (Bhugra 134). During the process of acculturation, although it is generally taking place on the group level, a person’s identity is likely to change, for example their concept of their self (Bhugra 135). It involves different strategies that are used by individuals in contact with another culture: “assimilation”, “integration”, “separation” and “marginalization” (Bhatia and Ram 4). Berry and Sam (318) see “integration” as the optimal acculturation strategy as it “appears to be a consistent predictor for more positive outcomes” and individuals preserve their home culture but also actively involve themselves with the host culture.

When this fusion is taking place, transcultural identity is being formed. Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc (48) explain in their study that the concept of immigrants is changing, stating that they should be understood as “transmigrants” who “forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement”. Especially for children of immigrants who left their country of origin in bitterness, finding a connection to both cultures, often proposes a difficult task (Suarez Orozco 179; Bradatan, Popan and Melton 173). If the parents raise their children without introducing them to the culture and the language of their origin country, children are less likely to develop a “transnational profile” (Bradatan, Popan and Melton 173). However, Suarez-Orozco (192-193) refers to studies by Gibson (1988) and Ogbu and Herbert (1998) who proved that children of immigrants forging a transcultural identity are more likely to achieve academic success in comparison to those who do not. Developing a transcultural identity therefore helps on the individual level but also benefits society as they are thought to be “particularly adaptive” in times of globalization (Suarez-Orozco 193).

Furthermore, immigrants or so called transmigrants often feel connected to their birth place on a local level, rather than on a national one, which again supports the use of the term transcultural rather than transnational (Bradatan, Popan and Melton 172). Selasi (“Multi Local” 2014) goes one step further by calling herself a “multi-local”, as she argues that neither multinational nor international can define a person, but it is the local area where you have been and the relationship you have with where you are that make up your identity. Her statement relates to how Frank (110) explained globalization, which on the one hand eliminates “body and space” but on the other hand also attempts “recuperation of those dimensions in new ways”, where “the

migrant is weightless and rooted in multiple places”. Instead of seeing the human only in relation to his nation-state of birth, globalization offers mobility to find himself at home in different places at the same time.

However, depending on the acculturation strategy, the reaction in certain situations can vary and therefore different problems may occur. Also, because the acculturation process “is not a matter of one’s individual strategy where one has a free choice” (Bhatia and Ram 13), but different immigrant groups might face different challenges depending on the host culture. The following section will go into more detail about the struggles of migration in connection to acculturating into a new environment.

2.1.3. Struggles connected to migration

Migrating to another geographical area is always a process of a social change, no matter if it takes place transnationally or from a rural to an urban area. Individuals need to leave their social network because of economic, political, educational or other reasons in order to settle permanently in a different geographical area. This means that they leave their social context such as family and friends, jobs, living situations and in case of transnational migration also their language (Suarez-Orozco 174). The host environment however, “instead of facilitating the building of a new home [often] rejects the migrant on racial or cultural grounds” which puts the migrant in a troublesome position (Steiner 4).

Before the process of acculturation, as explained in the previous section, can begin, migrants therefore experience “loss, dislocation, alienation and isolation” (Bhugra 129). Then of course it depends on the personality traits of a person how one can deal with this stress and is able to settle down in the new environment. Berry (708) explains acculturative stress as a “stress reaction to life events that are rooted in the experience of acculturation”. Whenever two cultures are interacting, stress phenomena are produced. Depending on the acculturation strategies different behavioral shifts could be observed, whereas the fewest changes result from the separation strategy and the most from the assimilation strategy (Berry 1997). In connection to acculturative stress, the integration strategy is the least stressful, as individuals have successfully adopted features from the host culture but have not lost values from their home culture. Nevertheless, for people who are racially marked it is always more challenging to find themselves part of the new cultural environment (Suarez-Orozco 178). Especially

because the concept of integration is misinterpreted by most people, as they only see that the immigrants shall integrate into their culture whereas the real meaning is “bring together or incorporate (parts) into a whole” (Salisu 145). All religions or ethnic groups should have the same opportunities, but this is only rarely the case which is why a lot of immigrants stay in a community with people of the same origin. Choosing to live in a neighborhood mainly populated by minority groups can complicate the situation even more, as living in an ethnic enclave fosters the contact to people from the same ethnic community but limits the interaction with people from the “mainstream culture” (Suarez-Orozco 178). It also leads to little identification with the host culture and a feeling of being marginalized (Suarez-Orozco 180).

Bhugra, professor of mental health and cultural diversity in London, has studied the influence of migration and acculturation on people’s mental health and found out that “persistent problems in cultural adaptation are associated with higher risks for long-term mental health problems”. In this respect, the type and cause of migration also plays a role. Other factors outlined by Bhugra and Becker (19) that can lead to struggles in the social adjustment are “the duration of the relocation, the similarity or dissimilarity between the culture of origin and the culture of settlement, language and social support systems, acceptance by the ‘majority’ culture, access and acceptance by the expatriate community, employment and housing”.

Selasi (2005) sees potential problems for transnational African people in being “lost in transnation”, when they are “Brown-skinned without a bedrock sense of ‘blackness,’ on the one hand; and often teased by African family members for ‘acting white’ on the other”. Exactly this feeling of being in-between cultures is what DuBois (1903) referred to as “double consciousness”. However, in a multicultural environment, Gates (2003) demands more than just “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings”, which describes the need of the development of a multiple consciousness for people living outside their cultural environment of origin.

2.1.4. Multiple-Consciousness and Afropolitanism

“We are fitted not just with double consciousness; we possess multiple-consciousness, for we perceive the world from multiple perspectives”, is how Eze (2016) captures the essence of the Afropolitan model, introduced by Taiye Selasi (2005). For Eze, being Afropolitan means to be able to relate to other people and see the “beauty in otherness”

rather than focusing on the differences between them. She (“Rethinking” 239) also argues that Afropolitanism can be viewed as a “cultural face of cosmopolitanism” as it applies the idea of cosmopolitanism to the African continent and to people of African descent. Being Afropolitan is an “effect of globalization and late modernity” and it is characterized by mobility, not only geographically but the inner mobility of having an open mind, negotiating reality without losing one’s roots in one’s heart (Rask Knudsen and Rahbek 1, Eze “Rethinking”). Neumann and Rippl (164) also stress that the model focuses on “spaces of entanglement” between Africa and the western world keeping in mind “locally embedded practices and situated knowledge”. There is also criticism of the concept, such as superficiality, class bias and elitism (Gehrmann 2010, Eze “Rethinking”). Braidotti (6) also notices that the model does not report the differences between people who have a high level of mobility and the vast majority who is rather immobile, which criticizes the model for its elitism. Still, Selasi’s model contributes to the unfinished decolonization of Africa and “proposes some moral re-examination of the world” (Gehrmann 64, Eze “Rethinking” 244). Moreover, it provides new opportunities for Africans in the world, attitudes toward them and narratives of the future (Gikandi 10).

Seeing Afropolitanism as a challenge can further encourage dialogue and discussions about the meaning of “being African” in the globalized world (Rask Knudsen and Rahbek 3). Rask Knudsen and Rahbek (16) see Afropolitanism in relation to Appiah’s idea of cosmopolitanism and argue that it does have a political aspect to it as it is concerned with Africa and its relation to the world. Ooko-Ombaka (2-3) points out that as Afropolitanism is driven by Africans, “the term evokes for [her] a desire of our generation to articulate and make concrete the impact of our smorgasbord of lived experience across Africa and the rest of the world”. In this belief, it also serves as a countermovement to Afro-pessimism, a movement during the political and economic crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, that presented Africa as a hopeless underdeveloped continent “imprisoned in its past” (Gikandi 9) as it seeks to change the one-sided image of Africa promoted in western media and fosters multi-local thinking (Neumann and Rippl 160). Africans who see themselves as “citizens of the world” furthermore shape African identities in the diaspora but also on the continent itself (Neuman and Rippl 162).

The creation of a multiple consciousness also refers to the development of a global identity as the world becomes more and more connected. This means that one does not only feel a sense of belonging to a local culture but also to a global one which leads to more unity among people from different local cultures. The values of the global culture “necessarily emphasizes tolerating and even celebrating differences” (Suarez-Orozco 196-197). Globalization has turned our former concept of identity, of being shaped by geography and culture seen as oppositional concepts into a relational concept (Eze “Rethinking” 235).

Applying the concept of multiple consciousness to the African continent, Mbembe (“Ways” 2) points out that there is no “single way of seeing Africa”, but “plurality is the norm”. According to Mbembe, not only the history of Africa, but also of the rest of the world “has always been marked by, if not cultural mixing, then at least interweaving of worlds” (Mbembe, “Afropolitanism” 28). Furthermore, the new generation of African emigrants are multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multilingual “cultural mutts” whose task is to redefine what it means to be African (Eze “Rethinking” 235, Selasi 2005). In order to make sense of themselves they must take into account national, racial and cultural dimensions and therefore need to be willing to “complicate” Africa, as Selasi puts it. Being transcultural, transnational, and Afropolitan includes appreciation and maintenance of one’s culture of origin while being a citizen of the world. While at the end of the 20th century a common identity for all dark-skinned people was imagined, the new generation faces new challenges of defining themselves in a “runaway world” that is growing smaller through globalization (Giddens in Eze, “Rethinking” 237). Europeans, Asians and Africans can no longer be seen in opposition to each other. Sonderegger (14) emphasizes that living in the modern world “offers ample opportunities to look at global realities in one common frame of reference, neglecting neither differences nor sameness”. Therefore, we should not exclude each other, but we should seek to learn from each other and relate to each other as we are all humans (Eze 2014). Certainly, this poses a challenge to those “entering a new space as well as [to] those [...] receiving” newcomers, as everyone needs to “learn to negotiate each other’s differences” (Suarez-Orozco 196, Cooper 8).

At this point it is necessary to differentiate between transnational or transcultural and diasporic identities. Bradatan, Popan and Melton (171) define transnationalism as “keeping strong ties to the origin country” and diaspora as “a group living out of their

origin country, keeping a strong attachment to a homeland and maintaining a distinctive profile within the host country". Bhatia and Ram (12) explain that diaspora refers to immigrant groups who have their own institutions in the host country to maintain their culture and language. Still, they are in constant negotiation with their cultural identity as diasporic communities are dynamic and interminable (Bhatia and Ram 13, Grace 18). Similar to transnational and transcultural identities the diaspora breaks with the concept of local and global as is open to change and transcends borders.

As Gates (31) puts it, "multiplicity is no longer seen as the problem but as a solution – a solution that confines identity itself. Double consciousness, once a disorder, is now a cure". Being able to incorporate two or more cultures in one's identity as well as developing a feeling of belonging to a global culture can only be beneficial due to the ongoing processes of diversification in our societies. Being open to people and their cultures as well as allowing them to maintain their cultures of origin facilitates their integration in the new environment also prepares oneself for a multicultural society and seeing oneself as a global citizen appreciating differences (Suarez-Orozco 197-198). Mbembe ("Afropolitanism" 29) mentions that people who have moved and experienced different worlds unintentionally develop a transnational cultural identity through the ability of expressing themselves in more than one language. Tarek Eltayeb, author of one of the novels under analysis later, also has multiple roots and commented in the interview that he feels Sudanese, Egyptian and Austrian "without boundaries". Countries are just lines on a map consisting of cities with different names and he incorporates three of them. Also, he mentioned that he sees his friends "without nationality". Sharing the same mother tongue with someone is of course a bonus, but it is also no reason to be friends with someone.

Selasi's concept of the Afropolitan made it possible for her to make sense of her multiple roots. Different from imposed African identities that stigmatize people of African descent, the Afropolitan model offers new possibilities of identifying oneself as African in the global world. She implies, through the use of personal pronouns like "we" and "us", that it is possible that more Africans living in the diaspora share her views, which creates an Afropolitan collective (Rask Knudsen and Rahbek 39-40).

2.2. The New African Diaspora

[T]hink of African identities as both rooted in specific local geographies but also transcendental of them. To be Afropolitan is to be connected to knowable African communities, nations, and traditions; but it is also to live a life divided across cultures, languages, and states. It is to embrace and celebrate a state of cultural hybridity – to be of Africa and of other worlds at the same time. (Gikandi 9)

A notable point made by Gikandi is that he does not see diasporic African identities “between” but “across” cultures, languages and states. Living outside of one’s country of origin is seen as enriching one’s identity; however, it is always connected to struggles and challenges, as the majority of immigrants in the new diaspora left their countries under bad conditions (Okpewho 9).

The term “African diaspora” appeared between the 1950s and 1960s according to Shepperson (44) and is often used to “express the links and commonalities among groups of African descent throughout the world” (Hayes Edward 3). Zeleza (32) describes it as simultaneously referring to a

process, a condition, a space, and a discourse. [...] It entails a culture and a consciousness, sometimes diffuse and sometimes concentrated in a ‘here’ separate from a ‘there’; [...] simultaneously a state of being and a process of becoming, [...] a navigation of multiple belongings.

Possessing a multiple consciousness is therefore also a characteristic of a diasporic identity which is dynamic and changing. Interestingly, Zeleza (33) mentions that a diasporic consciousness is a form of group consciousness that is often discovered and circulated by intellectuals rather than by a diasporic community itself. This raises the question of how a diasporic community is defined and how the African diaspora can actually be studied. There is again not a single way to study and present the African diaspora, but academics and intellectuals can only present their own viewpoint within their field of study, as they might be part of an African diaspora or present a viewpoint from the outside. In my project, I will present an outsider viewpoint on the African diaspora in the US and Austria, in relation to their representation in literature. Both authors are part of different diasporas and tell stories of fictional characters and how they became part of a diaspora as they left their country of origin. This project seeks to show that despite the geographical distance between Austria and America, the nations share certain characteristics especially regarding the environment they create for people of African descent that try to establish their life in of these countries.

Globalization also plays a role in the configuration and development of the new African diasporas, as the migration of Africans since the 1980s expanded once more over the world. This last wave of migration is defined by structural adjustment and consists mostly of professional elites, traders, refugees and students. Families are located in different countries and continents; hence, different diasporas interact with each other (Zezeza 34-53). The development of new diasporas also affects time and space, history and geography for Africans as well as Europeans – and Americans – and calls for a shift in our perspectives and understandings of the local, the regional and the global world (Fabre and Benesch xiv; Byfield 2). Thandika Mkandawire (2) points out that “diasporas played an important role in the reinvention and revitalization of the ‘home country’s’ identity and sense of itself. Fabre and Benesch (xiii) see it as a “promising, powerful new idea” that is dealt with in different scholarly fields and is

challenging new modes of thinking and assumptions [...] about the unfolding of contemporary cross-cultural or multicultural societies and communities, [...] the past, the power relations, frontiers and boundaries, about cultural transmission, communication and translation, about revolt or revolution. [...] It opens new ways of approaching familiar issues [such as] migratory flux, identity formation, structures of societies as well as structures of mentality and emotion”.

Challenging power relations and boundaries is an important point as the “struggle for identity is implicitly linked to struggle for political power” and Africans must refrain from “seeing identity as something one is born into” (Salisu 63).

Furthermore, the original term “diaspora” has been replaced by its plural form, as there is not a collective relation to the homeland “Africa”, but the cultural, linguistical and political diversity leads to the assumption of multiple diasporas (Fabre and Benesch xvi-xvii). These diasporas can also be overlapping, as some people might see themselves as part of more than one diaspora. An example given by Byfield (6) are Nigerians, Ethiopians and Senegalese in New York, who all somehow form part of the African diaspora, but have a different relationship to each other and to the continent, which results in “shared and competing interests”.

2.2.1. African Immigration in the U.S

According to *In Motion*, the African-American Migration Newsletter, over the past thirty years, more immigrants from Africa have come to the United States than during the transatlantic slave trade. It is further reported that they make up 6 percent of all

immigrants in the US, Nigerians being the largest community, followed by Ethiopians and Ghanaians. According to the findings of a study conducted by Kofi K. Apraku (11), for a majority of African immigrants the economic situation in the home country was a “somewhat important” or “very important” factor in deciding to emigrate. Five major factors identified by Gordon (79) for African migration are “(1) Globalization and integration of the world economy, (2) Economic and political development failures in Africa, (3) Immigration and refugee policies in Europe and the United States, (4) Anglophone background, (5) Historic ties of sending countries to the United States.”

In American society minority groups are still often homogenized in their racial or ethnic identity, which also holds true for the black community. The growing presence of African immigrants challenges these perceptions as they often “embrace multiple identities” (Clark 169-170). Arthur (287) has observed that the new African immigrant diaspora in North America is “very dynamic both in form and content” as they are coming “from every geographic region of the continent – from Francophone, Anglophone, Spanish and Portuguese Africa”.

For many African immigrants, the goal is to achieve permanent residency and holding an American passport, which consequently will naturalize them as Americans. The problem for Africans to establish their own identity as American citizens is that cultural differences between black people are likely to be overlooked as African societies are still ignored or misrepresented on the media (Okpewho 11, Ojo-Ade 215). Since Africans were brought to America on slave ships their identity has been “shaped and defined by others”, which results in the misconception that all Africans have “one culture, one voice, one ideology” (Clark 179). The arriving immigrants become part of a homogenous black identity in the United States, which is linked to negative stigmas, makes them suffer from discrimination and prejudice and makes it hard for them to construct identities separate from those of African Americans (Awokoya 257-258, 261). In Femi Ojo-Ade’s words, “[y]ou arrive in paradise with pride and qualifications to contribute and enjoy the fruits of your labor only to realize that your quality is considered secondary to the color of your skin”. Chimamanda Adichie (2014) also commented on how she became black in America, as in her country of origin, Nigeria, blackness has never been an issue. Being black in America, as she explains, “comes with baggage”, which is why she had problems identifying herself as black. “Learning blackness” is what participants in Awokoya’s study (271-72) reported as understanding

ways of being black in America apart from their skin color. This means that they had to learn how to present themselves and interact with African American peers in a way that adhered to the profile of black people presented in the mainstream media. Still, this can be very challenging for their identity, as they learn how to adapt their behavior and language according to the context but they cannot freely express themselves as individuals apart from the expected black identity imposed on them. As already mentioned before, in Africa, ethnicity is more significant for someone's identity than race is, which makes it even more difficult for first generation immigrants to understand and adapt to the prejudices linked to being black (Grace 138, Clark 179).

The problem of identification as African in America becomes especially crucial for African immigrant parents in the raising of their children. While the parents might still find it easier to keep a connection to Africa and visit their original homes, their children are born into the "comfortable life in America", which of course depends on their social class (Okpewho 10). Adichie (2014), however, proposes that one's sense of home is also connected to where you are at the moment, as home changes as you leave and if you go back it will not be the way you have created it in your mind. Selasi ("Multi-local", 2014) goes one step further and says that one is not able to "go back", because time moves on, we change, countries change and places change.

As proved by interviews conducted by Clark between 2005 and 2007 parents, local immigrant communities and whether or not a person is born in Africa play a role in the self-identification of a person as either African-American or African (173-177). Awokoya (264-265) further identified school, peer environments and the media as influential factors among immigrant youth. As they become "Americanized", personal interactions as well as media representations of African-Americans have an impact on how they perceive African American peers as well as themselves.

The relationship between Africans and African Americans is a complex issue worth discussing, as it is marked by stereotypes and misunderstandings due to "cultural barriers and social and economic difference" (Arthur 77-78, Ojo-Ade 218). Scholars like Clarence E. Walker (61) however argue that there does exist an "emotional, cultural and psychological connection" between Africans and African Americans. Still, it cannot be overlooked that both groups do not know about each other's culture and past as interviews conducted by Darboe show that almost half of the African

immigrants interviewed (48 percent) and over half of the African Americans (62 percent) hold stereotypes against each other (16-17).

The education in American schools and the media further contributes to a one-sided perspective on Africa. Schools often take on a Eurocentric perspective and consciousness and the media representations of Africa and its cultures foster stereotypical images (Darboe 19). Young African immigrants in Awokoya's study also expressed that they had the feeling of being representatives of "the continent of Africa" and being given a "role of ambassador" in school. They further stated that the images their teachers and classmates had of African people were mainly negative and due to a lack of information (268-269).

Another point is that Africans as well as African Americans blame each other for their histories. African Americans blame Africans for selling them into slavery and Africans accuse African Americans for being too American and uneducated (Ojo-Ade 218). Ojo-Ade (219), however, does not see the problem only between those groups, but in the ones imposing identities on Africans and African Americans, in Europe and America. Already Josephine Moraa Moikobu (192) stated in her book on Black American and African identification:

The fact that these strain-causing elements do not come from Africans or their black American counterparts but are perceived as coming from somewhere outside these two groups; they come from white who are said to have deliberately spawned myths and stereotypes to demean black peoples and keep them deliberately separated and isolated so they can be dominated.

This view is also shared by interviewees of Darboe (3), who argue that Africans and African Americans are kept apart by stereotypes and myths imposed mostly by the white population.

The current creation of so-called "pop culture identities", led largely by people of African descent in the North American diaspora, help to "elevate the status of the person of African descent". As Europe has access to these new identities through global popular urban culture, they can be used to win credibility and improve their social, political and economic independence in order to make the society they live in less racist (Salisu 70-71).

2.2.2. African Immigration in Europe

Africans came to Europe even before the transatlantic slave trade, like the Moors to the Iberian Peninsula in the eleventh century (Midlo Hall 4). In more recent years, migration from Africa to Europe has been given more attention in the media due to numerous Africans trying to cross the Mediterranean ocean to Europe. The images conveyed are very negative and portray migration as some form of flood or invasion. (de Haas 1305-1306).

People of African descent have contributed largely to what we nowadays consider as European culture and giving the literary field a name helps acknowledging African writers as part of a diverse European literary community (Brancato 1-2). Brancato (3) points out that the term “Afro-European” can be either too inclusive or too exclusive and is generally connected to the discussion of multiculturalism in the European Union. To Kwanzaa Millenium (in Kano 2011) it is a “generic term to designate the black communities of Europe”. However, they are very diverse concerning their geographical origins, different generations and different legal statuses. He comes to the conclusion that there is no such thing as an “Afro-European identity”, but rather a “black urban Europe where African-American, Afro-Caribbean and urban cultures meet in different ways”. Nevertheless, he calls for a harmonization of the black communities in order to make an Afro-European identity arise.

In 2009, Kano gave his opinion on what black people or people of African descent in Europe have in common, referring to the categorization within Europe “as a certain kind of people” even though racial slavery does no longer exist. According to him black people in Europe are still seen as foreigners and are perceived as “the Other”. It seems that black people do not fit into a European identity, although their presence is a “logic consequence of the African-European history” (Kano 2009).

It further needs to be mentioned that the situation of African people in Europe is very different for example in France or England compared to the German-speaking world, due to colonization. Both countries have colonial ties to Africa and larger diaspora communities. Although their societies are more pluralistic, the diaspora communities have experienced alienation because the political and societal leaders did not offer the same opportunities to all members of the society, but people of African descent were disadvantaged. This created more crime, hatred and riots in major cities of France and England. Although Salisu mentions that such riots are unlikely in the German-speaking

world, because a smaller number of disenfranchised youth, nothing is impossible (Salisu 118-20). The next section will focus more on the situation of people of African descent in Austria, as one of the novels under analysis in this thesis revolves around experiences of an African immigrant in Austria.

2.2.3. African Immigration in Austria

According to the 2010 annual report about black people in Austria, published by Simon Inou and Beatrice Achaleke, over 40.000 people of African descent live in Austria, of which around 22.000 still hold the nationality of an African country. The majority comes from Egypt, followed by Nigeria, Tunisia, Ghana and South Africa (6). Unsurprisingly it is also reported that more than half of Africans in Austria live in Vienna (7).

The report includes an historical overview of black people in Austria by Walter Sauer (8-12), starting in 1517 and dedicating a large part to the slave trade from the Iberian Peninsula as well as from the Ottoman Empire to Austria. Between the 17th and 18th century 50 people of African descent were known by name, but there have been more. The most famous example of this time was Angelo Soliman, residing in Vienna between 1754 and 1796. He started as a valet and made it to a homeowner but was finally killed and his body displayed in the museum of natural history. Although slavery was abolished in 1811 in Austria and black people received more political independence, the society confronted them with racism. During the 19th and 20th centuries people of African descent mostly worked as domestic help or in the entertainment business. Many girls were brought to monasteries to become “civilized” and prepared for future missionary work in Africa. However, most of them got very ill, were traumatized and died early. During the 3rd Reich Sauer reports that the racist politics from Germany spread to Austria and around 60 Africans were in custody in Mauthausen and died there. Also, according to Salisu (158) during World War I many children of black soldiers and white mothers were sterilized to keep them from having children. This essentially “wiped out the first generation of multiple heritage children”. Sauer (12) further reports that after World War II our country has been whiter than ever before and slowly new “niches” opened for African migrants, the educational sector up front. In the winter term 1961/62, 639 students from African countries or colonies were recorded. Also, new embassies were constructed, cooperation on religious base were built through Nigerian theology students and the introduction of newspaper delivery

brought many Egyptians to Austria. Still, Africans remained in an outsider position and only less than 20 years ago on May 1, 1999 Marucs Omofuma, an asylum seeker from Nigeria was strangled to death on the airplane by police men who wanted to deport him to Lagos (no-racism.net).

Ebermann (2007) was probably the first one to discuss the situation of Africans particularly in Vienna. His study serves as a useful basis to understand their struggles of establishing a community and identities in Austria. Ebermann tries to fight against myths and stereotypes and wants to contribute to the normalization of the relationships between blacks and whites in Vienna. Results from interviews conducted between 1991-93 show that the majority of Africans do not feel at home in Vienna and experience it as an “Africa-hostile environment” (23). A more recent study conducted by Philipp and Starl in 2012 shows similar results, as 70 percent of the participants do not believe in the equality of blacks and whites in the Austrian legal system. Racial discrimination is especially high in the world of work. 40 percent of the participants were discriminated against at least once, a third was discriminated against by their superior. Also in the public space around half of the people said they had been subjected to racist harassment on public transport and in the street and 57 percent were stopped by the police and had to identify themselves. The most recent incident that went viral happened on Sunday, October 14, 2018, when the police asked a group of Afro-Austrians in a park to identify themselves and then expelled them from the park. The group of males was neither aggressive nor molesting any of the other people in the park and they reproach the police for racial profiling and racism (Vienna.at). 62 percent of the participants in Philip and Starl’s study feel that black people are still considered as foreign by the majority population and 76 percent of those find it incriminating. This result probably also holds true for the group of young Afro-Austrian rappers, who were born and raised in Austria and were still identified as potential threat to other people by the police.

As shown in the study and by the incident in the park, people of color still do not feel part of Austrian society and therefore, it is difficult to establish an Afro-Austrian identity here. Salisu (62-63) describes their identity as “wounded” as Africans in Austria cannot feel proud of their origin, because the Austrian system forces them into an inferior position. In order to make people of African descent (PAD’s) feel at home in Austria we need a “definite and distinct foundation of identity” that helps quickening the process of arresting social, political, economic and psychological predicaments they

face (Salisu 65). Salisu (29) believes that PAD's in the German-speaking world need to unify in order to establish a "common identity of their own" and "stop the problem of cultural dislocation". It is of importance that people develop a racial consciousness without discriminating against others (ibid. 31). Also, the founding of an "Afro-Austrian identity" can be a targeted measure to reduce the use of racist expressions and shedding a more positive light on PAD's in Austria (Salisu 163). Salisu (78) further argues that those who feel "confident with the terminology" must find the best way to say "here we are, the opinion of the others does matter on common issues, but neither their opinion about us nor their opinion about what concerns only us matters", and still maintain their alliances. In this respect Salisu calls for self-definition by PAD's in Austria, standing in for each other and feeling involved. Salisu (83) emphasizes that a "collective African identity in a space like Austria must do everything possible to seek not to undermine other folks" as it was done by Europeans.

As the population of PAD's is growing, also the youth is facing important challenges. Salisu (84) compares the situation of the African youth in Austria to what is happening in French and English societies, who have disenfranchised black youths. She fears that the situation could be even worse in Austria, because there is a smaller platform to celebrate African cultures and the integration that is happening "disunites and criticizes any attempt of foreign originated culture to take collective root in the country". The coexistence of ethnic groups and multiculturalism were a choice initiated by Europeans with roots in European expansion, that lead to unequal relations; nevertheless, PAD families in Austria have the right to call it their home, too (Salisu 86).

Anti-racism activist Beatrice Achaleke founded various clubs to strengthen the black European community as well as African identities in Austria. She defines herself as "black Austrian", but also as a global citizen, as she spent 25 years of her life in Cameroon and then 20 years in Austria before she moved to South Africa three years ago (Achaleke). She also struggled with finding herself as part of the Austrian society as she felt visible and exposed because of her skin color. Also, she was not aware that the Austrian white society already had an identity concept for people of color in which they are expected to fit in. She even arrived at a point where she felt like she had no identity at all, because she had to justify why she was in Austria. Although Achaleke is holding an Austrian passport and speaks German fluently she did never felt really accepted as an Austrian. This is also pointed out by Salisu (149), arguing that "certain

people are perceived as Austrians due to certain features and looks whereas some might be Austrians but not having those prescribed features and looks guaranteed they are never seen as Austrians". Expecting certain roles of people because of their appearance cause problems in a multicultural society and threatens a peaceful coexistence.

Until Beatrice Achaleke had her children she saw herself still as African, but then she defined herself as black Austrian and European, because this is the identity that she wanted for her children so they would be able to feel at home in Austria and Europe. However, Austrian society seems to make all PAD's suffer from "social precariousness" as "the cultural space does not allow the import of cultural traits from their African heritage" (Salisu 157).

Achaleke has arrived at a point where she sees herself as a global citizen, which gives her the opportunity to always redefine herself and choose an identity depending on where she is. It takes a long way and courage, especially in the German speaking world where people of color are still "denied a full measure of being [Austrian] while at the same time are disconnected from African cultural traditions creating [...] a dislocation [...] and the quality of being only partly centered in one's cultural and biological identity" (Asante 2008). Salisu (161-162) further comments that the Austrian system does not permit the creation of diasporic communities which makes it even more difficult to establish an Afro-Austrian identity, but also makes it inevitable for those who want to identify as Afro-Austrian to clearly define themselves. Imposed identities are used to classify people and are attached to politics. In the case of the black population they are still connected to slavery and racial discrimination and the media mostly mentions PAD's in connection to crime (Salisu 163).

Although children of African parents are becoming more and more in Austria, the debate on equal rights for all is still in its infancy but becomes more imperative. As opposed to being American, being Austrian is still linked to native ancestry and makes it therefore harder for people of color to become accepted, even if they were born and raised in Austria (Salisu 164-165). The challenge may lie in the "lack of intensity of a colonial past in Africa" (Salisu 175). However, the situation of PAD's in Austria contributes to many of them leaving again after receiving the citizen ship, because in other European countries they are given better opportunities than here, for example in France or England, countries with larger diasporas (Salisu 172).

Still, different establishments help to give the Afro-Austrian community a face and a voice, for example the fashion brand “Kids of the Diaspora”, founded by a young Austrian-born Nigerian designer in Vienna, or the magazine “Fresh – Black Austrian Lifestyle” whose mission is to improve the image of black people in Austrian media and to show a differentiated perspective on their lifestyles. The “VAW” (Vienna African Writers Club) further contributes to the exchange of literature by African writers or about Africa. They do not only host meetings, but also poetry slams open to the public. The opening of the first African bookstore in Austria called “Afri-Eurotext” is one more step forward toward the acceptance of Africans as part of Austrian and European culture and it offers the possibility to get to know African authors, literatures and cultures better. Dr. Daniel Romuald Bitouh, the owner of the bookstore, sees it as a way to establish himself in Austria, but also to stimulate and inspire others. He further stated in the interview that he recognizes interest among the Austrian population and authors of African descent in Austria for the literature offered in the store. Also, he argues that there is a strong necessity for Africans in Austria to take themselves out of the position of the victim and to start speak for themselves, no matter if they are first- or second-generation (Bitouh). Afri-Eurotext offers a fresh approach to the establishment of an Afro-Austrian identity as it is a place where people can discuss, but also consult information about African cultures and read literature from African authors in African as well as European languages. An important statement by Bitouh is that Afri-Eurotext should not be a place just for Africans or just for Europeans, but for everyone who is interested. It should be a place of cultural encounter, exchange, and fusion.

2.3. Contemporary African Literatures

Contemporary African writing refers to literature produced during the first decades of the 21st century and creates “a sense of continuity and renewal” of African literature. Characteristics of this new generation of writers are discourses on gender, language and identity as they are located between “inherited traditions and their individual talents”. Also, they put their African experience into the context of a global culture (Allan xiv-xv).

The diffusion of African immigrants over different countries further leads to African writers being “the most transcultural and transnational group of individuals anywhere

in the world” (Ojaide 43). They are also part of the “worldwide phenomenon of migration and globalization” which influences their cultural identities as well as the content and form of their writing (Ojaide 43). Therefore, one cannot simply talk about “African Literature” of “African writers”, because contemporary “African writers” come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and the label “African writer” is very “expansive, pluralistic and inclusive”. On the one hand this can create a collective identity, but on the other hand it does not take into account the individuality of the writers of African descent (Salami-Boukari xviii, Bady 1). Bady (3) argues that the concept of African literature “served a particular purpose in a particular time” but it becomes intangible in times of globalization considering that many “African writers” are also Americans or of any other nationality.

Amuta (1-2) already demanded a greater understanding of African literature, criticizing that Africa is still perceived as “undifferentiated socio-cultural continuum” and ignored for its heterogeneity. The conflict she is describing has to do with the definition of African literature and African writers who remain a “victim of centuries of denigration and exploitation” (3). Amuta (37) further questions the existence of a so called “African World View” opposed to a western world view. Distinguishing between an African and a western world view would again support the idea of a homogenous mode of perceiving reality in Africa as well as in the Western world.

In contrast to African writers born before the 1960s, the younger writers are often children of emigrants, live outside the continent and have only vague memories of their country of origin and its environment and society, which is reflected in their writing (Ojaide 44-45). Africa becomes “a translocational space” (Grace 139) as much of the contemporary literature deals with topics such as migration, relocation of people and physical and spiritual journeys. As reported by Ojaide (44-45), many suffer from disconnection and rather than displaying a nostalgic image of their homeland, they adopt a more critical view on African history and culture. Also, Afropolitan writers like Taiye Selasi or Teju Cole, focus on “Africans of the world” and not about the people still living on the continent and their realities. Habila (2013) even argues that people do not read literature to see the “ugliness and injustice [that] is present in Africa”, because they can also watch the news. Bwesigye (2013) however is critical of this statement, as it denies the writers freedom to tell his own story. Bwesigye sees the danger in Habila’s opinion that the Afropolitan experience becomes the only one accepted in

contemporary African literature leading to a new “single story” of the contemporary African experience. However, as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie pointed out in her TEDTalk “the single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (2013). Therefore, Bwesigye (2013) calls for African writers to tell multiple stories, “the Afropolitan, the realist and those in between”.

In 2013 Selasi declared at the 13th international literature festival in Berlin that “African Literature doesn’t exist”. In her opinion states and, even more, continents are not a useful category for defining literature, as all art “transcends per force the geopolitical and personal borders with which we try to parse it” (2). Africa in particular is the “most culturally, religiously, ethnically and linguistically diverse” continent, which makes it even less possible for her to define “African literature”.

Notwithstanding, researchers (Ojaide 2008; Salami-Boukari 2012; Cooper 2013; Echeruo 2015) have tried to establish a common understanding of the New Generation of African Writers and their diverse backgrounds and current locations. Also, Brancato (1) calls for using the plural form “African literatures” to accentuate its plurality. Nwosu (25) examines African literature in connection to world literature to shed light on its “multidimensionality” and transnationality. To her, literature ranges “beyond cultural and temporal boundaries” (28) and while world literature incorporates all the world, Nwosu sees African literature as a “regional exemplification” (30) of it. She further points out that modern African Literature “has always been in some sort of relationship with external factors or outside forces” (39) and through globalization, cultural diversity and numerous writers in the diaspora, this has even more intensified and amplified. Apart from so called modern African Literature being written in many different European languages – more than African languages -, Nwosu (40) argues that one should see a writer regardless of their national identity. “To be African is also to be universal” is how Nwosu (41) states it. In my understanding, this holds especially true when we take a look at contemporary African writers, as they have different origins, moved to different continents and speak different languages.

Still, many writers take up migrational experiences and multiple identities as main themes for their fictional novels, which established a connection between them. Among these contemporary writers of African descent, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Tarek Eltayeb, who write stories of migration, relocation and experiences of different cultures.

Their literature is referred to as “transcultural African literatures” and the next section elaborates on how it is characterized and practiced.

2.4. Transcultural African Literatures

Like other writers originally from the African continent, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Tarek Eltayeb also migrated from Africa to the West and their characters take on “crosscultural positions”. Tina Steiner (3) talks about how “Contemporary African Migrant Literature” crosses cultural boundaries as the people as well as the texts are translated products. Hence, as transnational migration challenges the concept of national borders, transnational migrant writers test the organization of literary studies which are also based on nation-state frameworks (Frank 115). As a consequence of cultural exchange, it comes to a fusing of linguistic and cultural experiences which are characteristic for 21st-century hybrid and transcultural literatures (Stolarczyk-Gembiak 191). Seyhan (13) mentions that many of the so-called writers in diaspora see literature itself as a “travelling phenomenon that changes cultures of the spaces it enters and is itself changed by them in return”. He calls for dropping “hyphenated designations of writers” and see writers who cross national and cultural boundaries as transnational, cosmopolitan or transcultural writers as they “can reflect on the necessity of communicative exchange between different worlds” (Seyhan 15).

Transnational literature further contributes to the ongoing “decentralization of the traditional literary canons” (Rodriguez-Murphy 93). African authors writing in the English language, for example, modify the English literary canon. Also, all over Europe and North America, the new generation of African writers is “reshaping and renewing the literatures from Europe and North America”, enabling a global extension of African literature offering different perspectives (Rodriguez-Murphy 94). Adichie is probably one of the most famous examples of contemporary African writers who successfully “translocated” herself in order to be read and translated in the West. She describes herself as an “inhabitant of the periphery” who is, like other people from “a continent like Africa”, “conditioned by [her] history and by [her] place in the world to look somewhere else for validation” (Adichie 2010). Bandia (150) explained in an interview that translocation more than “just a matter of choosing in what language to write. Themes, writing style, trends and, in some cases, physical movement or displacement

are important”, especially for writers from the periphery or from minorities in order to obtain their place in a global literary context.

Although Gebauer and Schwarz Lausten (2) argue that “migration literature” has evolved to an acknowledged literary field, this thesis does not categorize the authors under analysis under this category even though migration is one of the major themes. One reason for this is that calling transcultural literature from whatever origin “migrant literature” is often understood negatively and which is problematic because it foregrounds ethnicity and cultural identity based on authors’ biographies and ethnic backgrounds (Behschnitt 80). Therefore, scholars like Stolarczyk-Gembiak (193) or Frank (116) compare transcultural literature to Goethe’s concept of “Weltliteratur”. The idea is that national literatures participate in a world literature through cultural exchange. As transcultural writers already hold more than one culture and participate in intercultural exchange, their literature can also be regarded as “new world literature” (Stolarczyk-Gembiak 194). Furthermore, the terms transnational, transcultural or new world literature do not only refer to literature written by migrants but also include “literature outside the nation written by ‘indigenous’ writers excluded from the dominant language or culture” (Gebauer and Schwarz Lausten 5).

As the author is “living and writing in an intercultural and interlinguistic space” they engage with the culture and country of origin as well as with the host culture and country. Frank (114) regards the “migrant writer” as someone who on the one hand lost “local physical spaces and languages that are shaped by [...] specific spaces” but also tries to react against it. He refers to Gumbrecht’s theory that “we want to claim specific places, specific region, and the planet Earth as spheres of ‘home’ to which we belong”, which makes the writer “struggle to recuperate his or her old space and its layers of history and narrative potential, and to come to terms with the new environment’s local specificity” (Frank 114). Rushdie (10) sees it as an “urge to reclaim, to look back” resulting in the creation of “imaginary homelands”, because the memories are fragmented and incomplete. Literature allows the translated writers to recapture their individual but also the collective cultural history and release it to the public, which can serve as a therapeutic remedy for predicaments and psychological issues that they have to deal with when they arrive in a racially hostile cultural environment (Salami-Boukari 197).

The novel then serves as a construction of cultural differences and dynamics between different cultures and languages. Their characters represent a transcultural position which “often results in strategic oscillation between aspects of past and present, African and Western, local and global” (Steiner 4). Writing gives transcultural African writers an opportunity to “explore their mixed cultures and identities” either in Europe or in America (Cooper 5). This can also be seen in the works of Adichie and Eltayeb, whose characters explore their new environment while trying to maintain their own culture in order to find themselves at home. Adichie describes her novel *Americanah* as a novel that is “about leaving home as much as it is about going back home, and really about what home means [...] in that sense that you leave home and you create home in your mind and then you go back and it is not what you have built up in your mind [...] there is a sense of loss” (“Americanah Author” 2014).

Being in a kind of distanced position to the culture of origin does not only offer new perspectives, but also puts the writers in a space of liminality (Steiner 14). Their identities are “plural and partial” at the same time and Rushdie (15) notes that “sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools”. Adichie provided a similar viewpoint as she said that her “afrosporic” position allows her to have a more global perspective on Nigeria and its population and gives her the opportunity to “describe new ways of being African” (“Americanah Author”, 2014).

Cooper (1) points out that for all writers in the diaspora it is a challenge to “find a [language] into which to translate their more than one culture, language and knowledge base without being sucked into some of those older tropes and imperial metaphors”. As Damrosch (4) defines world literatures through its capacity to “circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language”, the choice of language plays an important role for literary texts to gain international attention, because texts written in a widespread language, such as English, cross boundaries more easily.

In Europe, a linguistically diverse space, many writers choose to write in English or French to increase the possibility of reaching a broader audience, whereas others deliberately write in the language of their host country although they come from Francophone or Anglophone countries. In Britain and France major publishers translate the works of African writers, whereas in Spain or Italy it is difficult to get

published by anyone. This issue of writing and publishing in various languages can be a result of the transnational experience and is described as a “sign of embeddedness of place and language and of the untranslatability of experience” (Brancato 6). Steiner (7) however talks about “cultural translation”, which refers to the connection between the written words and which thoughts they express. By mediating the language inevitably also the culture is mediated. Steiner (8) even argues that the “heart of cultures lies in processes of translation”, as culture itself incorporates a “translatory movement” between self-assertion and normative regulation. In the narratives “cultural translation” stands for the “re-framing of cultural categories” that show the transformations of the migrating characters (Steiner 9).

Regarding the two authors under analysis, Adichie writes in English, most likely due to her upbringing in Nigeria, English being one of her mother tongues, and later moving to the United States. The identities in her fiction are described as “ever-changing”: new ones may arise; other ones may be questioned and her characters are “translated being” as they move between linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Rodriguez Murphy 97-98). Many Nigerian writers of Adichie’s generation use the English language and they see it as part and parcel of the Nigerian linguistic landscape and not merely as a colonial heritage. However, she also incorporates other languages in her fiction that are spoken by Nigerians (Rodriguez Murphy 100-101). As pointed out by Hewett (75), Adichie’s works present a “heterogonous, diasporic dimension within contemporary Nigerian literature”, which offers an expanded understanding of her generation.

Tarek Eltayeb, although he has spent over 20 years in Austria, still writes in Arabic because it is the language that comes from within him and he cannot write in the same flow in German (Eltayeb). Writing in Arabic in a German-speaking country definitely does not make it easier for him to get published, but luckily his wife translates his works into German.

Publishers, universities and other institutions underestimate their importance when it comes to the visibility of new literatures such as modern African writing. They have a huge impact on marketing strategies but also on the production and reception of these texts among the country’s society (Brancato 7). In France, for example, black writers are seen as part of the “grande famille”, whereas Italy created a so-called “literary ghetto” by labelling African literature as part of “Migration literature” in the 1990s (ibid. 7-9). Another factor is the concentration of the global book market in the English-

speaking world, New York and London, which facilitates the global success of literary texts written in English in comparison to other languages (Neumann and Rippl 165).

According to Brancato (10), although Afro-European literature has developed in different countries at different times, a synchronic reading shows common concerns among the writers. It is also interesting that depending on the country and their readers, authors criticize the country they are living in in a milder or harsher way. Therefore, the importance of the audience cannot be underestimated as they have a strong influence on the authors' communicative choices (ibid. 11).

What Brancato (11) also elucidates is that in Afro-European literatures there is a tendency towards a comparatist perspective on the interaction between Africa and Europe. The African literary tradition has been defined in opposition to colonialism and Euro-American literature, as mentioned by Hewett (76), which should now change through contemporary transcultural writers. The process of "European decolonization from within" should demonstrate what these continents mean for each other and allow an incorporation of African identities into European identities as an "element of cultural heritage" (Brancato 11).

Also, outside of Europe contemporary transcultural African writing still struggles with global asymmetries, as publishers, translators and critics are largely situated in the Global North. Transcultural exchange is not yet open and free for all writers of all origins, since global imbalances are still the reason for the marginal position of African literary institutions and writers. "The 'worlds' of world literature are built on privileges, hierarchies and power structures" (Neumann and Rippl 1679-180). Nigerian writer Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani (2014) highlights: "Some of the greatest African writers of my generation may never be discovered, either because they will not reach across the Atlantic Ocean to attract the attention of an agent or publisher, or because they have no yet mastered the art of deciphering Western tastes". This is when the question of audience of transcultural writers comes into discussion.

Taiye Selasi (2015) argues that despite the fact that the African publishing industry does not work very well, it does not mean that African diasporic writers are writing for the west. "Can we really not imagine that the African novelist writes for love: love of craft, love of subject? Do we really believe that she is not an artist but an anthropologist, not a storyteller but a native informant? Would we really suggest that she hasn't the right to engage a global audience?" Reaching a global audience can

unfortunately only be accomplished through finding a publishing company in the West. Selasi further quotes the author Okey Ndibe, who said that “[w]e used to spend so much time agonizing over the question of whether we were writing for the west. In retrospect I see our error. In Nigeria we grew up reading the west. The west was talking to us. Why shouldn’t the west read Nigeria? Why shouldn’t we talk back?”. It should be the privilege of every writer to talk back in their own voice, telling their own story, that does not adhere to a common experience shared by the whole continent. The writer Chigozie Obioma (2016) comments in an article stating that he would “write only what seems to [him] to be honest, and aim to craft a novel with the grace of the novels [he] admire[s]. To [him], this should be the aim of great fiction. To do otherwise is to negate the very nature of literature”. In his belief, fictional writing must transcend boundaries and speak to all.

3. Literary Analysis: Transcultural Identity in *Americanah*

3.1. Ifemelu's development of a transcultural identity

In the subsequent analytical part of this thesis, the findings from the preceding part will be applied in order to gain a picture of the female main character's forming of a transcultural identity due to her emigration to the United States. This analysis will include expectations of a life in America as well as the struggles she encounters in a society where race matters. In this respect, identities imposed on black people as well as difficulties in finding a job as a black person will be discussed. Also, Ifemelu's acculturation strategies and her relationships to American men are important stages in her development of a multiple consciousness as a transcultural being.

3.1.1. Expectations of America vs. Reality

The expectations people all over the world have of America is closely connected to its media representation. America is presented as a "utopian society that is devoid of errors" (Ibibi 94). Hollywood films, popular all over the world, support the perception of the American dream and "reinforce a positive national image" characterized by "freedom, equality, prosperity and other positive aspects" (Bi 2012). It becomes clear in an early stage of the novel that Nigerians also have an idealized picture of America, its culture and lifestyle. In Ifemelu's social environment, people seek to know more about American culture than about their own. Her best friend Ginika moves to America with her parents, her mother being an American citizen, and one of their friends says, "American passport is the coolest thing" (*Americanah* 79). Her boyfriend, Obinze, is also obsessed with American culture, especially with American literature because, in his opinion, "America is the future" (*Americanah* 84). Being an "Americanah" is used to describe someone who moved to the United States and took on certain behaviors and characteristics thought to be typically American.

Although Ifemelu starts studying at a Nigerian University not planning to emigrate to the United States, the seemingly endless [strikes at her university make her change her mind about her future. Her Aunt Uju had already left Nigeria after giving birth to her child and manages to convince Ifemelu to apply for a scholarship and move to America. Obinze is also in favor of this plan, especially because Ifemelu has "nothing to lose" and Aunt Uju and Ginika can help her to start a new life (*Americanah* 121).

Getting a visa is surprisingly easy for her after taking the SATs and Ifemelu herself joins her family and Obinze in painting an idealized picture of her possibilities and future prospects in America. The problem is that for Ifemelu, “America was America” and she imagines herself “in a house from *The Cosby Show*, in a school with students holding notebooks miraculously free of wear and crease” (*Americanah* 122).

Yet, when she arrives in America, she is confronted with the reality which does not correspond to what she knew from Nigerian media about America. In her imagination “overseas” was a cold place, which is why she arrives in the “thickest sweater she could find” even though it is summer and there is big heat wave. She anticipates that the buildings in the States will be “high-shine gloss” and the matte facades and signboards disappoint her, as does a boy peeing in public, her aunty’s rusty car and one-bedroom Brooklyn apartment where Ifemelu has to sleep on the floor. (*Americanah* 127-128). The “glorious America” she expected turns out to be nothing like it was presented on *The Cosby Show* but still she feels “an eagerness to discover America”, [in its gritty reality—not sure if this is what you mean] (*Americanah* 130). Living with Aunty Uju and her son Dike on the one hand gives Ifemelu a safe place like a home, but on the other hand shows her the reality of living as an immigrant in urban America. For example, when Ifemelu gets her driver’s license there, the instructor cheats to make people pass, which she imagines would not happen in the American reality of a person belonging to the white upper-class like Kimberly, the woman whose children Ifemelu babysits for (*Americanah* 203).

For Ifemelu, Dike, having grown up in America knowing little about Nigeria, serves as a kind of first hand example of the cultural differences between the first generation of African immigrants and the second generation. His mother educates him without teaching him about his Igbo ancestry. She does not even want him to speak Igbo because “two languages will confuse him”. Even though Ifemelu tries to argue that they also grew up speaking two languages, Aunty Uju reminds her that America is different (*Americanah* 134). Uju only speaks Igbo to Dike when she is angry, which makes Ifemelu worry about the effect that will have on Dike’s relation to the Igbo language and culture (*Americanah* 211). His American identity in contrast to Ifemelu’s African identity also shows when Dike asks Ifemelu to make hot dogs and she fries them, as she knew from Nigeria, instead of cooking them in hot water. (*Americanah* 132). It becomes very clear in these situations that Aunty Uju does not want her son to be identified as an Africans in America or to practice any Nigerian traditions in order to

make her son feel himself part of the American society rather than an outsider. Nevertheless, it is clear that in his teenage years, he neither identifies with fellow black American teenagers nor does he really know about his African heritage, which results in an identity crisis that leads to a suicide attempt (*Americanah* 453, 470).

Ifemelu also starts watching television at home, which make her seek the life shown in the commercials “where all problems had sparkling solutions in shampoos and cars and packaged foods”. But the numerous crime reports on the news make her feel worried and scared to take out the trash in the evening (*Americanah* 139-140).

The experiences she makes in her first months living with Aunt Uju and Dike make her understand that it is not at all easy to settle in America and become successful. As she writes in her email to Obinze after going to Manhattan for the first time, “it’s wonderful, but it’s not heaven” (*Americanah* 145). In the supermarket, Aunt Uju “bought what was on sale and made herself need it” in order to afford groceries, she wears “scruffy braids” and “trousers that gathered bulkily between her legs” although she is working three jobs (*Americanah* 133, 135). When Ifemelu later moves to Philadelphia to study and tries to find a job to be able to pay rent and food, she herself has to experience the hardships of being an African woman in America. Nevertheless, “she hungered to understand everything about America” and so she reads the books that Obinze suggested to her, to get a clearer picture of “America’s tribalism – race, ideology, and region” (*Americanah* 166-167).

3.1.2. Struggles

3.1.2.1. Imposed black identities

In America, unlike in Nigeria, Ifemelu becomes black. In Nigeria, she identified herself through her Igbo background and developed her identity without seeing herself as different from the norm. In America however, she even takes on the identity of another Nigerian woman as she uses her social security card to be able to apply for a job. With her student visa, she is not allowed to do so, and it seems to be common that African immigrants use the name of others who already have the American citizenship, because people cannot tell them apart (*Americanah* 131). Apparently, Adichie criticizes how in America black people are still viewed as homogenous racial group (Awokoyo 257). Researchers have called this the Other-race effect, which is not always “fueled by racist thinking”, but depends on how much time a person spends

either with people of their own race or of other races (Pomeroy 2014). Adichie herself mentions in an interview how she herself “became black in America”, an identity she had never thought about back in Nigeria. She emphasizes that coming to America meant assuming new identities: “Identity shifts based on where one is, really [...] When I came to the US, I found myself taking on a new identity. No, rather, I had a new identity thrust upon me” (“Americanah Author” 2014). Ifemelu records this discovery in her blog post “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: In America, You Are Black, Baby”

Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I’m Jamaican or I’m Ghanaian. America doesn’t care. So what if you weren’t “black” in your country? You’re in America now. (*Americanah* 273).

Ifemelu further learns that America’s society is hierarchical, and race is one of its categories by which people are sorted. Black people are “always on the bottom” of America’s racial hierarchy and sometimes “race is class” (*Americanah* 217, 205). Although Ifemelu was not familiar with the concept of race and the baggage that comes with being black in the beginning, she felt an urge to share her “raw and true” thoughts with more people and also hear stories of others who might share some experiences with her (*Americanah* 366). Writing her blog as a “Non-American black” helps her to analyze and understand race in America, “an exotic and self-indulgent phenomenon” that fascinates her (*Americanah* 500). She points out that “[i]n America, you don’t get to decide what race you are. It is decided for you” (419). Also, it does not matter how much money she has, as a black person you are equal with a poor white person (*Americanah* 205).

Jane, Aunt Uju’s neighbor, makes her aware of the difference between Africans and black Americans, as she does not want her children to behave like them (*Americanah* 137). It takes time for Ifemelu to figure out how to tell the difference between Africans and African-Americans “from looks and gait, but mostly from bearing and demeanor, that fine-grained mark that culture stamps on people” (*Americanah* 217). In school, Dike experiences how the teachers had different expectations from black students. For example, he does not get sunscreen like the other white children in a summer camp. Later he is suspected to have hacked the school’s computer network, because “you have to blame the black kid first,” and even his friends would ask him for weed, just for fun (*Americanah* 226, 433). For black immigrant youth like Dike, schools “serve as a sociocultural entry point” and therefore have a strong influence on how the youth

construct their identities (Awokoyo 259). Dike writes an essay in school about how he feels conflicted about his identity, but his mother plays it down as “the kind of thing they teach them here. Everybody is conflicted, identity this, identity that” (*Americanah* 269). Yet, Dike’s suicide attempt is an indicator of how hard it is for a second-generation Nigerian in America to establish his own identity when people have different expectations, simply based on your appearance (*Americanah* 453). Aunt Uju and Ifemelu try to tell him how not to behave, but as Dike does not know any other reality, he still considers himself black and he cannot escape it. In America, only if you are successful as a black person, you “will no longer be black”, like Obama or Oprah (442). As mentioned in the novel, however, people thought that by electing a black man as president, racism would end, but it did not and racist stereotypes about black Americans continued. Wise (vi) even argues that racism “was instrumental in helping him attract support from white voters” because they saw him differently from “the negative black norm”. Still, in the novel, Blaine’s friends discuss whether America and especially its white population is “ready for a black president”, which is concluded to be a ridiculous question to ask, but it again shows how prejudiced Americans still are towards blacks (*Americanah* 408).

Moreover, Americans are depicted as having a rather undifferentiated view of Africa, its people and culture. This is presented through Kimberly, her sister Laura, and their friends who are white Americans. When Ifemelu meets Kimberly for the first time, she is amazed by her “multicultural name” and always uses “beautiful” to refer to black people (*Americanah* 180-181). Her sister Laura even starts comparing other Africans to Ifemelu although they have nothing in common (*Americanah* 207). At their party Ifemelu overheard conversations about different charity projects in different African countries and one woman even asked Ifemelu to work for her NGO if she ever “wants to go back and work in Africa” (*Americanah* 209). In the hair salon, Ifemelu gets asked by a white woman about her origin and after the answer “Nigeria”, she starts talking about how she would go to Congo and Kenya and how the book *A Bend in the River* made her “truly understand how modern Africa works” (*Americanah* 233). These situations show the power relations between America and Africa and how their inequality creates a single definitive story of Africa. As Adichie (2013) points out in her talk, “because of America’s cultural and economic power, [she] had many stories of America”. Still, Americans seem to have only one story of Africa, which complicates

the “recognition of our equal humanity” and emphasizes the differences rather than the similarities.

Ifemelu joins? the African Students Association, where she first feels like “she did not have to explain herself” and where they talk about Africa and America in a mocking way. The members introduce Ifemelu to different names, like African-Americans, American-Africans and Africans, how they differ and how Ifemelu should try to connect with “fellow Africans” in order to keep her perspectives (*Americanah* 170-172).

A similar feeling comes up when she first meets Boubacar, a Senegalese professor at Yale, who, even having come from a Francophone background, gives her a “fraternal” sense of belonging. In contrast to her African-American boyfriend – discussed in section 3.1.4.2. – she feels like she is talking to someone “who spoke the same silent language as she did,” as they could laugh together as would not be possible for them with Americans (*Americanah* 420).

It also becomes apparent throughout the course of the novel that race, and even moreso racism, are taboo topics in America, but Adichie speaks openly about it in her novel. She comments that other books about race did not satisfy her, because they were not honest about it. “It’s not that people aren’t thinking those things, it’s that they’re not saying them” (Mistry 5). This honesty causes Ifemelu many discussions, because “black people are not supposed to be angry about racism. Otherwise you get no sympathy”. In America, black people are expected to “appreciate How Far We Have Come” to avoid making people feel uncomfortable, but to Ifemelu race does matter and her blog enables her to speak openly about it (*Americanah* 275, 359):

They tell us race is an invention, that there is more genetic variation between two black people than there is between a black person and a white person. Then they tell us black people have a worse kind of breast cancer and get more fibroids. And white folks get cystic fibrosis and osteoporosis. So what’s the deal, doctors in the house? Is race an invention or not? (*Americanah* 374)

In the United States “racism is entirely intact” and people should still “fight for simple justice, for equity, for full recognition” (Ayers 14). Landsmann (18) argues that white people especially have a “visceral fear” of discussions on race and are rarely conscious of the privilege they have. Also, some people pretend that they don’t notice “certain things”, like skin color, “because this is America”, which again shows their fear of admitting and accepting the reality of racism (*Americanah* 155). Ifemelu cites a short conversation how one white male in her class asked “Why must we always talk about

race anyway? Can't we just be human beings?" The answer from the professor was "That is exactly what white privilege is. [...] Race doesn't really exist for you because it has never been a barrier" (*Americanah* 429). White people do not see "whiteness" as a racial identity and also do not feel affected by racism because they do not have to experience it like their black fellow men (McIntosh 4).

Ifemelu is invited to give a "diversity talk" on "How to Talk About Race with Colleagues of Other Races". But her conclusion that racism cannot be equated leaves her mainly white audience speechless, and even gives rise to a later email insulting her as a racist. This makes Ifemelu realize that the people at her diversity workshops are not the same as those who read her blog; they do not want to be inspired for change but left with "feeling good about themselves" (*Americanah* 377-378).

Shan, Blaine's sister and African-American writer, writes a memoir that also deals with her experiences of racism but her editor wants the book to "transcend race". This scene also serves as a good example that you cannot openly speak about race and make it the obvious main theme of your argument unless you are white, because "whiter writers can be blunt about race and get all activist because their anger isn't threatening" (*Americanah* 416-417). Nevertheless, Ifemelu's blog can push boundaries and so she encourages people to ask questions even if they feel uncomfortable, because "sometimes people just want to feel heard" (*Americanah* 406). Shan argues that Ifemelu does not understand and feel what she is writing about in her blog, because of her outsider perspective. It feels like Ifemelu is put in some privileged position over African Americans, who would be "labeled angry and shunned" if they had written the same kind of blog (*ibid.*) Her exclusion from the identity shared by Blaine, his sister, and his friends, becomes more apparent when they admire her for "having ancestors that go way back" (*Americanah* 406). But Ifemelu still tries to take on a voice for American [b]lack people from her position as a Non-American [b]lack, as she points out that "American []lacks, too, are tired of talking about race. They wish they didn't have to" (404), but racism profoundly affects their daily life. In this statement, the pronoun "they" emphasizes Ifemelu's exclusion from the [African-American identity, as she has never been affected by race in her daily life before moving to America.

3.1.2.2. Money and (un)employment

Discovering race and being confronted with the negative stigma of being black in America also affects Ifemelu's career. She has to face the same difficulties as many other immigrants in the United States who seek employment to pay their bills. According to the news release of the bureau of labor statistics "Foreign-born workers were more likely than native-born workers to be employed in service occupations and less likely to be employed in management, professional, and related occupations." Unemployment rates vary by race and ethnicity and [B]lacks have the highest unemployment rate among foreign-born and native-born people in 2017 (U.S. Department of Labor 2018).

First of all, Ifemelu arrives in the States with a student visa, which does not allow her to apply for a job, so she accepts to use the social security card of Ngozi Okonkwo and starts introducing herself with another name. Ginika even advises her to say "Ngozi is your tribal name and Ifemelu is your jungle name and throw in one more as your spiritual name. They'll believe all kinds of shit about Africa" (*Americanah* 131, 153, 160).

Although she applies "to be a waitress, hostess, bartender, cashier", she waits for "job offers that never came". Two fellow students from the ASA then advise her to delete her university education in Nigeria from her resume, because "American employers did not like lower-level employees to be too educated". Nevertheless, the restaurant where she applied for a hostess position calls her to tell her that they hired "a more qualified person" (*Americanah* 161, 171, 175). So Ifemelu even starts inventing job experience to have better chances.

Pressured by her unpaid bills, Ifemelu thinks about doing escort service and finally meets a sports coach who looked for a "female personal assistant" through an advertisement in a newspaper. He looked for someone who would "help him to relax" or "massage" him and Ifemelu did what he wanted to even though she felt uncomfortable (*Americanah* 188-189). Research shows that being forced into sex work due to social disadvantage, bad working conditions and lack of social support is related to mental illness, which also holds true for Ifemelu's situation (Rössler et al., 2010; Krumrei-Mancuso, 2016 in Sanders et al. 2). This experience changed her relationship to Obinze and caused her to fall into a state of depression, although to her it was

something that “happened to Americans, with their self-absolving need to turn everything into an illness” (*Americanah* 194).

Finally, Ifemelu gets hired as a babysitter by Kimberly and looks after her two children, Taylor and Morgan. Through them, Ifemelu gets an insight into how richer Americans raise their children and how they view Africans, as already mentioned in section 3.1.2.1 on imposed black identities.

When Ifemelu’s graduation is approaching she has to see a university career counselor to help her finding a job. To please her parents and their ideas of “rife” job opportunities in the organized place called America, Ifemelu tells them that her employment prospects are good (*Americanah* 248). But still, because she is not an American citizen, her “opportunities for growth” and “good fit” are not the same as for American students.

For a black woman, job interviews in America still require different preparation than for a white woman. The advice from her counselor is “lose the braids and straighten your hair. Nobody says this kind of stuff but it matters” (*Americanah* 250). Having “the white-girl swing” in one’s hair means to look more professional and intellectual. A professional look is synonymously used for straight hair or “the white kind of curly [...] but never kinky”. Whereas for Ifemelu’s parents her success in getting the job is to prove that America “creates opportunities for people to thrive”, Ifemelu wonders if she would have gotten the job wearing her “thick, kinky, God-given halo of hair, the Afro” (*Americanah* 251-253). With her hair “hanging down” she sacrifices not only her natural hair but also part of her African identity to fulfill American beauty standards of a professional look:

The verve was gone. She did not recognize herself. She left the salon almost mournfully; while the hair-dresser flat-ironed the ends, the smell of burning, of something organic dying which should not have died, had made her feel a sense of loss.”

The following part on acculturation strategies will provide a closer analysis of hair and its connection to race, identity and the American culture as well as other characteristics that Ifemelu adopts during her stay in the United States.

3.1.3. Ifemelu's acculturation strategies

As mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis, acculturation happens when different cultural groups and their individual members are in contact. Although change should happen in both groups, the immigrants have a greater need to adopt certain strategies in order to find their place in the new society (Berry 698-700). Research suggests "integration" as the optimal strategy (Bathia and Ram 2001, Berry 2005) and this section will discuss Ifemelu's strategies to adapt to the American culture and society. It is clear that she constantly negotiates her transcultural identity and her acculturation strategies change through her social environment and relationships.

At the hair salon before moving back to Nigeria Ifemelu gets asked how long she has lived in America. She remembers how it is important to have "more years" to "earn the prize of being taken seriously among Nigerians in America, among Africans in America, indeed among immigrants in America" so she lies but is honest that she will move back to Nigeria (*Americanah* 19). At this point she is not yet aware how much she has also assimilated to American culture in her 13 years there, and she feels like she has to defend her African identity against the hair dresser who was surprised she can speak Igbo (*Americanah* 49). Ifemelu did not want to become someone who "got lost" in America, like Bartholomew, Aunt Uju's first partner in America (*Americanah* 143).

Especially when it comes to language and accents it feels like Ifemelu struggles between first trying to assimilate to sound American and later separating herself again by speaking with her Nigerian accent. It all starts on her first day at the university when the woman working at the International Students Office speaks to her in a very slow and clipped manner because of her foreign accent, which initiates her practice of an American accent (*Americanah* 164). She deliberately lets go of it due to a call from a telemarketer who complimented her for sounding American after being there only three years (*Americanah* 215). She begins to think about how she "had taken on, for too long, a pitch of voice and a way of being that was not hers. And so she finished eating her eggs and resolved to stop faking an American accent" (*Americanah* 216).

For Ifemelu it is a way of finding her own identity again, and even though the hairdresser asks her why she does not have an American accent, she is not bothered anymore by the negative connotations African accents have in America (*Americanah* 231).

Not only language or accent, but also the outer appearance of a person gives away how someone assimilates to another culture. For example, an Ethiopian taxi driver tells Ifemelu that her “blouse is too tight” for being African and she should “be very careful or America will corrupt [her]” (*Americanah* 255). This incident irritates her and she checks whether her blouse is actually too tight, which is a sign of insecurity about how she presents herself and what her looks tell about her.

The probably most important characteristic that changes while she is developing her transcultural identity in America is her hair. As Adichie said in an interview with Ashley Weatherford (2016):

“Hair is something we see, but we don’t understand what’s behind it, kind of like race. It’s the same way that something seems obvious, but it is really complicated and complex [...] I think it’s just some people don’t know what the hair that grows from the head of black women actually looks like.”

In America, as previously mentioned, braids are considered by some to be unprofessional and in order to be successful as a black woman, their hair needs to undergo a painful treatment of relaxers. Ifemelu even suffers from hair loss because of the chemicals applied to her hair, so her friend Wambui cuts her hair off. It becomes obvious that she is not happy with her “cool and brave look” as her boyfriend Curt describes it and she does not even dare to go to work (*Americanah* 257-259). Although it might sound overdramatized to some readers, Adichie deliberately chose to use hair as a political statement, because she herself and other black women had to grow up in a world where they could not “look like [their] authentic self” because it could make other people feel uncomfortable (Mistry 2). Hair therefore is used as a race metaphor:

Some black women, AB and NAB, would rather run naked in the street than come out in public with their natural hair. Because, you see, it’s not professional, sophisticated, whatever, it’s just not damn normal. [...] I have natural kinky hair. Worn in cornrows, Afros, braids. No, it’s not political. No, I am not an artist or a poet or a singer. [...] Imagine if Michelle Obama got tired of all the heat and decided to go natural and appeared on TV with lots of woolly hair, or tight spirally curls. [...] She would really rock but poor Obama would certainly lose the independent vote, even the undecided Democrat vote (*Americanah* 367-368).

What Ifemelu comments on here, is that people classify each other by their physical appearance, and “looking African” still carries primitive connotations. It takes courage for Ifemelu to be able to embrace her natural hair as a beautiful gift from God, which also stands for valuing her Africanness and being proud of her ancestry (*Americanah* 264, 501). She comes to understand who she is within the society and in relation to

others; therefore, is able to self-construct her identity from within and express her black female beauty through her hairstyle, which is still seldom recognized and promoted by public figures and celebrities (Johnson 53-54, Nyamnjoh and Fuh 53).

In summary it can be stated, that through adapting her speech in America, depending on whether she is having a professional conversation with [w]hite or [b]lack Americans or whether she is talking to fellow Africans, Ifemelu chooses to assimilate to the cultural identity of her conversation partner. According her hairstyles, Ifemelu first finds herself forced to adhere to [b]lack American beauty standards, until she finds her strength to separate and express her own beauty ideals.

3.1.4. Cross-cultural love

This part will examine the two relationships Ifemelu had in America. The first one was with Curt, a white upper-class American whom she got to know through her job as a babysitter, the second one was Blaine, an African-American academic she first met in a train and later at one of her talks.

3.1.4.1. The Hot White Ex

The simplest solution to the problem of race in America? Romantic love. Not friendship. Not the kind of safe, shallow [...] but real deep romantic love [...] and because that real deep romantic love is so rare, and because American society is set up to make it even rarer between American [B]lack and American [W]hite, the problem of race in America will never be solved. (*Americanah* 367).

Through Ifemelu's relationship with "The Hot White Ex" she experiences how hard a relationship between a [b]lack woman and [w]hite man in the U.S. is, mainly because of the way others view them as a couple. When another [b]lack woman at a dinner party argues that "race was never an issue" when she dated a white man, Ifemelu answers that

the only reason you say that race was not an issue is because you wish it was not. [...] When you are black in America and you fall in love with a white person, race doesn't matter when you're alone. [...] But the minute you step outside, race matters (*Americanah* 359).

She herself experiences it when she first meets Curt's mother, who is tolerant towards his "exotic" girlfriend, but also points out that she is a Republican that does not support welfare, as if Ifemelu as black woman has to be dependent on welfare (*Americanah* 244-245). Also, Don, Kimberly's husband, thinks of both of them as "attractive and interesting" people, but cannot imagine a romantic relationship between them

(*Americanah* 240). Ifemelu criticizes the American society for still being subconsciously biased against interracial relationships and making it a taboo for [B]lacks to openly speak about their experiences “to keep [their] nice liberal friends comfortable” (*Americanah* 360). Ifemelu had a crush on a white man before she was with Curt, but she felt “invisible” to him. She also says that she “didn’t want a white man” and her friend Wambui is even scared of the paleness of a naked white man (*Americanah* 235-236, 240). These situations illustrate that relationships between [w]hites and [b]lacks in America are still seen as something unusual, something people cannot openly desire or are even scared of.

Especially “black women’s bodies and their associated traits [...] are often represented as inferior objects of spectacle and ridicule [...] but, paradoxically, desirable as well, even if only reduced to the level of fantasy” (Nyamnjoh and Fuh). In regard to the relationship between Curt and Ifemelu, some people just view his love to her as some kind of fetish. For Curt, it is “her deep voice”, “the braid that escaped from her rubber band” and her vibrant laugh that made him fall in love with her. Nevertheless, she is his first black girlfriend, and he tells her that he “had never seen a body so beautiful, her perfect breasts, her perfect butt”, which can be interpreted as some kind of fantasy he wished to come true one day (*Americanah* 240). To Ifemelu this is flattering, because in Nigeria her boyfriend Obinze called her ass “flat” and she has never been considered one of the prettiest girls in school. Curt does not make a secret out of his desire for Ifemelu and “she began to like him because he liked her”, but clearly, he is the driving force that brings them together (*Americanah* 237). Curt is presented as a very self-confident man who enjoys speaking of himself and who is charming and charismatic. He “holds [Ifemelu] like an egg” and at least in the beginning of their relationship makes her feel “precious” and “proud – to be with him, and of him” (*Americanah* 272). But it turns out that he is not very empathetic towards others as if he is blinded by his own beliefs. He always makes plans for them too, which was unusual for Ifemelu because she “had grown up not doing, but being” (*Americanah* 257).

He gives Ifemelu the opportunity to become “a woman free of knots and cares” and she takes on a new identity, “lighter and leaner; she was Curt’s Girlfriend, a role she slipped into as into a favorite, flattering dress” as she “slipped out of her old skin”. She feels “contentment” and becomes used to the easy privileged lifestyle he offers her.

(*Americanah* 241-242, 247). But, it is also clear to her from the beginning that “only an American of his kind” could be so “ebullient” and optimistic and that if they ever married, his family would “stare in horror and ask one another, in whispers, why the help was wearing the bride’s dress” (*Americanah* 242, 246). She realizes that she will never be able to fully understand and know his friends, let alone be a part of their world.

In the progression of their interracial relationship, Ifemelu observes that he is not aware of racism and racist situations as well as of his privileges, especially because of his skin color. When he proposes a spontaneous trip to Paris, she has to remind him that with her Nigerian passport, getting a visa is not as easy as it is for him (*Americanah* 242). However, his privileges and the power that comes with them are also of help to her as he simply needs to make “some calls” to arrange a job interview for her that will get her a work visa that will guarantee her a green-card (*Americanah* 249). It makes Ifemelu think of her friends who do not have a white man who loves them and could “with a few calls, rearrange the world, have things slide into the spaces that he wanted them to” (*Americanah* 250).

Curt’s white privilege is something that he lives unconsciously, something that he “had been conditioned into oblivion about its existence” (McIntosh 1). Although he is aware that black and white are not the same in America, he does not actively engage with the problem. McIntosh (1-3) describes it as an “invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks”, because white people in America are not taught to engage critically with racial privilege or disadvantage. They are taught to develop according to their individual aspirations, which is easier for them than to other racial groups, because they were born into a privileged position of power that opens doors for them. Also, Wise (ix) calls for white people to realize how racialized their lives are because “by remaining oblivious to our racialization we remain oblivious to the injustice that stems from it”. Ifemelu decides to confront Curt with what “racially skewed” really means, after he criticizes a magazine she read that featured exclusively black women (*Americanah* 364). She takes him to a bookstore to show him a variety of women’s magazines that all dominantly feature white models and white beauty ideals.

In the end, their relationship does not last, because Ifemelu feels the “urge to create rough edges to squash his sunniness”, but probably another unspoken reason is the gap that remained between his lifestyle and hers.

3.1.4.2. The Perfect American Partner

The relationship between Blaine and Ifemelu is very different from her relationship with Curt, as there is more intimacy and mutual love between them and definitely more admiration from Ifemelu's side.

Ifemelu observes him very closely during their first conversation on the train, she recognizes his "skin color of gingerbread and the kind of lean, proportioned body that was perfect for a uniform" as well his "outfit that was selected with the right amount of thought" (*Americanah* 217-218). It is apparent that she looks at him in a very different manner than she looked at Curt. It feels like she recognizes more details about him, his appearance and his interests. She even imagines a relationship between them, after having spoken only few words, seeing him as the "perfect American partner she would never have" (*Americanah* 236). Nevertheless, when they meet again after eight years, they go fast from "flirting friends to lovers on her bed" and they slide "into an immediate intimacy" (*Americanah* 382-383).

The relationship with Blaine, an assistant professor at Yale, introduces Ifemelu to African-American identities and their history of racism. Blaine also has a great influence on her lifestyle, as she starts to do things he does, "she began to floss [...] going to the gym, eating more protein than carbohydrates – and she did them with a kind of grateful contentment, because they improved her" (*Americanah* 384). She even starts editing her blogposts after he read them, which make her feel like his apprentice (*Americanah* 287). These examples serve to elucidate that Ifemelu puts Blaine on a pedestal and attaches more importance to his points of view than to her own, which leads to an imbalance in their relationship. To her, "he knew about everything; she was intimidated by this and proud of this and slightly repelled by this" (*Americanah* 384). Furthermore, she feels she needs to "catch up" with his knowledge and she is "fascinated by his sense of rightness" (*Americanah* 387).

Moreover, Ifemelu notices, that Blaine as an [African-American] understands racism in a different manner than she, who writes her blog "from the outside" (*Americanah* 418). He argues that her posts need more "depth" because she has the "responsibility" to people who read her texts as a "cultural commentary" (*Americanah* 386). Also, he expects her to be upset when a white woman in a grocery store asks to touch her "beautiful" hair, but Ifemelu allows her to touch her Afro, because "how else would she

know what hair like [hers] feels like?” (*Americanah* 388). Blaine organizes a protest after the imprisoning of an African-American security guard because a white employee wrongly suspected him of dealing drugs, when he actually just exchanged money and car keys with a friend. He expects Ifemelu to participate, but to her the lunch with the Senegalese professor is of more importance, which upsets Blaine. He accuses her of not actually believing in what she is writing on her blog, but that the “blog is a game that [she doesn’t] really take seriously, [...] like choosing an *interesting* elective evening class to complete your credits” (*Americanah* 428).

Situations like these show that [African-Americans] consider different situations as insulting and racist, due to their history of slavery and racial segregation. Ifemelu as an African feels indifferent about it, because “race was not embroidered in the fabric of her history; it had not been etched on her soul” (*Americanah* 418). When Blaine is accusing her of not being upset by the same things as he is, it feels like an accusation for being African, and not [African-American].

Blaine has a very firm and convincing personality that Ifemelu continues to admire after they break up. His character serves as a representative of privileged upper-class black Americans, who stand up for those who are less privileged. Still, he tries to slip his personal-convictions over Ifemelu’s head in their relationship, which make her realize that they probably differ more than she expected in the beginning and after their only fight Barack Obama remains their “new passion [...] an unfixed, unspoken intuitive intimacy” (*Americanah* 437). Ifemelu describes her relationship with him “like being content in a house but always sitting by the window and looking out” (*Americanah* 9).

Lastly it can be stated that in both of Ifemelu’s relationships, the partners offer her a life very different from what she was used to, due to their race and class, and which she could benefit from. Apart from that, she could not truly relate to either of her partner’s lifestyles and attitudes and comes to appreciate her roots and her Africanness. She decides to go back to Nigeria where she becomes truly aware of how she developed a multiple consciousness through her emigration to the United States that made her perceive the world around her from a new perspective.

3.2. Multiple Consciousness

“Her blog was going well, with thousands of unique visitors each month, and she was earning good fees, and she had a fellowship at Princeton and a relationship with Blaine [...] and yet there was a cement in her soul [...] longings, shapeless desires, brief imaginary glints of other lives she could be living, that over the months melded into a piercing homesickness. [...] Nigeria became where she was supposed to be” (*Americanah* 7)

This quote serves as an example of how Ifemelu accomplishes her dream of a successful life in America, but also indicates that she does not lose her roots in her heart and even misses her home. This shows that she has developed a multiple consciousness of her reality and seeks to reconnect to her roots (Eze “Rethinking”). Although Ifemelu has spent fifteen years in America, she is proud of speaking her mother tongue Igbo (*Americanah* 49).

She did not become the “Americanah” people expected from the ones that left for America, because she continued to identify as Igbo and Nigerian, even as she additionally developed a more global identity as part of the Africans diaspora. Likewise, her cross-cultural relationships broadened her perception of different identities and raised her awareness for similarities and differences between rich and poor, black and white, and U.S. citizens and foreigners.

Before leaving the U.S., Ifemelu goes to the hairdresser to get braids and reflects on her “new American selves”, how Curt was the first one who had a clear influence on her (*Americanah* 235). Her American consciousness becomes apparent when she arrives back in Lagos, which “assaulted her” with its chaos and unpredictability. She describes it as “falling into the new person she ha[s] become” as if her experiences in America subconsciously changed her perception of reality and made her “[look] at things with American eyes” (*Americanah* 475-476). It also causes her confusion about “what was new in Lagos and what was new in herself”, as she listens to the stories of her friend Ranyinudo, imagining herself in her position (*Americanah* 478). Those in Ifemelu’s social environment recognize her changes in personality more than she herself does, and her friends eagerly point out how American she is. They start calling her “Americanah” or “Madam America” and want her to prove her “Americanness” (*Americanah* 481, 483, 485, 490).

Still in America, it becomes apparent how Ifemelu longs to express herself through her culture and language of origin when she meets Kayode, a friend from home, in a mall and they both lapse “into their Nigerian voices and their Nigerian selves”. Kayode

mentions to her that he enjoys running into Nigerians because it gives him a feeling of “being back home”. Ifemelu however, cannot share that feeling, because she is not in contact with fellow Nigerians at that moment, but lives in “a small, circumscribed world of Curt’s American friends” (*Americanah* 276).

To find out how much America has really changed her when she returns to Lagos, she follows the advice of her co-worker Doris to attend a meeting of the “Nigeropolitan Club”, where people who moved back from England or the U.S. gather and share their experiences (*Americanah* 499). The meeting opens Ifemelu’s eyes to the fact that she is part of a privileged, elite group who have the freedom of mobility to go to America and study at Harvard or Yale (*Americanah* 502). They call themselves “Nigeropolitans” which follows the idea of Selasi’s Afropolitan model, which is criticized for its elitism. Ifemelu and the other members of the Nigeropolitan club are “the sanctified, the returnees, back home with an extra gleaming layer” with “their voices burred with foreign accents”. Even though “she wished she were not”, Ifemelu feels comfortable among them and identifies with their needs (*Americanah* 501-503). Still, she does not hold back from also criticizing them

[as] a group of young returnees who gather every week to moan about the many ways that Lagos is not like New York [...] Full disclosure: I am one of them. Most of us have come back to make money in Nigeria [...] but we spend all our time complaining about Nigeria, and even though our complaints are legitimate, I imagine myself as an outsider saying: Go back to where you came from! (*Americanah* 519).

Once again Ifemelu tries to find herself in a collective consciousness or identity, like she did in her relationships in America, but comes to the conclusion that she must take on her own point of view. On the one hand, she moved back because she was homesick, but on the other hand she did not want to give up the things she liked in America. She was interested in the new vegetarian restaurant where they had “the kinds of things we can eat”, identifying with her fellow returnees while differentiating from “them”, the Nigerians who stayed at home (*Americanah* 503). However, there is still the feeling of relief to be “really home”, being able to catch up with friends and finding her way back into the “assorted” life in Nigeria (*Americanah* 506, 520).

Her multiple consciousness enables her to get a more differentiated view on Nigeria, its people, her friends and relationships, which she cannot freely share with many of her friends or co-workers back in Lagos. At her work for the women’s magazine *Zoe*, she gets criticized for being too provocative, which makes her think about starting a

blog again, called *The Small Redemptions of Lagos*. There, she can freely publish about health care, the Nigeropolitan Club, affordable fashion and people helping others (*Americanah* 514).

Although Ifemelu insists in her conversation with Obinze that she has not changed that much, he recognizes that she has become more “self-aware” and “more guarded” (*Americanah* 534). It is part of the multiple consciousness she gained through her experiences abroad, her discovery of race and how she “got off the plane in Lagos and stopped being black”. She could “finally, spun herself fully into being”, a person who has developed a multiple consciousness and found peace in holding more than one culture.

4. Literary Analysis: Transcultural Identity in *Das Palmenhaus*

4.1. Hamza's development of a transcultural identity

The second analytical part of this thesis will focus on the male main character in *Das Palmenhaus* and his development of a transcultural identity through his emigration from the Sudan to Austria. Firstly, Hamza's perception of reality will be discussed, as a major part of the story are flashbacks to his life in the Sudan. Secondly, his life circumstances such as job prospects, his visits to the palm tree house and his relation to Austrians and fellow Sudanese people are examined. Lastly, Hamza's acculturation strategies and his crosscultural relationship to Sandra, an Austrian woman will be points of discussion. Lastly, his multiple consciousness developed through his experiences in Austria will be examined.

4.1.1. Between realities

Hamza's story, unlike Ifemelu's in *Americanah*, is very much marked by unrootedness. He has to leave his home village Wadd An-Naar very young to support his mother and sisters, who die during his absence. Then he is forced to go to war in the south of Sudan until he manages to flee to Egypt. All the memories and hardships from his past keep coming back in different situations which make him fall in to daydreams. Hammond (2007) argues that Hamza is more home in the past than in the present, as he is always surrounded by his story and his dreams, which he has no audience for until he meets Sandra, who is eager to know about his story. Communicating one's dreams has a releasing and reassuring value, without necessarily understanding the strange imagines and events in the dreams (Kleespies 72).

He starts dreaming in different locations, for example in the tram he closes his eyes, smells the perfume of the woman behind him and sinks into half-sleep. The smell continues in his sleep and he remembers the place where he first smelled it as an infant (*Palmenhaus* 16). Also, he is able to go back to his dreams even if someone interrupts it. His past is seared into his consciousness which enables him to recollect many details about his past. Smallest actions, for example when Hakiema, Hamza's cat, uses her left paw to play with a bread roll, make him remember how he started as a left-hander and

in [seinem] Kopf wirbeln diese Begebnisse, die Schauergeschichten und überkommenen Traditionen wild durcheinander durch die [ihm] ein Makel aufgedrückt, meine Linkshändigkeit zu etwas Entstellendem gemacht worden ist und [seine] linke Hand zu der des Teufels" (*Palmenhaus* 28).

As Hamza himself expresses, „Seelen besteigen keine Flugzeuge“ (*Palmenhaus* 20). Although he physically moved to Austria into a different environment, his soul remains in Egypt, in Africa, where it has some kind of roots. When the plane takes off in Kairo he feels like his soul is about to crash. It comforts him that they are still on Egyptian ground and “bei diesem Gedanken ließ [er] sie halbwegs beruhigt zurück, gut aufgehoben, um irgendwann wieder auf sie zu treffen” (*Palmenhaus* 280). Although when he decides to leave his home forever he expects that another place can patch up the torn pieces of his soul (*Palmenhaus* 166), he remains lonely. He wishes his soul would have come with him, but the coat from Amm Rikaabi is the only thing that could milder his feeling of being estranged as it has a familiar smell (*Palmenhaus* 283).

Sounds and especially smells in his surrounding make Hamza's thoughts drift away into a distant place and a different life (*Palmenhaus* 42, 60). Back in Egypt, he already started to fall into daydreams when he had the feeling “vom Leben erdrückt zu werden” (*Palmenhaus* 124). Dreams have an important role in the mental household of a person, as they regulate the human psyche (Kleespies 73). Eltayeb explains in the personal interview that the dreams allow Hamza to withdraw from reality, understand his own story better and, furthermore, they appear to fill the gaps in his soul (Eltayeb). Still, Hamza himself questions the meaning of his dreams, as in extreme situations of tension or sadness he struggles to differentiate between dream and reality (*Palmenhaus* 282).

The dreams deal with strange things and in the course of his memory different subplots and gradually also the places of his life overlap without conforming to a clear picture (Neundlinger 2007). Hamza records that going away is especially hard when you have to do it by yourself, which he did all his life. Together one can share the pain and you have somebody to calm you down, but if you are alone you have to do it all by yourself and the memories you have are your only consolation, because “ohne sie hat die Seele keine Nahrung” (*Palmenhaus* 286).

Another reason for Hamza's shifting between realities, between his past and the present, is definitely the harsh reality that expects him in Austria. In Egypt, Vienna is described as a paradise which makes Hamza long to see it himself. He describes it as

“Verlangen nach Leben – auf der Suche nach etwas Unbekanntem, nach etwas, das irgendwo auf mich wartete” (Palmenhaus 146). It can be described as some kind of European Dream, based on embeddedness, quality of life and interdependence. But despite the expectations of immigrants like Hamza, Europe is very hostile towards new immigrants and discriminates against Muslims and other religious minorities (Rifkin 3,7). Only Khaliefa Wadd Nafiesa, an Egyptian student who travelled a lot, tells Hamza that „wenn du dich einmal auf den Weg machst, um die Welt kennen zu lernen, wirst du auf Seltsames treffen. [...] Du wirst Seltsames sehen, Hamza, bei Gott, du wirst Seltsames sehen”. He is the only one that does not whitewash the world, but also makes Hamza aware that he will be confronted with more brutality and untruthful ignorants (*Palmenhaus* 20-21).

4.1.1.1. Austria: Hell or Paradise?

When Hamza decides to leave towards the paradise, El-Khattaaf, the owner of a workshop he works at for a short time, hands him a passport “für [seine] Flucht, [...] kein Reisepass” (*Palmenhaus* 182). Hamza’s only wish is to escape from hell, and luckily El-Khattaaf plans him an itinerary and he receives support from the Sudanese community (Orthofer 2012). At the oasis Saliema he first feels that his soul can get some peace. However, it is just one stop on his long way to Vienna, which is “no paradisiacal escape”, as he still thinks when saying goodbye at the airport (Orthofer 2012).

Eltayeb includes the famous song “pleasant nights in Vienna”, written in the 1950s, by the Egyptian singer Asmahaan in his novel, which accompanies Hamza on his way:

The pleasant nights in Vienna
Have a breeze of heavenly air
A melody in the air has a ringing tune
When the bird heard it, it cried and sang
[...]
Why don’t you let your heart enjoy happiness?
Loved ones are at both your sides
What else remains for this to be heaven?

Asmahaan describes Vienna as a heavenly paradise, as “a garden from heaven” where one can find love, peace and happiness. Asmahaan was very popular in Egypt and the Arabic speaking world, and Hamza even sees her as one reason why he decides to go to Vienna. He believes that “die Engel von Wien haben nichts dagegen

[ihm] ein Einreisevisum ins Paradis zu erteilen" (*Palmenhaus* 274) because he has already experienced his part of torture and struggle in the "most remote corners of the world". He wants to tell the angels that he comes on behalf of the devil who sends him to report on the differences between hell and paradise. Nevertheless, his friend Amm Rikaabi, who has spent some time of his life in Vienna, already warns him that Vienna consists of both, paradise and hell:

Du bekommst eine Portion Paradies und zwei Portionen Hölle: Paradies, weil du Zuflucht vor dieser Öde und Erniedrigung finden wirst; eine Hölle, weil du ohne Sprache sein wirst, die dich beschützen könnte; und dass du wie ein Neugeborenes wieder von vorne anfangen musst, nur mit einem alten Kopf, das wird die andere Hölle sein (*Palmenhaus* 275).

At his arrival, Hamza is confronted with Amm Rikaabi's prediction. In the beginning the hells of Vienna outweigh its idyllic sides. Identical to the three shocks that Eltayeb experienced when he arrived in Vienna, the cold, the language and money are also the biggest shocks for Hamza (Eltayeb). In the opening pages of the novel Hamza describes the cold as "elend", the weather as "trostlos" and how he suffers in his freezing flat (*Palmenhaus* 10, 12). At his arrival it is winter time, but still he thinks he has arrived in a "Land des Glücks", because there is no war. He accepts that his paradise is a cold place and remembers how people talk about flames and heat to describe the place of the devil, so he concludes that the cold and snow has to be the place of angels and of the good (*Palmenhaus* 288).

His desperate situation makes him count the days that he has already spent in this house; four years, two months and five days, at the time when he first meets Sandra (*Palmenhaus* 31). He argues that he is afraid of the deceptive time, because he has lived through many times that often lasted only a few months. Time is not trustful and he is always prepared that his situation would change as he is waiting for the unknown, which is scary. Hamza mentions the difference in the perception of time in the Sudan and in Austria, which also presents a cultural shock. Time is described metaphorically, Hamza coming from a place "in dem man die Zeit wie Ziegen vor sich hertreibt", but in Vienna "Zeit ist wie ein Raubtier hinter dem Menschen her [...] frisst den Schwachen auf" (*Palmenhaus* 32). Hamza feels kind of in-between because he has lived both ways but has always been pushed into it. The notion of time will be further discussed in section 4.1.2.1.

Nevertheless, Hamza does find places in Vienna, that give him a positive feeling, for example the vegetable markets, because he enjoys the hustle and “dieses rege Leben, das Feilschen” make him happy (*Palmenhaus* 21). However, only when Sandra introduces him to the palm tree house in Schönbrunn, Hamza is able to construct his own little paradise and find peace and escape Vienna’s brutal reality.

4.1.1.2. The palm tree house

In Hamza’s first flat, the walls are empty and outside everything is white from the snow. To cover the cold, he buys palm tree wallpapers at a flea market that give him the feeling of being closer to the sun (*Palmenhaus* 34). When Sandra first steps into his home she recognizes the palm trees on the walls and the ceiling and she asks him if he has ever been to the palm tree house. Hamza is very excited to meet “die Seelen [s]einer Vorfahren” between the tropical plants and palms, because he relates the palm tree not only to his home country but also to his family and relatives. Although in reality he is a little disappointed because there was only one date palm, he concludes that “eine einzige Dattelpalme in ganz Wien ist genug” and he begins to stroll down memory lane (*Palmenhaus* 41). Neundlinger (2007) describes the palm tree house as a kind of “Projektionsfläche der eigenen Geschichte”. Through the confrontation with his origins clearer contours of the cracks and fractures in Hamza’s life emerge in contrast to the artificial paradise of the palm tree house.

The visits to the palm tree house make him feel like a little child brought to his favorite playground, it feels like an addiction, as if it was the “Tränke für Erinnerungen und Glück” (*Palmenhaus* 47, 52). Again, this shows how the past, despite the struggles, still gives him positive feelings, more than his present life in Vienna without war, but also without his family. The palm tree house becomes the place of security and warmth as well as a place of memory (Prolit 2013). It is Hamza’s “Lieblingsplatz für diese Geschichten, dieser Ort, der [ihm] so gut tut und [ihn] nach all den Jahren, in denen [er] niemandem und nichts vertrauen konnte, langsam wieder ins Gleichgewicht bringt“ (*Palmenhaus* 240).

The palm tree as a plant is a very frequent and recurring symbol in Arabic flags and emblems, which indicates its importance in the Middle East and Northern Africa. The plant is very important in semi-desert areas, like Hamza’s village Wadd An-Naar, because it survives dry spells, has a high amount of sugar and stays free of fungus

and germ (IZ 2003). Moreover, it is a symbol of life, which holds true also for Hamza's belief, as the presence of the palm tree and the sun give him energy and nutrition against the cold outside. Even the dreams he thought to have lost reappear and send him into memories of his past. He simply enjoys "das Gesicht in [den Sonnenstrahlen] zu baden. Am liebsten würde [er] die Augen geschlossen halten um das Bild vom Dorf und vom Sand nicht zu verlieren" (*Palmenhaus* 59). Hamza's home, Wadd An-Naar (Valley of the fire), was formerly known as Wadd En-Nuwaar (Valley of the flower), an oasis known for the best dates of the El-Gondeel variety, because it was one of the rare places where the Arguun-palm grew (*Palmenhaus* 258). This explains Hamza's special relation to the date palms and his eagerness to find them in his new cultural environment because they also give him a sense of home and belonging:

Das Palmenhaus ist unser zweites Zuhause geworden. Ich fühle mich hier geborgen und sicher. Hier habe ich glückliche und traurige Stunden durchlebt, habe geträumt, Erinnerungen heraufbeschworen, habe gelacht und mich verliebt (*Palmenhaus* 322).

In the end Hamza even decides to bury his beloved cat under the only palm tree in the palm tree house and remembers the day he met her „ausgesetzt, mager, unter der Kälte leidend wie ich. Ich denke an die lange Zeit mit ihr. Sie war für mich ein gutes Omen, und durch sie bin ich der Liebe meines Lebens begegnet“ (*Palmenhaus* 336).

4.1.2. Struggles

4.1.2.1. Being a stranger

When Hamza arrives in Vienna, he feels the cold of the city and estranged. Weische (2007) describes it as "Spannung zwischen Sphären [...] [welche] einen Strang [bildet], an welchem sich die Geschichte Hamzas entwickelt" and how he rubs up against his western environment. On all his way he encountered helpful people, but in the hoped-for paradise he is suddenly alone. Vienna turns out to be a merciless city where one's soul dies a cold death. Hamza finds himself in "dieser herausgeputzten, sanftmütigen, historischen Stadt, in der Menschen wie [er] erbarmungslos an den Rand gedrängt werden" (*Palmenhaus* 7).

He encounters his first shelter through an Egyptian newspaper seller, Abbaas, who he meets on his first taxi ride from the airport into the city. Abbaas wants to go back to Esna, because life for him is harder than expected. He came to Vienna because a

relative moved here and told him it was amazing, because he needed some company in a place that was not paradise at all (*Palmenhaus* 290). Abbaas and his friend Jimmy bring Hamza to his first flat that he will share with other north Africans. The place is cold and dirty and the toilet is on the corridor. Hamza leaves this place as soon as possible, because apart from the condition of the flat, his roommates don't behave in a considerate and friendly way. He finds a flat on the last floor of an old house, where the „Einheimischen“ do not like to live, because there is no elevator, it is dark and the walls are cold and wet. Mostly foreigners or poor Austrians live in those places, „für besser Gestellte ein weiterer Grund, wegzuziehen“. It becomes clear in the first pages that Hamza takes on a collective identity of being a foreigner in Austria and he compares himself to others with the same origin and situation. He realizes that Austrians, like other people from rich countries, differentiate between „Bei uns“ and „Bei euch“ and cut themselves off from people who come from less privileged areas (*Palmenhaus* 7-8).

Austria is presented as being very prejudiced against people of color, which Hamza experiences for example in the supermarket, when a detective and an employee suddenly attack him at the cashier and shout „Jetzt homa endlich amol an fo di Gfrasta dawischt“, although he is not a thief but simply hides his cat under his jacket (*Palmenhaus* 14). He tells other incidents from the tram, when the conductor does not ask anyone for their ticket but Hamza or the tone the conductors use to talk to him. They are harsher with him and skeptical when they look at the picture on his monthly ticket (*Palmenhaus* 15, 109). Over the years in Vienna, Hamza becomes used to being controlled regularly as „jeder mit dunkler Hautfarbe wird ständig überprüft“ (*Palmenhaus* 293). On his way to a friend's place, who lives in a different district, he is stopped by the police who ask for his ID and registration form followed by other questions until they empty his bag onto the street. They find incense and mistake it for an illegal substance so Hamza is taken to the police station. In the car, he only understands the words „Neger“ and „black“.

Sandra once asks Hamza if he has ever been „grundlos schlecht behandelt“ which he answers with a laughter saying that people always find a reason why they treat someone bad. For example, when Hamza went to a Café and the waiter would not serve him. So, Hamza walked to the counter to order and the waiter answered in a scornful and condescending way „Bei uns werden keine Ausländer bedient“ (*Palmenhaus* 323-324). The situations told in the novel are not fictitious but happen

almost on a daily basis in Vienna, as reported in section 2.2.3. Black people are still treated differently than white people in Austria and are confronted with racism in their daily life. When Hamza works in a glass house his boss tells him how his “idiot” neighbor married an Egyptian and gave birth to “kleine Neger” who are now running around in the village. The boss is very hostile towards foreigners, although he has illegal employees from African countries, which shows his double standards on immigrants.

Another factor that makes Hamza feel estranged is the importance of time to Viennese people. Before he leaves, Amm Rikaabi gives him a watch as a present because “in den Ländern der Zeit [wird er] die Zeit brauchen. Dort wird [ihm] der Sinn von ‚Zeit‘ erst so richtig klar werden” (*Palmenhaus* 278). His only Arabic friend in Vienna Abuu Darsh then explains to him that

alle diese Leute [...] werden von ihren Uhren gezogen [...] wenn sie nur ein paar Minuten zu irgendwelchen Nichtigkeiten zu spät kommen, geraten sie schon in Panik [...] die Augen ständig auf die Uhr gerichtet. [...] Ihr ganzes Leben ist geplant und durchorganisiert,

Neither Abuu Darsh nor Hamza can identify with this value of time, but Abuu Darsh already takes on a more critical view on the Austrians because he has spent more time here than Hamza. Abuu Darsh’s character allows Eltayeb to criticize the Austrian culture, because Hamza is still in the process of acculturation, trying to understand and adapt, but he cannot openly talk about his dislikes (Eltayeb). Both, Hamza and Abuu Darsh, originate from a world that understands under the economy of time that it can either pass or stand still, which is why Hamza reacts with disconcertment to the “hochfrequent getakteten Hetzen der Menschen in einer europäischen Metropole” (Weische 2007).

4.1.2.2. Employment

Eltayeb himself started as a newspaper peddler for two years when he arrived in Vienna in 1984 followed by other hard works until he could start studying to finish his degree (Eltayeb). Insufficient knowledge of German was a problem for him, which holds true also for Hamza. Philipp and Starl (2016) report that almost half of the participants in their study claimed that their insufficient knowledge of German was a problem when looking for a job, which again represents Hamza’s situation.

Hamza is a character that never gives up and he belongs to the kinds of people “die irgendetwas arbeiten, um zu überleben” (*Palmenhaus* 201). He works different kinds of jobs to make a living in Vienna. His main occupation is selling newspapers on the street, which a lot of Egyptians do. When Hamza arrives in Vienna he is told that this job for the newspaper is the only way he can make money. He refers to it as “Sklavenarbeit”. He has to get up very early in the morning to be on time on his spot in the outskirts of Vienna. His boss is very strict with his employees and the smallest mistake can mean that they will not get their basic salary. Also, if they do not sell enough newspapers, they have to pay it out of their own pocket, so that the company does not lose money. Another downside of the job is that Hamza does not get insurance and he has to pay all the costs for doctors himself (*Palmenhaus* 89, 111, 113, 251).

Hamza and his colleagues are treated like “Rindvieh” when they are introduced to their job and they are shown videos from “good” and “bad” employees. Receiving the work uniform reminds Hamza of the time he had to go to war. In the military, the soldiers have to do exactly what they are told to, and so it is as a newspaper seller. The bosses remind him of the military leaders although they do not wear a uniform (*Palmenhaus* 196-199).

Additionally, Hamza stands in for a friend who distributes leaflets in houses. Similar to the other job, the route is planned by the boss. Also, they check some houses if they actually deliver the leaflets and do not drop them in front of empty flats (*Palmenhaus* 220). In winter time Hamza also cleans the streets from the snow. At New Year’s Eve he works long hours, because he gets paid extra for cleaning up the waste from the party (*Palmenhaus* 306). These examples indicate that he is willing to do any job to survive.

He loses his job as newspaper peddler when he is in hospital because of an appendix operation. This causes higher rent arrears and therefore, Sandra asks him to move in with her (*Palmenhaus* 251). This is the only time when Hamza is jobless until he asks for a job in a pet shop where they immediately offer him a trial (*Palmenhaus* 297). It is not explained if he ever gets hired.

4.1.3. Hamza's acculturation strategies

Similar to Ifemelu, Hamza's acculturation strategies also change throughout the novel as his transcultural identity develops. At first it can be interpreted as "separation" (Bhatia and Ram 4) because he is very occupied with bringing a part of his home to Vienna as he puts up pictures of palm trees in his flat in order to replace the real palm trees in his head and falls into daydreams, as discussed earlier (*Palmenhaus* 34, 38).

His first contacts in Vienna are fellow North Africans, but even with them Hamza does not really want to engage with. Abuu Darsh is his only real friend apart from Sandra, but the friendship is strongly characterized by Abuu Darsh just turning up and starting to tell stories. Still, he plays an important role in Hamza's perception of Vienna and its people. Abuu Darsh offers Hamza a view from a foreigner who has been living in Austria for a longer time and who is not afraid to voice his opinion. His strong critiques of Austrians mostly adhere to Hamza's experiences, but he is not able to articulate it in the same way.

His cat Hakiema, further plays an important part in his acculturation process. Her name is made up for his two sisters' names, Kariem and Haliema. She gives him comfort as she "schläft genau über meinem Herzen. Sie reguliert meinen Herzschlag für mich, also kann ich wieder in meine Erinnerungen eintauchen" (*Palmenhaus* 65). During the cold winter, she is his only consolation and she has a comforting and quiet personality that helps him to endure lonely and cold times (*Palmenhaus* 10-13). She can be seen as his closest friend, as he has no one besides his cat and he takes her everywhere with him. When Sandra comes into his life, she and Hakiema form some kind of surrogate family for Hamza.

Notwithstanding, he does try hard to integrate into the Austrian society. He is taking on any job to survive in this cold place and already before his arrival he has a high interest in Austrian art through his friend Amm Rikaabi. His story sparked Hamza's interest in Vienna and its art when he tells him about an exhibition called "Palmenhaus – Sonnenhaus" from a Viennese artist called Valerie (*Palmenhaus* 230). Amm Rikaabi fell in love with this woman, she spent some time in Egypt and then he went to Vienna with her. Certainly, this story makes Hamza long for a similar romance.

Learning German is definitely an important step for Hamza's adaption to Austria. It is presented in a very funny way, as he brings books called "Lerne Deutsch in sieben

Tagen” and “Deutsch für Ausländer” with him that are not helpful at all. Especially because of the Viennese dialect that is presented in the novel. For example, at his arrival the taxi driver says “Ojs klor” and Hamza is confused what chlorine has to do with the address (Palmenhaus 287). Apart from the serious situations illustrated, Eltayeb plays around with languages which also brings an amusing side to Hamza’s struggles when he uses German vocabulary like “Möhre, Aubergine, Aprikose”. People’s reactions like “der redet wie ein Piefke” make him believe that this is the word for someone with bad German skills (Palmenhaus 297).

Through Sandra he tries out Austrian food, she takes him to her family in Krems where they celebrate Christmas, and Hamza is more and more integrated into the Austrian way of living. Their numerous visits to the palm tree house and different restaurants give Hamza a new meaning in his life in Austria and make it purposeful.

The next section will elaborate more on the importance of Sandra in Hamza’s acculturation process and in his development of a transcultural personality.

4.1.4. Cross-cultural Love

Hamza was a very shy boy in his village Wadd An-Naar and had difficulties showing his emotions and feelings towards girls. He was into a girl called Leyla, but he never dared to speak to her and also, it was forbidden by the society (*Palmenhaus* 300). In Kairo, he is seen talking to a group of girls, which gets him a bad reputation because he opens himself to hell. In Vienna, he meets two women before Sandra, but one had bulimia and the other one was obsessively tidy. Sandra’s only obsession is “ihre grenzenlose Liebe” and also Hamza gets to know a different side of himself and admits his feelings (*Palmenhaus* 326). The emotional side of him finds expression in his relation to Sandra and she is a big help for him to adapt to the foreign surrounding where he has been feeling lost (Malina 124).

Their first meeting is on the staircase in Hamza’s house when his grocery bag rips and Sandra helps him to bring everything into his flat. She is very fond of his cat Hakiema, who immediately likes her and so Hamza invites her for tea. Their interactions are very loving from the first second. Hamza charmingly explains her the pronunciation of his name and Karkadé and they both are amused by her mispronunciation because some Arabic letters do not exist in German. For example, Hamza has to explain her how to

pronounce his name, because the way she says it, changes the meaning in Arabic (*Palmenhaus* 31-35).

Hamza likes about Sandra that she does not immediately ask about his job, because “in diesem Land [ist es] eigentlich immer ein der ersten Fragen [...], wenn man jemanden kennen lernt” (*Palmenhaus* 44). Sandra rather asks him about spices that he uses for cooking and his history. It seems like Hamza is ashamed of his job and he prefers telling Sandra about his history than about his uncomfortable living situation in Vienna.

First, Sandra uses visiting the cat as an excuse to see Hamza, but soon they make it a habit to meet three times a week, at his place, in the palm tree house, and her place. Sandra realizes that he is drifting into his daydreams, “in eine Art Schlummer versunken”, when they are in the palm tree house and she asks him where he is then. She shows interest in his dreams and wants him to take her with him so she can see what he sees (*Palmenhaus* 49).

Their relationship is very much marked by mutual exchange of their culture and their history. Although in the beginning Sandra is the one asking about Hamza’s story, when they spend time at her house in Krems, she is finally also sharing her story, which she found not be of equal importance as Hamza’s (*Palmenhaus* 245). Their deep bond is also shown through her giving herself to him, but he knows that truthfully, he belongs to her (*Palmenhaus* 135).

Sandra gives Hamza the feeling of family and warmth as he finds his “verloren geglaubten Jahre” again through her. He even describes her as a garden in paradise (*Palmenhaus* 51, 201, 315). Unlike Ifemelu’s partners in *Americanah*, Sandra is very diplomatic and open to learn about Hamza’s culture, rather than trying to impose her Austrian identity and lifestyle on him. She is a very humble and caring person as she kisses Hamza each time he tells a painful story. It is a totally new feeling for him to receive so much attention from someone (*Palmenhaus* 133). Also, her presence, the “verzaubernde Atmosphäre und die Musik vertreiben den Schmerz und die Erinnerungen die [ihn] heute heimgesucht haben” (*Palmenhaus* 135).

Sexuality, which is still regarded as a taboo topic in the Sudanese society, also finds its place in the story of Hamza’s relationship with Sandra:

Ich liebe den Geruch ihres Mundes. Unsere Kleider fallen wie Herbstlaub zu Boden. Ihr Körper ist zart und warm, weich und zugleich fest. Meine Lippen

gleiten langsam an ihrem Mund zu ihrer Wange und dann zu ihrem Ohr. Mein Gesicht taucht in ihr Haar ein. Ihr Atem spricht zu mir in den schönsten Sprachen, und ich kann jeden einzelnen Laut verstehen. Unsere Hände erforschen des anderen Körper in erregender Langsamkeit. [...] Ich tauche in Sandras Leben ein, und unser Atem wird schneller. [...] Wir werden lauter und unsere Stimmen fließen harmonisch ineinander. [...] Mein Körper geht in ihrem auf. Ich bin glücklich, machtlos und mächtig zugleich, erregt und beruhigt, vergesse alles in diesem Augenblick (Palmenhaus 135-136).

Similar to the rest of their relationship, their sexual interaction is described in a very loving and caring way. Eltayeb uses metaphorical language to describe the details of their experience and makes it about more than just physical love. Through their physical connection their souls and their lives connect even more which becomes apparent in this scene. Still, Hamza feels ashamed when he kisses Sandra in public, because it makes him feel half naked, although for Austrian couples it is a normal thing to do (*Palmenhaus* 313).

When Sandra becomes sick, he brings her to hospital and stays with her until the end. She is diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and passes away shortly after his cat Hakiema, who falls sick at the same time. The feeling is “wie ein Erdbeben, das [ihn] erschüttert und alles in einem einzigen Augenblick zunichte gemacht hat was [sie] gemeinsam aufgebaut haben“. He waits to wake up from this dream and to come back to life (*Palmenhaus* 341). It is a very tragic end to a beautiful love story, but still it is written in a hopeful way, as Sandra leaves her diary to Hamza. She requests that he should keep telling his story and dreams, he should continue his visits to the palm tree house and remember her when he invites friends over to their house as if she was with them.

Only through her death Hamza is able to realize how his relationship to Sandra changed him and his life in Austria. Even though he wants to leave to Egypt by himself, in the final scene at the airport he rescues a little cat, misses his flight and Abuu Darsh takes him and his new cat to a café.

4.2. Multiple Consciousness

This section will now shed light on Hamza's development of a multiple consciousness. It is not presented as obvious as in Ifemelu's story, as she went back to Nigeria and recognized how she differed from other Nigerians. Moreover, Hamza's transcultural experiences is told in a very different manner, as his past plays a bigger role than in

Ifemelu's story. Still, there are incidents where Hamza notices how he assimilated to the Austrians and identifies not only through his Sudanese culture. Besides, he critiques religious developments in the Sudan and creates a distance between his memories of his home and current developments in the country. Nevertheless, Hamza never lost his closeness to his roots and he values his heritage a lot. For example, the lantern and the three stones he brought from home are his most precious possessions.

When Hamza first comes to Vienna he feels so estranged from the Austrian culture, because it is so different to anything he has experienced in life. But the longer he stays he realizes how he has become "allmählich wie die Leute hier" (*Palmenhaus* 32). Bhugra (134) argues that through the imbalance of two cultures only the inferior one assimilates to the dominant, but not the other way around. In Hamza's case, he as the inferior assimilates to the Austrian system, which is not only negative, but he does accentuate the negative side such as feeling pressured by time (*Palmenhaus* 32).

His multiple consciousness further is expressed through his view on his religion and its development in the Sudan. The parts where Hamza tells stories that deal with religion it becomes apparent that the religious history of the country is marked by Christians and Moslems trying to impose their beliefs onto the people. Hamza has always been a very open person and interested in books that were forbidden because they were thought to be "gegen Religion und Moral gerichtet" (*Palmenhaus* 273). In that sense, he can be seen as a kind of silent rebel that always wanted to follow his own beliefs and interests, which he is more able to do in Austria than in the Sudan or Egypt. He further openly speaks about his and his sister's circumcision when Sandra asks about it and he calls it a "heuchlerische Männergesellschaft" (*Palmenhaus* 318). This critique is very direct for a calm character like Hamza, but it shows his development of a multiple consciousness as he has not spoken up about it before.

Hamza's development also arises from being demeaned by the society he comes from. Being physically distant from his country of origin, its culture and society allows him to be more critical and he even calls it "verlogen" and "militant", which he did not dare to when he was still part of it (*Palmenhaus* 318). At first the focus is more on how he misses his home, the palm trees and the smells, but more and more also the negative sides and experiences are revealed, like his time as a soldier and prisoner.

His relationship to Sandra again plays an important role as he loses the "Lasten [seines] Lebens" by telling Sandra his past "Stück für Stück" (*Palmenhaus* 240). He

already lost faith and trust in his environment until Sandra takes him to the palm tree house which turns into his favorite place for telling stories. Through this relationship his life takes a “glückliche Wende” and Hamza can move on from his past.

Summing up, his development of a multiple consciousness has a connection to the processing of his past and finding his place in the present through the relationship to Sandra. He almost appears to be haunted by his past and only through talking about it he can find his way to enjoy his new life with a new perspective. Similar to Ifemelu, he keeps embracing his traditions and knows where he comes from but still he takes up new habits from his new cultural environment.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, this thesis examines the forming of a transcultural identity in African Diasporic literature, comparing the U.S. and Austria. I provided a general overview of identity concepts and related those to globalization and transculturalism, in order to help the readers orientate themselves to the topic. Further, it has been established that the cultural identity of a person cannot be defined through national borders, but is more complex due to the influence of local as well as global cultures. Through globalization, our understanding of cultural identities changes, as our cultural environment becomes more diverse and interconnected. Appiah's concept of the Cosmopolitan explains that if one decides to move, they take their cultural practices, their roots, with them, which is further applied to the African continent by Selasi's concept of Afropolitanism. The so-called transmigrants are able to navigate between two worlds and be part of more than one culture. The concept of the Afropolitan and Berry's acculturation strategies serve as a theoretical basis to understand how the main characters in the novels develop their transcultural identities.

Moreover, it has been pointed out that feelings like loss and dislocation together with a racist host environment can lead to acculturative stress or even mental problems. Especially for people who are racially marked, integrating into a new culture comes is more difficult and they are often confronted with negative prejudice. Nevertheless, the development of a multiple consciousness and therefore also a transcultural identity is possible by seeing oneself as African but also as a citizen of the world. You need to constantly negotiate reality in order to create new African identities that tell more than a single story.

Furthermore, similarities between the African Diaspora in the U.S. and in Austria have been presented, as in both countries African identities are historically shaped and defined by those in power, the white majority. Whereas in the U.S. African-American identities present additional misunderstandings about African identities, in Austria, the forming of black or African identities is still developing as Africans are still a minority that is marginalized by the society, as I have demonstrated in this thesis. As both novels, *Americanah* and *Das Palmenhaus* deal with emigrant characters from the African continent to the West, the analysis has been carried out with a comparative approach. The main characters Ifemelu and Hamza show similar expectations about

their host culture and also share experiences in terms of imposed identities, struggles with seeking employment and trying to adapt to their host culture.

In terms of the idealization of the west, I have shown that Ifemelu as well as Hamza think of their country of destination as some kind of paradise with unlimited possibilities for a better future. Additionally, both have contact to people who either are currently living in their country of destination, like Ifemelu's Aunt Uju, or have lived there, like Hamza's friend Amm Rikaabi. Although they also share some of the hardships, an idealized picture is painted of the U.S. and Austria. In both novels, it is clearly indicated that in the Sudan as well as in Nigeria, people believe in an American or European dream, that keeps them hoping for a better and easier life in the west. Thus, Hamza and Ifemelu are disappointed when they actually arrive in their country of destination and are confronted with the immigrant reality, which is connected with the feeling of being estranged from the mainstream society. In the process of their acculturation, Hamza as well as Ifemelu, are confronted with racial discrimination and worse job opportunities than Americans or Austrians. Although Hamza and Ifemelu show different preconditions of going abroad, because Ifemelu comes from a very educated background and Hamza has always tried to survive with any kind of job, their chances of employment are similar. On the one hand, Ifemelu is not allowed to work with her student visa, on the other hand, Hamza, who has almost no knowledge of German, also has few options to earn money. Both fall into a certain group of people in the host country that is less privileged simply because of their origin and skin color. In Hamza's situation, the knowledge of the host countries' language additionally presents a barrier for integration. In Ifemelu's story, we are also given insight into other characters' acculturation processes like Aunt Uju and her son Dike, who grows up in the U.S., which gives the story more complexity and perspectives. Hamza does not have any relatives who he can compare his experiences to, only his friend Abuu Darsh offers a second point of view, but his character plays a minor role and stays in the background.

At a further stage of their integration into the host culture, Hamza and Ifemelu feel the urge to speak up and criticize their new environment. Ifemelu talks about her discomfort in her blog, which gives her an anonymous space where she can openly speak. Ifemelu appears to be more agitated and wants to express her anger with the American society, whereas Hamza is a quieter character, that copes with his problems through silence and dreaming. Sandra, Hamza's girlfriend, then gives him the possibility to raise his voice and share his thoughts but still in a calmer way than

Ifemelu. Ifemelu's partners do not have the same understanding for her situation like Sandra, which might also be a reason why Ifemelu needs the blog to share her impressions.

Transcultural love plays an important role in both of the character's development of a multiple consciousness, as I have shown. Through their relationships, Hamza and Ifemelu are able to reflect more upon their own cultural identity as well as learn about their partner's cultural identity. Whereas Adichie's main character concludes that in transcultural relationships one spends too much time explaining, which makes her wonder if she would have anything else to say to her partner otherwise, Eltayeb's main character enjoys the exchange of his and his partner's culture. Despite the differences in their relationships, it is clear that Hamza and Ifemelu learn more about themselves through their relationships.

It is further demonstrated that the characters construct their transcultural identities through the multiple consciousness which is gained through living 'in-between' two cultures. Ifemelu, although she has adapted to the conveniences of an American lifestyle, never loses her "Nigerian selves" and embraces her cultural background. The same holds true for Hamza, who enjoys the organized life in Austria, but still lives his own culture through his visits to the palm tree house, where he drifts into his past.

In conclusion, it can be stated that this thesis offers an original contribution to African Diasporic Literature, as it sheds light on a literary field that is still offered little attention, especially African Diasporic Literature in Austria. Eltayeb's and Adichie's novels show that African immigrants in the U.S. and Austria show many parallels and they raise awareness of racial discrimination against people of color and their exclusion from the mainstream white societies in the U.S. and Austria.

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7. Appendix

7.1. Zusammenfassung in Deutsch

Diese Arbeit untersucht die Romane *Americanah* und *Das Palmenhaus* und ihre Präsentation der Entwicklung einer transkulturellen Identität in der Migrantenerfahrung. Die Romane stammen von Autoren, die selbst Teil afrikanischer Diasporas sind und eine transkulturelle Identität entwickelt haben, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie und Tarek Eltayeb. Um die Autoren in einen Kontext zu bringen, setzt der theoretische Hintergrund Identitätskonzepte in Zusammenhang mit Globalisierung und Transkulturalität und erklärt die Rolle von Diasporas in einer globalisierten Welt und wie sie neue afrikanische Identitäten konstruieren. Die analysierten Werke erzählen Geschichten von afrikanischen Emigranten in den Westen, in die U.S.A. und Österreich und erforschen wie die Erwartung und die Realität im Zielland in Verbindung stehen. Beide Hauptcharaktere müssen gegen aufgezwungene Identitäten als Schwarze in einer weißen Gesellschaft ankämpfen während sie sich in ihrem Akkulturationsprozess befinden und ihr multiples Bewusstsein ausbilden. Ich zeige in dieser Arbeit, dass trotz der geographischen Distanz und der historischen Unterschiede zwischen den U.S.A und Österreich, afrikanische Immigranten mit den gleichen Vorurteilen und Hürden in ihrem Zielland konfrontiert werden, die die Ausbildung einer transkulturellen Identität erschweren.

7.2. Abstract in Englisch

This thesis explores the novels *Americanah* and *Das Palmenhaus* and their presentation of the development of a transcultural identity in the migrant experience. The novels are both written by writers who are part of African diasporas and have developed transcultural identities themselves, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Tarek Eltayeb. To place the writers into context, the theoretical background presents identity concepts related to globalization and transculturalism as well as the role of Diasporas in a globalized world and how they create new African identities. Their works under analysis each tell the story of an emigrant from the African continent to the west, either the U.S. or Austria and explore how their imagination and reality of the country of destination connect. Both main characters experience struggles with being black in a mainstream white society during their acculturation process and their development of

a multiple consciousness. I show in this thesis that despite the geographical distance and historical differences between the U.S. and Austria, African immigrants are confronted with the same prejudices and obstacles in their host environment which complicate their development of a transcultural identity.

7.3. Transcript Interview Tarek Eltayeb

- I: *Ok. Sie wissen bereits worum es geht. Bitte stellen Sie sich vor und beschreiben Sie sich.*
- E: Ok. Mein Name ist Tarek Eltayeb, ich bin in Kairo geboren, am 2.1.1959. Mein Vater stammt aus dem Sudan, meine Mutter ist halb halb, halb Ägypterin, halb Sudanese. Ich zuerst in die Koranschule gegangen, dann Volksschule bis zur Uni in Ägypten und dann mit 25 hab ich das Land verlassen und bin nach Wien gekommen. Und in Wien hab ich eine sehr harte Arbeit gehabt die ersten zwei Jahre als Zeitungskollaborateur in Kagan. Dann später konnte ich eine Arbeit finden im Berufsförderungsinstitut. Dann im Telekabel habe ich auch gearbeitet, so „nebenbei“-Arbeiten hab ich gehabt. Dann habe ich begonnen auf der Uni zu studieren und hab mein Studium hier beendet 1997. Jetzt bin ich tätig auf der Fachhochschule Krems seit 1999, auf der Uni Graz und auch hier in Wien auf der Arabistik.
- I: *Und deutsch haben Sie erst hier in Österreich gelernt?*
- E: Ja, 1985 hab ich beschlossen ich muss unbedingt Deutsch lernen, weil es war für mich auch nicht sehr leicht mit den Menschen die ganze Zeit Englisch zu sprechen.
- I: *Wie würden Sie sich bezeichnen? Als Afrikaner, als Österreicher, als Sudanese, als Ägypter...*
- E: ...Alles. Ägyptisch, wer mich hört der merkt sofort das mein Akzent Karinish ist, die Sprache von Kairo. Das unterrichte ich auch hier. Wer mich sieht von der Farbe merkt der ist aus südlichen Ländern, Nubien vielleicht, aber ich bin aus dem Sudan von meinem Vater her. Und auch in meinem Kopf ist so viel österreichisch. Ich bin da seit 34 Jahren. Genau am 12. Jänner waren es 34 Jahre, dass ich da bin in Österreich. Natürlich habe ich viel von Wien und dem Waldviertel. **Die Sprache eher nicht, aber alles was hier ist, ist schon meine Heimat. Meine Kaffeehäuser, meine Straßen. Ich wohne im selben Haus** seit 85, gleich da in der Nähe im 7. Bezirk und das ist für mich sehr....ich fühl mich wohl hier.
- I: *Ist sozusagen Österreich eine Heimat und Ägypten die zweite Heimat? Wie stehen die Länder in Beziehung zueinander?*
- E: Es ist so lustig, weil bei mir ist alles eine Mischung. Ich hab keine Grenzen, überhaupt nicht. Die Leute versuchen immer zu sagen „bist du Sudanese oder bist du Ägypter?“ und dann kommt in den Zeitungen immer Streit. Da schreibt einer Sudanese, sudanesischer Schriftsteller, andere sagen „nein, der ist Ägypter“. Wenn sie mich fragen sag ich „beide und noch dazu Österreicher auch“. **Ja, ich fühl mich wirklich als alle drei ohne Grenzen.** Das ist in mir, die Länder sind nur die Linien, die Hauptstädte, die Namen und so, bei mir fließt dann aber alle drei zusammen.
- I: *Reisen sie öfter hin und her zwischen Österreich und Ägypten?*

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- E: Ja, mindestens einmal im Jahr. Im Sudan war ich zweimal bis jetzt. Insgesamt in meinem Leben dreimal, einmal mit meinem Vater, da war ich 20. Das zweite Mal hab ich eine große Einladung vom Sudan bekommen, da hab ich im ganzen Land Lesungen und viele Veranstaltungen gemacht und 3000 km gefahren in einem Monat. Es gab auch einen ganz großen Überraschungsempfang am Flughafen, dass ich erschrocken war, das habe ich nicht erwartet, dass sie alle mit Blumen und Kameras und so kommen. Dann war ich in 7 Bundesländern vom Sudan immer auf einer Uni und im Fernsehen und Radio und habe andere Autoren dort getroffen und mit ihnen gesprochen. War sehr nett. Und vor eineinhalb Jahren waren wir auch dort im Sudan von der Uni Wien. Mit 33 Leuten haben wir eine Reise organisiert.
- I: *Das trägt wahrscheinlich dann dazu bei, dass man die Wurzeln sozusagen nicht verliert und sich mit allem identifizieren kann.*
- E: Ja. Ägypten ist eh von meine Mutter lebt, Sudan war ich nicht so oft, aber es ist auch ein großer Teil von mir und hier in Österreich ist meine Frau und der Rest der Familie von ihr. Und natürlich hab ich hier auch eine sehr lange Zeit verbracht, mehr als in Ägypten.
- I: *Als sehen sie sich auch als Teil von Wien und Österreich?*
- E: Ja.
- I: *Wie ist ihr Bezug zu anderen Menschen hier in Österreich aus Ägypten oder aus dem Sudan?*
- E: Ich bin nicht so in einer Community hier. Ich kenn ein paar, ich besuch selten einen Verein. Wenn eine Veranstaltung ist, dann gehe ich manchmal, aber direkt in einem Club oder Verein bin ich gar nicht und das vermiss ich auch gar nicht. **Meine Freunde sind für mich ohne Nationalität**, das ist mir wurscht. Ich kenne jemanden der ist aus Nicaragua und wir verstehen uns super. **Natürlich wenn jemand aus Ägypten ist, dann ist das sprachlich gut und nah, aber muss nicht sein, dass der deshalb mein Freund ist. Meine Freunde sind wirklich von überall.**
- I: *Weil ich vorher schon angesprochen habe, vor dem Interview, mit dem Vienna African Writers Club. Gestern habe ich Sie dort erwähnt, und ihr Name war den Leuten ein Begriff, aber sie haben sich dann gefragt „Wo ist er? Warum ist er nicht hier bei uns?“.*
- E: Ehrlich gesagt, am Anfang al ich in Wien war, war ich in diesem Verein ab und zu. Und wenn sie da sitzen uns streiten und politische Dinge besprechen... es gab keinen Schritt nach vorne. Ich habe gefunden, dass es Zeitverlust ist für mich. Wenn ich wirklich lieber ein Buch lese oder was schreibe ist das besser für mich. Dann tu ich das sehr gerne und freue mich. Wenn jemand aber irgendwas braucht, dann gehe ich gerne und helfe ich.
- I: *Haben sie auch schon in Ägypten geschrieben oder haben sie erst in Österreich begonnen?*

E: Ich habe begonnen zu schreiben... wollen Sie eine lustige Geschichte hören?

I: *Ja, gerne.*

E: Mit 17 war ich verliebt in ein junges Mädchen. Ich habe Gedichte geschrieben für sie. Aber sie hat diese Gedichte nie gesehen. Ich habe mich geschämt ihr diese Gedichte zu geben und dann habe ich sie Freunden von mir gegeben als ob sie von jemand anderem wären. Ich habe gesagt die Gedichte hat mir jemand gegeben und er möchte gerne eure Meinung hören. Er hat mir das Vertrauen gegeben, dass ich sie euch zeige. Lest sie, aber den Namen sag ich nicht. Sie waren total begeistert von dem was ich geschrieben hab. Dann habe ich begonnen weiter zu schreiben, aber für sie, für die Gruppe. Vielleicht war das der Anfang, die Gedichte. Viel gelesen habe ich immer, weil mein Vater eine Bibliothek zuhause hatte, die sehr schön war.

Ernsthaft habe ich dann begonnen zu schreiben 1986 in Wien. Ich war allein da, ohne Freunde ohne irgendwas. Das einzige was ich gedacht habe war, dass ich meine Familie, meine Verwandten, meine Umgebung von unten aufs Papier bringen werde. So mach ich meine Welt, ohne zu denken was zu publizieren. Dann habe ich etwas nach London geschickt, das wurde publiziert, in Arabisch damals, und die wollten weiter etwas haben. Und innerhalb von einem Jahr habe ich 11 Kurzgeschichten publiziert. So schnell hat es begonnen. Also ernsthaft, um es kurz zu beantworten, 86 hier in Österreich habe ich begonnen zu schreiben und 88 habe ich 3 Bücher fertig geschrieben, davon ist eines *Städte ohne Dattelpalmen*.

I: *Also haben Sie ihre Eindrücke von ihrer gewohnten Umgebung verschriftlicht?*

E: Ja, weil am Anfang habe ich Österreich vielleicht 5-7 Jahre überhaupt nicht verstanden. Ich habe versucht... aber die Sprache war für mich sehr schwer zu verstehen. Und von unten war so viel Vorrat, dass ich das alles zuerst einmal bearbeiten sollte, habe ich gedacht. Alle Geschichten die ich am Anfang geschrieben habe spielen alle in Ägypten, über Ägypten. Später habe ich dann angefangen langsam mit Österreich und jetzt gibt's schon pur Österreich in meinem Schreiben, gemischt auch mit Ägypten aber genau was da in Österreich passiert.

I: *Also war es am Anfang auch eine Form des Erinnerns und Verarbeitens von dem was in Ägypten war?*

E: Genau, eben in Erinnerung holen, literarisch bearbeiten. Zum Beispiel über einen Freund nachzudenken, was er geredet hat, wie es damals war. Namen werden natürlich geändert, zwei, drei Freunde werden in einen Charakter geschrieben.

I: ***Welche Bedeutung hat für Sie die Sprache in der Sie schreiben? Was beeinflusst es ob sie einen Text auf Arabisch verfassen oder auf Deutsch?***

E: Arabisch ist für mich das Beste, das Leichteste für mich. **Auf Arabisch schrieb ich ganz einfach wie wenn jemand lacht oder weint. Da gibt es keine**

Strukturen, das kommt einfach. Wenn ich aber auf Deutsch schreibe, schreibe ich mehr Artikel oder etwas für die Uni, das geben ich dann auch jemandem zum Korrigieren, weil natürlich gibt es Fehler. Aber Literatur schreibe ich lieber auf Arabisch weil es für mich leichter ist. Auf Deutsch merke ich, dass ich mir vorstelle wie ein Professor vor mir steht und sagt „Nein, das ist Dativ, nein das ist Genetiv, das ist der, das ist den, das ist das.“ Artikeln auf Deutsch sind wirklich sehr schwierig. **Fließend zu schreiben ist auf Arabisch einfacher, weil ich merke, dass es einfach von mir kommt.** Manchmal macht man natürlich auch Fehler, aber das macht nichts, das korrigiere ich später, aber auf Deutsch sage ich zum Beispiel „Ich gehe in der Garten“ und das ist falsch. Dann denke ich nach ob es der, die oder das ist und dann ist der Gedanke weg von dem was ich schreiben wollte. Deshalb schreibe ich lieber auf Arabisch, meiner Muttersprache... Denken ist in meinem Kopf in allen Sprachen gleich. Natürlich arabisch, aber oft auch drängt sich Deutsch nach vorne. Ganz einfach darum, weil für mich Gedanken keine Grammatik brauchen. Das ist wurscht. Wichtig sind da drinnen Nomen und Verben, was passiert, aber der Rest ist nicht so wichtig.

I: Das Gefühl ist wichtig.

E: Ja, ich träume auch immer auf Deutsch.

I: Wahrscheinlich auch bedingt durch die Umgebung, wenn Sie den ganzen Tag Deutsch hören.

E: Natürlich. Aber auch wenn ich mit Leuten aus Ägypten spreche, mit meiner Mutter zum Beispiel, dann weiß ich gar nicht welche Sprache ich spreche, aber ich rede mit ihr Deutsch, mit allen Menschen.

I: Ok... wieder zu ihrer Literatur. Sie schrieben hier in Österreich, wer ist ihre Leserschaft?

E: Ganz gemischt. Die Lesungen sind öfter in Österreich auch unter Autoren aus Österreich. Ich bin gerne unter Österreichern und ich hasse diese „Migrantenliteratur“.

I: Ja, es ist schwierig zu formulieren. Was könnte man ihrer Meinung nach tun um das Literaturangebot in Österreich offener zu gestalten für mehr Schriftsteller mit verschiedenen kulturellen Hintergründen?

E: Ich glaub es ist schon offen, es gibt Möglichkeiten. Angebote sind da. Das Problem ist, dass etwas auf Deutsch geschrieben wird. Manchmal ist es nicht so gut, wenn jemand auf Deutsch versucht zu schreiben, obwohl seine Sprache nicht so gut ist. Wegen seiner Situation, er ist vielleicht Flüchtling und er kämpft mit der Sprache, wird etwas trotzdem aufgenommen, weil man sieht, dass er sich bemüht hat. Aber es ist dann eben doch nicht gut genug.

I: Ist es schwierig, wenn man als afrikanischer Schriftsteller nach Österreich kommt und in seiner Muttersprache schreibt, jemanden zu finden, der das dann übersetzt?

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- E: Übersetzung ist sehr schwierig. Übersetzer bekommen gar nichts oder sehr wenig. Und wenn jemand übersetzt denken sich die meisten „Ich mach lieber ein paar Dokumente für ein Büro oder ich dolmetsche etwas und bekomme gleich Geld.“ Wenn jemand ein Buch übersetzt dann bekommt er vielleicht 5000€ und arbeitet ein Jahr lang. Das sind wie 500€ im Monat und aber jeden Tag wirklich viel Arbeit. Das ist das Problem. Wenn jemand auf Deutsch gut schreiben kann, dann bekommt er auch die Möglichkeit das zu präsentieren, wenn nicht dann braucht er eine gute Übersetzung und das ist nicht einfach zu finden. Ich finde das ist das Problem. Wenn die Verlage ein bisschen Unterstützung bekommen würden oder die Autoren direkt, dann könnte sich etwas verändern. Weil es gibt Leute, die wirklich gut schreiben, aber eben in ihrer Muttersprache.
- I: *Ja, das ist ein Problem. So kann man das Literaturangebot nicht an die Gesellschaft anpassen, die sehr divers ist in Österreich. Dann könnte man vielleicht auch mehr Leute dazu bewegen zu lesen, wenn sie merken, es gibt Schriftsteller hier mit gleicher Herkunft, die Themen bearbeiten, die für sie wichtig sind.*
- E: Genau. Auf Deutsch gibt es eh ein paar mehr, aber die kommen dann vom Ursprungsland. Die sind in den Ländern bekannt, zum Beispiel Ägypten und Marokko, Libanon. Es gibt bestimmt von jedem Land Bücher, die dann auf Deutsch übersetzt wurden. Aber da im Land, wenn wir von Österreich sprechen, gibt es wenige Übersetzer, wenig Geld für die Übersetzer und dann vor allem im Gebiet vom Arabischen ins Deutsche ist es sehr sehr selten.
- I: *Gut, dann noch ein paar Fragen zu ihrem Buch Das Palmenhaus. Was war ihre Inspiration? Hat es einen autobiografischen Ursprung als sie selber im Palmenhaus waren?*
- E: **Natürlich war ich im Palmenhaus. Der Ursprungsgedanke ist gekommen als... ich hasse die Kälte.** Die Kälte ist wirklich mein Feind und ich hab am Anfang sehr gelitten hier und hab dann viel geschrieben im Palmenhaus. Also das Buch hat schon etwas von meinem Leben. Der Gedanke war so: Was wäre wenn Hamze, der Protagonist, zurückkommt vom Sudan oder Ägypten nach Österreich. Wie wäre das Leben für ihn hier. Das erste was ich gefunden habe war, er leidet zuerst an der Kälte. Wie kann er dann also seine Geschichte erzählen? Dann kam mir der Gedanke mit dem Palmenhaus. Mit Sandra kam dann auch noch die Liebesgeschichte dazu. Zur Erinnerung es gibt 12 Träume in 12 Kapiteln und jeder Traum bringt ihn auf etwas was später dann kommt. Das erleichtert dann das Lesen.
- I: *Sie haben bereits die Geschichte mit Sandra angesprochen, die sich entwickelt im Roman. Die beiden haben auch öfter das Thema der Sprachen, Arabisch und Deutsch, und die Missverständnisse die diese mit sich bringen. Sie versucht Dinge auszusprechen auf Arabisch, er erklärt es ihr. Spiegelt das auch das wieder wie sie es damals erlebt haben beim Deutsch lernen? Bzw. dass es eben*

nicht nur das ist, dass Sie Deutsch lernen, aber das andere ihre Sprache lernen wollen. Dass Migration also nicht nur in eine Richtung geht, sondern, dass man in der neuen Kultur auch etwas von seiner eigenen Kultur hergeben kann.

E: Das ist klar, das ist was, was bei mir wirklich passiert ist. Ich habe wirklich gelitten auch mit der Sprache. **Also die drei Schocks die mich getroffen haben waren die Kälte, die Sprache und Geld.** Das Land war sehr teuer für mich. Ich bin am 12. Jänner hier angekommen mit Kleidern aus Ägypten aus Baumwolle. Zwei Hemden, drei Hosen. Aber es hilft nicht. Ich brauchte Wolle, nicht Baumwolle. So etwas wo eines genug ist, weil drei, vier, das hat nicht geholfen. Auch richtige Schuhe brauchte ich, nicht welche aus Ägypten.

Zweitens war die Sprache. Am Anfang hab ich immer mit den Augen die Menschen verstanden, nicht mit den Ohren. Das war als ob die Menschen mit „krich krach“ sprechen würden. Ich habe nichts verstanden, deshalb musste ich immer genau in die Augen schauen um zu verstehen, aber es hat oft nicht gestimmt. Auch wenn Leute so sanft und so nett mit mir gesprochen haben, hab ich gedacht, dass das gut ist. Und wenn jemand ein bisschen finster schaut oder laut spricht, glaubt man er ist böse, aber das ist nicht so. Und das habe ich mit der Zeit gemerkt, dass jemand der vielleicht finster schaut und wenig redet auch sehr im lieb im Herzen sein kann. Und jemand der mich anlächelt hasst mich, das ist die Erfahrung die man im Laufe der Zeit macht. Das alles hat mir auch Geduld gegeben, den anderen zu verstehen. Wenn Österreicher zum Beispiel unten sind und Probleme haben und fragen, dann weiß ich was das sprachliche Problem ist. Habe ich die Frage jetzt beantwortet?

I: *Ja schon. Im Buch sind ja manche Wörter weiterhin auf Arabisch, hinten sind diese dann erklärt. Es sind aber auch Teile in wienerischem Dialekt geschrieben. Auch das arabische Lied ist auf Deutsch übersetzt. Wie sieht das in der Arabischen Version des Buches aus? Wie wird das Wienerische dargestellt?*

E: Dieses Lied ist sehr sehr berühmt und von einer sehr bekannten Sängerin. Wenn man Wien sagt in einem arabischen Land, dann kommt bei der älteren Generation sofort erstmal der Name der Sängerin, Asmahan. Und wenn man Asmahan sagt, sagt man Wien. **Wien war für diese Menschen das Paradies in diesem Lied.** Und das hat natürlich für das Buch eine große Bedeutung.

I: *Mhm. Manchmal kommen Ausdrücke vor, wenn Hamze erzählt was die Leute auf der Straße sagen, zum Beispiel „Heast“ oder jemand spricht ihn in der Straßenbahn an. In der deutschen Version ist das dann im wienerischen Dialekt geschrieben, wie funktioniert das in der arabischen Version?*

E: Natürlich ist das im Arabischen anders geschrieben. Da steht dann, dass er in einem Dialekt redet, mit Akzent der unverständlich ist, damit die Leute das verstehen. Bei der Übersetzung ist das dann natürlich super, weil man dann die Frage einfach in einem Wiener Dialekt schreiben kann. Das kommt auf Deutsch sehr gut. Auf Arabisch ist es beschrieben, auf Deutsch ist es gesagt.

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- I: Ok.
- E: Und umgekehrt.
- I: *Genau, mit den Dingen, die dann in den Fußnoten erklärt sind.*
- E: Genau. Ich sage etwas im Dialekt zu jemanden und dann merkt man sofort der ist aus dem Norden. Das ist wie wenn ich sage, der ist aus Linz, aus Oberösterreich oder aus Niederösterreich, das ist Vorarlberg. Man hört die einzelnen Regionen.
- I: *Was oft mehr aussagt, als wenn man sagt, dass jemand aus Österreich oder aus Ägypten kommt. Es ist nicht nur das Land, was etwas aussagt über die Sprache eines Menschen, mehr die Eigenheiten der einzelnen Regionen.*
- Dann zur nächsten Frage. Das ist wahrscheinlich wieder eine Parallele zwischen Ihrem Leben und dem Buch. Hamza's einziger Freund aus seiner Heimat ist Abu Darsh. Woher kommt Abu Darsh, welche Rolle spielt er?*
- E: Er ist nicht Sudanese. Er kommt aus einem südlichen Land und er hat eine eigene Sprache. Abu Darsh ist ein Kosenamen für Mustafa. Ja, warum ist Abu Darsh gekommen, dieses Geheimnis kann ich Ihnen verraten. Wie Sie gesehen haben, Hamza ist eh nett und höflich und er versucht sich zu adaptieren und die Gesellschaft zu verstehen, aber es gab Dinge ihm nicht gut gefallen haben. **Er wollte frech sein. Sein Charakter hat das aber nicht erlaubt zu machen, das wäre komisch gewesen, ein Widerspruch. Deshalb habe ich diese Person von Abu Darsh entwickelt. Der ist verrückt, der hat mir geholfen das auszudrücken was Hamza nicht konnte.**
- I: *Er gibt die also die Möglichkeit das Paradies auch zu kritisieren?*
- E: Ja, genau. Das musste auch sein. Hamza sieht das nicht so gut, er ist noch neu. Er sieht das was gut ist, was schlecht ist merkt er auch, aber er kann das noch nicht ausdrücken. Mustafa hat schon längere Erfahrung, er ist schon lange in der Gesellschaft und er traut sich schon mehr zu sagen.
- I: *Genau. Hamza ist noch nicht so lange in Österreich. Durch seine Träume und das Palmenhaus erinnert er sich an seine Vergangenheit und seine Heimat. Verhindert das auch ein bisschen, dass er sich wirklich wohlfühlt in Wien? Das, dass er sich so sehr mit seiner Herkunft beschäftigt. Oder hilft ihm das beim Einleben?*
- E: Natürlich hilft ihm das. Das ist ein Gebet, das ist was seine Seele beruhigt. **Durch die Träume zieht er sich zurück und da versteht er etwas, egal ob das schwer oder leicht ist. Aber es ist nicht, dass es ihn von der Gesellschaft entfernt, im Gegenteil, dieser Traum kommt um die Lücken in seiner Seele zu füllen.** Auch Dinge die er eigentlich nicht aussprechen kann, aber wir wollen wissen wie er sich ganz tief drinnen fühlt und das ermöglicht der Traum, wie zum Beispiel das mit seiner Mutter die ihn alleine lässt. Er kann das nicht laut sagen.

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- I: *Er hat vielleicht auch außer Sandra niemanden gehabt mit dem er darüber reden kann und die Träume bieten eine Möglichkeit.*
- E: Ja die Sandra war natürlich sehr gut für ihn.
- I: *Hat Sandra auch einen autobiografischen Hintergrund?*
- E: Vielleicht zum Teil, ja. Ganz wenig. Beziehung und Wohnung, das schon. Ich wohne im selben Haus seit 85. In der Zieglergasse, also es kann schon sein, aber das mit der Krankheit und so, das nicht.
- I: *Sonst würden wir heute nicht hier sitzen. Ok. Wollen Sie sonst noch etwas hinzufügen? Vielleicht generell, wie empfinden Sie die Situation von afrikanischer Literatur in Österreich?*
- E: Es ist nicht so genug beleuchtet. Es ist ja ein ganzer Kontinent und es wird oft so genommen und dargestellt als ein Land. Und das bekomme ich auch mit, wenn mich jemand fragt: „Sagen sie uns etwas über afrikanische Literatur“, dann sag ich: „Erzählen Sie mir etwas über europäische Literatur“. Das ist für sie wahrscheinlich sogar viel leichter. Sie kennen vielleicht belgische, spanische oder russischer Literatur leicht finden. Und trotzdem können Sie nicht drüber reden. Wenn ich jetzt sage „Österreich“, okay dann ist das deutschsprachige Literatur. Aber dann gehen wir weiter auf andere Sprachen und andere Länder. Wenn sie mich fragen über die Literatur in Nigeria oder in Somalia, aber Afrika, nein. Das ist ein Kontinent. Auch arabische Literatur, man kennt sich mehr, aber wir sind 22 Länder. Wenn ich von jedem nur einen kenne, dann ich einen Vortrag halten.
- I: *Weil jedes Land ganz anders ist.*
- E: Genau, auch verschiedene Sprachen. Stellen sie sich vor es gibt 22 deutschsprachige Länder, halb Europa ist arabisch. Viele denken leider noch immer, dass afrikanische Literatur nur ganz klein ist. Es gibt leider nicht so viele Übersetzungen. Es gibt so viele tolle Schriftsteller, die unübersetzt sind. Vielleicht gibt es aus spanisch und französisch noch mehr, vielleicht auch noch Englisch, aber deutsch weniger. Ich hoffe, dass in Österreich mehr Unterstützung kommt.
- (bezahlt Kaffee)
- Ja, es gab ja früher das Afro-asiatische Institut, ich weiß nicht ob Sie das gekannt haben, und es gab immer Lesungen. Und bei der letzten da war ich auch dabei, da ist dann ein Buch herausgekommen über afrikanische Literatur, ich hoffe, dass Sie das haben.
- I: *Über afrikanische Literatur in Österreich oder überhaupt?*
- E: Nein, überhaupt. Da gibt es von jedem Land ein oder zwei Autoren, da sind auch Gedichte drinnen. Ich kann es suchen, ich habe es bekommen.
- I: *Ja super. Dann hoffe ich, dass man dadurch mehr Licht auf afrikanische Schriftsteller werfen kann.*

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- E: Kennen Sie Tschibo? Er ist aus Nigeria und er schreibt in seiner Muttersprache. Er lebt hier in Österreich seit langer Zeit aber er redet noch immer Englisch. Er versteht Deutsch aber er redet Englisch. Seine Frau ist Österreicherin, er lebt lange Zeit schon mit ihr, er versteht Sie aber er spricht nicht Deutsch. Ich glaube aber er kann es. Seine Bücher schreibt er auf Igbo. Es gibt auch noch welche von Nordafrika, wobei die werden oft betrachtet als wäre es nicht Afrika. Das ist ein Problem. Wenn man spricht von einem Ägypter oder einem Algerier, dann denkt man nicht an Afrika, das ist immer sofort „schwarz“.
- Haben Sie genug über mich gefunden im Internet? Weil ich weiß nicht wieviel es auf Deutsch gibt.
- I: *Ja hab ich schon, aber ich mache eben diesen Vergleich mit Adichie's „Americanah“ und ihrem Buch. Über sie gibt es so viel und über Afrikaner generell die nach Amerika gegangen sind vor noch nicht so langer Zeit und die Länder miteinander vergleichen. Da ist es einfach Informationen zu finden. Aber sobald man auf Europa geht wird es weniger und in Österreich gibt es fast nichts. Deshalb hab ich gedacht, ok, die einzige Möglichkeit ist selbst auf der Uni, auf der Afrikanistik, nach Menschen zu suchen und mit Leuten zu reden um mehr darüber zu erfahren was sie beschäftigt und wie ihre Situation ist.*
- E: Ich kann gern noch versuchen zu sammeln was es noch zu meiner Person gibt.
- I: *Das ist sehr lieb, vielen Dank. Und vielen Dank für das Interview.*
- E: Bitte, sehr gerne.

7.4. Transcript Interview Beatrice Achaleke

I: *Bitte stell dich kurz vor, wie lange hast du in Österreich gelebt, was hast du hier gemacht.*

A: Ohje. (lacht)

I: *Nur eine Kurzfassung (lacht)*

A: Okay. Mein Name ist Beatrice Achaleke, geboren bin ich im Camerun und in Österreich habe ich 20 lange Jahre gelebt und was ich hier gemacht habe kann man zweiteilig sehen, also beruflich beziehungsweise politisch und privat. Ich beziehe mich auf das berufliche und politische. Ich habe viele, oder einige Vereine hier gegründet. Ich hab mich...ich glaube das wesentlichste war im Jahr 99 als Ofuma starb, als er umgebracht wurde, wo wir uns zusammengetan haben und versucht haben einen Dachverband afrikanischer Organisationen zu gründen. Wir waren auf großen Demos die dann in den Operation Spring gemündet sind. Dort wurden 99 Afrikaner verhaftet und sie wurden als Drogenbosse titulierte, eingesperrt und Prozess gemacht. Es war damals die größte Polizeiaktion in der zweiten Republik. Zu dieser Zeit war die erste schwarz-blaue Regierung.

Das nächste große Ding das ich machte war 2003 da wurde wieder ein guter Freund von mir zur Polizei gebracht, der war aus Mauritania. Ich war so wütend, dass ich meine Kinder genommen und aus Wien ausgezogen bin nach Niederösterreich. Von dort aus haben wir dann den Verein Schwarzer Frauen gegründet. Ich hab einfach meine Freundinnen versammelt und hab gesagt, ok, wir brauchen eine Stimme jetzt. Jetzt oder nie. Ich hab dann quasi den Verein allein aufgebaut, weil damals wusste nur ich allein wo der Verein hin sollte. Es sollte ein Ort sein wo wir Themen die uns betreffen zu unseren eigenen Arbeitsplätzen machen. Die anderen haben gedacht das ist ein Ort wo wir die Kinder hinbringen und uns treffen. Aber ich hatte eine Agenda und dementsprechend war es schwere diese Agenda umzusetzen, aber gelungen ist es trotzdem zum Großteil, denn der Verein existiert nach wie vor. Wir hatte viele Aktionen und auch EU-geförderte Projekte, aber dann wurde mir fad 2005.

Ich hab dann **AFRA**, international center for black women's perspectives, gegründet. In der Schwarze Frauen Community ging es darum schwarze Frauen zu bestärken, empowerment, nach innen in geschützten Räumen. Aber dann müssen sie nach außen gehen und sind sowieso ungeschützt. Deshalb war das Ziel von AFRA große Kampagnen nach außen zu richten die das Land auf schwarze Frauen und schwarze Menschen und ihre Bedürfnisse aufmerksam machen. Und dann kam Simon 2006 oder 2007...da war in der EU das Jahr der Chancengleichheit, ich hab gesagt, cool, schauen wir wie das Chancengleichheitskonzept aus der Perspektive von schwarzen Frauen aussieht. Also hab ich den **First Black European Women's Congress** ins Leben gerufen. Meine Güte hatten wir damals... (seufzt) ... alle dachten was soll denn das wieder, schwarze Menschen waren verwirrt. Wir sind Afrikanerinnen,

was willst du dort. Aber ich wollte mit dem Black European Women's Congress einfach schwarze Frauen in Europa zusammenbringen und schauen welche Erfahrungen sie in ihren Ländern haben und wie die zusammenpassen. Es kamen zusammen 116 Frauen aus 18 EU-Staaten sind sie gekommen. Wir hatten zwei Tage lang in Wien Kongresse, verschiedenste Gespräche geführt und haben anschließend „**The First Declaration of Black European Women**“ und auch die Selbstdefinition „black European“, trotz vieler Behaftungen, trotz viel Widerspruch, festgelegt. Ich glaub auf Youtube gibt es ein Video „The birth of the black European women's council“, da kann man viele Momente miterleben.

Ja, 2008 war dann „European Year of Intercultural dialogue“. Und ich hab mir gedacht, mit all diesen 116 Frauen gehen wir zur Europäischen Union und let's do intercultural dialogue. Wir haben dann the black European women's council dort vorgestellt. Es war eine riesen Veranstaltung. Es hat ein paar Jahre gut funktioniert, aber dann gab es keine Förderung mehr.

Schon 2009 hab ich gedacht, gut, von Integration und Anti-Rassismus will ich nichts mehr hören, ich will jetzt nurmehr Diversity machen. So hab ich „**Diversity Leadership and Consulting**“ Unternehmen gegründet und hatten wir glaub ich die größten diversity Kongresse überhaupt. Da war da die Vizepräsidentin von Walt Disney, Bank of America, die sind alle hier angetanzt. 4 Jahre lang hab ich das gemacht. Ab dem 3. Jahr haben die Sponsoren gefragt, was ich denn schon wieder will und sie haben mich doch eh schon gefördert, Diversität ist bei uns schon abgehakt.

Irgendwie gingen die Dinge nicht mehr und 2014 hab ich gemerkt ich werde verbittert und ich erreiche mein Ziel nicht.

2008 haben sie mir gesagt ich soll für den Nationalrat kandidieren und das hab ich auch getan, reingekommen bin ich nicht, aber es war eine sehr interessante Erfahrung.

So, 2015 hab ich meine Koffer gepackt, das Leben in Österreich aufgegeben und bin nach Südafrika gegangen. Und jetzt tu ich was ich schon immer tun wollte, schreiben.

Das erste Buch habe ich 2011 veröffentlicht, *Vielfalt statt Einfalt*, 2013 hab ich *Erfolgsfaktor kulturelle Vielfalt* veröffentlicht, 2014 das war damals *Follow Me to Africa*.

I: Diese Bücher hast du noch alle in Österreich geschrieben? Und sozusagen das Leben hier verarbeitet in den Büchern.

A: Ja (lacht).

I: Wie würdest du dich selbst jetzt bezeichnen?

*A: Ich sage ich bin ein **Black Austrian**. Vor allem ab dem Moment wo ich Kinder hatte wurde es für mich ganz wichtig. **Bis zu dem Moment wo ich Kinder hatte war ich Afrikanerin**. Dann wurde mir klar, es geht nicht mehr um mich. Die*

Kinder wachsen hier auf, im Kamerun sind sie Ausländer. Sie werden anders, aber sehr positiv empfangen. Meine Familie sagt immer „our white children“. Und hier sind sie alle möglichen Namen. Für mich war klar ich muss meine Prioritäten ändern um das Land auf meine Kinder vorzubereiten. Deshalb hab ich auch die vielen Dinge die ich gemacht habe getan. Ich hab auch Trainings für Exekutivbeamte 6 Jahre lang gemacht. In dem Moment war ich dann nicht mehr die Afrikanerin. **Ich wollte ich nicht mehr die Afrikanerin sein aber black Austrian und European sein, weil das ist die Identität die ich mir für meine Kinder gewünscht habe, damit sie irgendwo ein zuhause haben.**

Aber seit ich zurück bin sage ich **I am the proudest African women you can ever find on planet earth** (lacht). Aber die Sache ist, wenn ich zurückdenke, denke ich, ich hab den Luxus mich immer wieder neu zu definieren. Solange ich hier war, war ich 100% da und ich wollte auch so gesehen werden. Ich bin jetzt weg und wo ich bin tauche ich in eine andere Identität ein.

Ich sehe mich als eine Weltbürgerin die viele Identitäten hat.

I: Wie hat das Leben in Österreich dich verändert?

A: Wahnsinnig viel. Ich wurde zu einer Klägerin, einer Jammerin (lacht). Nein, das Leben in Ö hat mich auf zwei Ebenen verändert. Auf der privaten Ebene musste ich mich neu definieren, im Camerun haben wir keine weiße Bevölkerung. Ich war gewohnt in einer schwarzen Umgebung zu leben und als ich hier herkam musste ich erstmal sehen wie sichtbar ich bin. **Sichtbarkeit als schwarzer Mensch war mir nie so bewusst.** Und es war auch damit verbunden, dass eigentlich als sichtbare Person für dich bereits eine Identität vorgesehen ist, so wie eine Schublade wo du reinpassen musst. Passt du nicht hinein musst du dich ständig rechtfertigen. Das hat mich irritiert, ich hab gedacht ich muss mich anpassen. Bis zu dem Moment wo ich dachte ich bin jetzt gut angepasst ich sollte nicht mehr sichtbar sein, bemerkte ich aber die Sichtbarkeit geht nicht weg. Ich begann mich zu ärgern.

Gutes Beispiel, ich flieg nach Camerun mit meinem österreichischen Pass und bevor ich fliege sagt sie „ah du fliegst nach Hause, schön für dich“ und im Camerun sagt die Polizei zu mir „du bist illegal, dein Visum ist abgelaufen“. Dann hab ich gefragt „Wollen Sie mich jetzt nach Österreich abschieben?“. Das war nicht lustig. Fertig erklärt und erledigt hatten sie einfach nur mein Ausstellungsdatum vom Visum verwechselt mit Ablaufdatum. Ich flieg zurück nach Österreich und am Flughafen schauen sie mich an, die bei der Behörde die den Pass anschauen und sagen „Sie sehen aber nicht aus wie eine Österreicherin“, ich sag **„Ich kann nix dafür, ich bin eine schwarze Österreicherin aus Kamerun.“** Sie sehen aber auch nicht aus wie ein Österreicher“. Sie waren dann auch irritiert. Ich hab gedacht, okay, soll ich mich jetzt ärgern? **Ich hab eure Sprache gelernt, ich hab getan was ihr alles von mir gewünscht habt und jetzt soll ich dazugehören, aber gehöre ich dazu? Nein.**

In diesem Buch hab ich das auch verarbeitet warum mich das so irritiert hat. Aber inzwischen lache ich darüber und sage danke, dass ihr mich nie so richtig akzeptiert habt, weil ich kann sowieso nicht dazugehören. Aber die Veränderung war eben auf der Ebene, dass man sich sowieso ständig neu erfinden musste, bin ich jetzt eine Schwarze, eine Afrikanerin, eine Imigrantin, eine Fremde, eine Farbige ... **man wird ständig definiert und man kann sich aber nicht selbst definieren.**

Meine besten Freundinnen, als ich die Schwarze Frauen Community gegründet hab, haben gesagt „Du kannst dich nicht schwarz nennen“, hab ich gesagt „warum nicht?“, „Weil schwarz so negativ ist“. Ich sag, „darf ich mich, darf ich mich selbst definieren?“ und das von den Menschen die mir am nächsten stehen. Die sagen nein, wir können dich nicht schwarz nennen. Da war die Veränderung, dass man sagt, „Ich kann nicht einfach sein.“ Ständig glaubt jemand zu wissen was gut für mich ist, außer mir. Und wenn ich denen dann sag was ich will, dann wird das kaum akzeptiert, zumindest nicht ohne zu hinterfragen und mir zu sagen wie ungut das doch wäre. Das heißt man hat, **ich hatte das Gefühl gehabt, ich hab keine Identität, wenn, dann muss ich diese ständig neu erkämpfen. Ich muss mein Dasein ständig rechtfertigen.** Das war auch der Punkt wo ich begonnen hab nachzudenken. Also als Menschen die mir nahestehen angefangen haben zu denken ich bin unendlich undankbar, weil ich ständig Dinge erklären musste. Unsere Wahloma hat gesagt, „Beatrice, du verlangst einfach zu viel. Du sollst endlich Ruhe geben und dankbar sein, dass du da sein darfst“. Ich sag nein, bin ich nicht.

Also Veränderung in Österreich... Veränderung ist, also im positiven Sinne, dass ich jetzt weiß ich kann überall überleben. 20 Jahre hab ich in Österreich gelebt, ich weiß wie ich mich neu erfinden kann, dafür bin ich Österreich dankbar. Ich hätte es anders gewollt, aber es kam so. Und das Beste für mich ist, du kannst überall zurechtkommen, weil du dich ständig verändern kannst um irgendwo das zu sein was du willst, ob aus Trotz oder aus Wille.

I: *Diese innere Unruhe war das dann auch der Ansporn zum Schreiben?*

A: Ja, aber schon als Kind hab ich immer schreiben wollen. Ich kam nach Österreich um zu studieren und zurückzukehren. Aber ab dem Moment wo meine Kinder kamen war mir klar, dass ich meinen Plan ändern muss. Und der Plan des Schreibens... ich hab Deutsch gelernt, aber ich hab gedacht mein Deutsch wird nie gut genug sein um zu Schreiben, wer wird das schon lesen. Also dieser Selbstzweifel war da. Als das erste Buch geschrieben wurde... ich hab mir einen Ghostwriter gesucht. Wir haben das erste Buch geschrieben, beim zweiten hab ich dann gesagt, gut, ich schreibe und du tust das dann schön schreiben (lacht). Das wurde getan. Ab dem dritten hab ich dann begonnen zu schreiben und aaah das war wie ein Ventil. **Ich kann da die Dinge verarbeiten ich kann aber auch klarstellen wer ich bin.** Weil bei einem Vortrag kommen dann immer irgendwelche blöden Fragen, es wird hinterfragt wenn du deine

Gefühle darlegst, bist du zu sensibel oder zu emotional oder hast es nicht so gemeint und du siehst alles so negativ. Da in den Büchern kann ich alles sagen ohne dass mich jemand irgendwie... Ihr könnt meine Bücher lesen oder nicht, aber für mich ist es eine Art mich einmal ohne Rechtfertigung offenzulegen und die Dinge zu sagen wie ich sie haben möchten und ganz ich selbst zu sein. Es ist eine Art Heilung, Befreiung.

I: *Aber du schreibst jetzt auf Deutsch. Hast du auch in einer anderen Sprache geschrieben? Was ist deine Muttersprache?*

A: Meine Muttersprache ist eine gesprochene Sprache. Das erste Buch war eigentlich „The Voices of Black European Women“. Das war eine Sammlung von Beiträgen von schwarzen Frauen aus ganz Europa. Meine ersten eigenen Bücher hab ich auf Deutsch geschrieben, aber auch aus Trotz, ich wollte zeigen, ich kann eure Sprache, selbst wenn ich mir einen Ghostwriter besorgen muss (lacht). Ich kann in eurer Sprache schreiben!

Und jetzt bin ich zurück, Englisch ist nach wie vor eine Kolonialsprache, ich denke ich schreib eh in Kolonialsprachen, was wollt ihr denn von mir.

I: *Es ist sehr spannend, es ist wirklich spannend. Mit dem letzten Schriftsteller mit dem ich gesprochen habe, mit Tarek Eltayeb. Er schreibt nach wie vor auf Arabisch, weil er sagt, er kann auf Arabisch so schreiben wie er sich gerne ausdrücken möchte.*

A: Ich kenne Eltayeb. Ich hab ihn immer dafür bewundert, dass er auf Arabisch schreibt. Seine Frau spricht auch sehr gut arabisch. Aber für mich war ab dem Moment wo meine Kinder geboren klar, dass sich alles ändert, dass wir zuhause Deutsch sprechen müssen, **weil ich nie wollte, dass meine Kinder irgendwann diskriminiert werden, weil man davon ausgeht, dass sie nicht Deutsch muttersprachlich sind**. Das war für mich absolut wichtig. Jetzt sagt meine Tochter, „ich würde gerne kamerunische Sprachen lernen, das war nur deine Entscheidung“. Ich hab gewusst, dass das irgendwann kommt, aber ich wollte, dass sie eine Sprache haben, die ihnen ermöglicht in der Schule zu sein, die ihnen ermöglicht teilzuhaben und teilzunehmen ohne Probleme. Obwohl das immer gekommen ist, also Situationen wo man mit ihnen gebrochenes Deutsch spricht oder sonstige Dinge. Man kann das gar nicht vermeiden. Aber das war für mich das oberste Ziel und damit wusste ich auch, dass ich auch Deutsch ordentlich lernen und sprechen können.

Als das Schreiben kam, ich muss sagen ich hatte mich auch assimiliert. Mir war gar nicht bewusst wie sehr ich mich assimiliert hatte. Nicht im Positiven. **Ich wollte so sehr dazugehören, also lernte ich eure Sprache, wenn ihr wollt, dann schreib ich in eurer Sprache, wenn ihr wollt, dann beginn ich auch in eurer Sprache zu denken**. Um einfach dazuzugehören oder dazugehören zu können. Und heute steh ich da und denk mir, meine Güte, was hast du dir da alles angetan. Aber gut ich kann die Sprache jetzt (lacht).

I: *Jetzt hast du in Südafrika einige Kinderbücher veröffentlicht. Wie ist es dazu gekommen?*

A: Zwei Quellen waren dafür verantwortlich. Ich wollte schon immer Kinderbücher schreiben, ich hab hier in Österreich einige auch auf Deutsch verfasst. Eines ist „Meine Vielfalt Familie“, aber veröffentlicht hab ich keines. Also es gibt drei Kinderbücher auf Deutsch. Ziel war es das Verständnis zwischen den Kulturen, zwischen den Menschen herzustellen.

Aber nach Südafrika gegangen bin ich gegangen mit den Fragen, die meinen Kindern immer gestellt worden waren. Und als meine Kinder hier das erste Mal zu Besuch kamen riefen die Freunde an und fragten, ‚Hast du was zum Essen?‘, ‚Schläfst du mit Elefanten?‘, ‚Gibt es Trinkwasser?‘, ‚Sollen wir dir was schicken?‘. Und meine Tochter sagt, ‚Mama, bitte schreib endlich was, damit sie wissen wie es hier in Afrika ist. Ich will diese Fragen nicht mehr beantworten.

Das war das eine. Und das andere war um meinen Kindern eben eine Unterstützung zu bieten, damit sie bestimmte Fragen nicht beantworten müssen, aber auch mitten im Schreiben wurde mir klar, ich war auf der Suche nach mir, meiner eigenen afrikanischen Identität. **Zu meiner Schulzeit haben wir europäische Geschichte gemacht, Geographie, Literatur, war alles europäisch. Ich kannte zu wenig über Afrika.**

Und das Schreiben hat mich zurück auf mich geführt. Wer bist du als Afrikanerin. Welche Bücher hättest du gern gelesen als du klein warst? Also schreibe ich nur das, was ich gerne lese, was ich aber nicht gefunden hab.

2006 war Toni Morrison da. Ich hatte das Glück sie zu betreuen, viel Zeit mit ihr zu verbringen und sie hat immer gesagt, ‚Don’t wait for anybody to do anything for you! If you want to read a book a you don’t find it – write it! Open up your own restaurants, train your own lawyers, be responsible for yourselves!’ Und für mich war es dann klar: Ich schreib die Bücher die ich gern lesen würde, damit auch andere Kinder die dann lesen. Und ich mach Recherche, erstmal mach ich das für mich. Nicht einmal für meine Kinder. Seit ich sie schreibe – ich habe zu Beginn gesagt ich bin die stolzeste Afrikanerin die es gibt, weil ich Antworten finde, die mir die Lücken füllen und mir erklären warum ich so wütend war in Österreich, wenn man mich Afrikanerin genannt hat. Wenn man mich gefragt hat, wann ich denn wieder zurück nach Hause kehre. Ich wusste zu wenig über das wer ich bin. Und im Ausland redet man viel negativ über Afrika. Es wird überwiegend negativ über Afrika berichtet. Und was ich da in meinen Büchern suche ist, was Afrika ist, welchen Beitrag Afrika wirklich im Ökosystem spielt. Und ich finde Dinge wie Buch 4, „Ich zeig dir Unternehmen die in Afrika Autos erzeugen“, eine der – wie sagt man das – one of the most sophisticated cars is manufactured in Africa, but no one talks about it. Wenn ich all das sehe, dann denke ich, Ja! Ja! Ja!. Ich bin jeden Tag mit jedem Buch noch stärker und noch größer als Afrikanerin und denke, ok, die Bücher waren nicht da, weil du sie

schreiben musstest. Und ich bin froh und dankbar, dass ich diejenige bin, die diese Bücher schreiben durfte. Und auch für die Erfahrung in Österreich, die mich so weit getrieben hat, dass ich gesagt hab ich pack meine zwei Koffer und kehre zurück nach Afrika. Ich war damals irritiert, aber ich bin jeden Tag dafür dankbar. It was just a wake-up call. I stayed for too long in Austria. But I probably needed to get that far for me to come back and write these books.

I: *Exactly. Ohne die Erfahrung in Österreich hottest du diesen Drang die Bücher zu schreiben nicht so empfunden.*

A: Nein, hätte ich nicht. Ich bin für jede Erfahrung, auch für die negativen dankbar. Ich weiß es gab eine Zeit lang wo das Innenministerium mindestens einmal die Woche eine Gruppe – wie sagt man – es gibt eine Abteilung für Terrorismus und Verfassungsschutz. Ich bekam ständig Drohbriefe und jedes Mal, wenn die kamen, die kannten mich schon. Die schickten Leute, die Polizei, die die Briefe abholten. Und in meinem Büro mein Westbahnhof die kannten mich schon ...

(Interruption by the owner of the bookstore).

Also damals haben die Leute auch in den Medien geschrieben, 'Was macht die hier. Die soll doch endlich zurückgehen.' Ich war damals wütend und traurig und fühlte mich als Opfer. Und inzwischen denke ich 'Hey, thank you having reminded me that I needed to go back home'. (lacht)

I: *Ja dann hoffe ich, dass die Bücher jetzt hoffentlich auch in Österreich eintreffen und Anklang finden.*

B: Bitte ein ganzes Kapitel in deiner Arbeit über sie. 50 Seiten.

A: Nein, bitte sprich mit Belinda. Sie kann dir wirklich erzählen aus der Sicht von jemandem, der hier geboren ist. Die wirklich jeden Tag um ihre Identität kämpfen muss. Es gibt Beispiele von Belinda. Ich hab damals mit ihr gearbeitet, sie wollte das Land verlassen. Einer der Geschichten die sie mir erzählt hat war, sie hatte sich für eine Stelle beworben, die ein Unternehmen ausgeschrieben hatte. Sie hat am Telefon angerufen und die haben gesagt sie soll sofort vorbeikommen, weil sie wollen diese Stelle sofort besetzen. Die Belinda kommt an, läutet an und die Zuständige kommt raus und sagt 'Wir sind keine Entwicklungshilfe.' Belinda sagt: „Nein, Sie haben mich hierher bestellt.“ Die sagen: „Das kann nicht sein, wenn Sie nicht sofort verschwinden rufen wir die Polizei. Wir arbeiten nicht mit Afrika“. Belinda sagt: „Es geht um die Stelle.“ Das war wirklich arg.

I+B: *Wow, das ist kaum zu glauben.*

A: Sie heißt Quassim. Also sie haben nicht gewusst, dass sie schwarz ist. Und es gab viele solche Dinge. Ich glaube wir haben eh einige gesammelt und in den Publikationen... wie haben wir das genannt... Wir haben an vielen Publikationen gearbeitet wo solche Beispiele vorkamen mit der Art wie Menschen behandelt wurden. Vor allem Belinda hat vieles abkassiert. Weil ein Mädchen wie sie, die spricht wienerisch wie keine Andere. Wenn sie

am Telefon spricht, dann glaubst du sie ist eine echte Wienerin. Aber sie ist eben auch hier geboren, sie ist bei Pflegeeltern groß geworden, die Österreicher waren. Also sie ist in Niederösterreich aufgewachsen und sie spricht Wienerisch. Man hört sie und man denkt schon wie sie aussehen soll. Wenn sie dann erscheint, das tut so weh. Wenn man zu mir sowas sagt dann sag ich: „Okay, I was not born here. I can still go back to where I come from.“ Aber sie ist hier geboren und mit ihren Geschichten war es mir so wichtig, dass meine Kinder sich hier zugehörig fühlen. Weil im Kamerun werden sie sowieso akzeptiert. Da werden sie auf Silbertablets gehalten. Die Vicky hat mir jetzt ausrichten lassen, „Mama, in Südafrika war ich jetzt zweimal. Aber meine Identität ist im Kamerun. Im Kamerun bin ich eine Prinzessin. Ich will diese Sommerferien im Kamerun sein, ob du willst oder nicht.“ Weil sie weiß, wie sie dort aufgenommen wird.

Aber mit der Geschichte von Belinda, ja. Einfach mit ihr selber reden. Und um rund um **Belinda und Araba waren eben diese sogenannte zweite Generation die nicht als zugehörig geführt wird.** Du bist erste Generation, zweite Generation, dritte Generation, vierte Generation, da fragt man sich, wann hört das auch einmal auf? Wann kann ich dazugehören? Vor allem diejenigen die hier geboren sind und keinen Bezug zu ihrem Herkunftsland haben.

Und diese Bücher sollen einen Bezug zu Afrika schaffen. Wenn auch nur aus der Ferne. Zum Beispiel das hier (nimmt ein Buch) gibt die wesentlichen Informationen über alle 54 Länder. Und ich hoffe, dass die Kinder die hier aufwachen mit diesen Büchern einen anderen Bezug bekommen zu ihrer afrikanischen Identität, die sie stolz macht. Belinda sagte, sie hatte wirklich keine Argumente. Meine Mama hat mir nicht viel über Nigeria erzählt. Ich bin bei österreichischen Pflegeeltern groß geworden, die alle getan haben um mir das österreichische beizubringen.

Und wenn man auch die Bücher von May Ayim liest. Sie war einer der aufstrebendsten schwarzen Deutschen. Und ihr Vater war aus Ghana, ihre Mama aus der DDR. Und ihr Vater ist zurückgekehrt und ihre gesamte Familie hat ihren Vater wie einen Teufel dargestellt. Alles was über Afrika war. Man hat sie wie eine Weiße erzogen, damit sie sich eben mehr anpasst. Mit 18 hat sie begonnen nach ihrer Identität zu suchen. Sie ist nach Ghana gezogen, nach Südafrika gegangen um gegen die Apartheid zu kämpfen, sie hat auch ein Buch geschrieben. Sie war glaub ich nur 22 und alle haben geglaubt sie ist der Shootingstar der schwarzen Deutschen. Sie hat sich von einem 20-stöckigen Haus gestürzt, weil sie nicht mehr zurechtgekommen ist mit den Widersprüchen in ihrem Leben. Mit dem was sie in Ghana erlebt hat und was ihre Familie in Deutschland ihr über Afrika und ihre Familie in Afrika erzählt hat. Es hat nicht zusammengestimmt. Es sind solche Dinge die einen dann zum Nachdenken bringen.

Und ich wollte, dass meine Kinder zuerst einmal wo eine Zugehörigkeit fühlen. Araba hat auch ähnliche Geschichten geschrieben, warum die Identität so

wichtig für sie war. Manche haben dann begonnen sich durch die Kleidung auszudrücken. Araba hat immer Zöpfe mit Muscheln. Sie hat sich auch immer einen Turban gewickelt. Ein wunderschönes Mädchen die Araba. Das war eine Art sich auszudrücken.

Aber die erste Generation hat es nicht leicht gehabt. Die Esther Maria leitet die Schwarze Frauen Community, sie ist eine der ersten die hier geboren wurde. Sie ist jetzt über 50. Die Esther hat mir mal gesagt: „Wenn ich euch immer gesehen hab, hab ich gedacht, ihr Glücklichen, ihr kennt Afrika. Ich kenns nicht. Ich kann nicht mitreden.“ Und manche haben mir gesagt, wenn wir schwarzen Menschen auf der Straße gesehen haben, hat man die Straßenseite gewechselt. Schon wieder eine wie ich. Esther hat noch kein Buch geschrieben, aber sie hat auch zwei Kinder und sie arbeitet viel mit Jugendlichen hier. Ja.

I: *Gut, hast du noch etwas Abschließendes zu sagen?*

A: Schreib was Schönes. (beide lachen). Ich hoffe, dass dir deine Diplomarbeit gut gelingt, dass du glücklich damit bist, mit dem was du findest...

I: *Vielen Dank, für die vielen Inputs.*

A: ...,dass es dein Leben prägt, dein Denken und Handeln, deine eigene Identität, dass du sie dadurch findest. Das wünsch ich dir.

I: *Dankeschön.*