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Introduction

In an era where the most right-winged party of an apparently developed country gains (!) voters with slogans like “Liebe deinen Nächsten!” (love your neighbour, as thyself) – obviously referring only to the white, middle- or high-class neighbours of Austrian or (at least) German descent – or “Deutsch statt 'nix versteh'n” (German instead of “no understand”), it seems of utmost importance to pay more attention to the topic of racism in education. Confronting pupils with other viewpoints and ways of being, showing them common ground with “strangers”, and consequently decreasing fear and fostering empathy and understanding should be a central part of teaching in Austria.

I started writing this thesis in fall, thus Christmas was approaching and – as it seems to become a tradition during the time of Advent – I was confronted with an increasing amount of undernourished, dark-skinned children hesitantly smiling from billboards, including the caption that for only a couple of Euros a month you can save an African child from starvation. Besides these flyers, which make it so comfortable to buy off one's bad conscience, advertisement for a Safari in Kenya for only 498,- can be found and for only 100 Euros more a week at the beach in Mombasa is included. That is – with rare exceptions – the depiction of Africa in Austria's media. An actually vast and diverse continent is presented, and thus imagined, in a very limited manner: Starvation. Underdevelopment. Poverty. Safari. Game animals. Heat. Desert. The Exotic. Maybe also Malaria and Aids is among the first ideas that would pop up in a brainstorming exercise.

If I had not grown up in Nigeria, and if all I knew about Africa were from popular images, I too would think that Africa was a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals and incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and AIDS, unable to speak for themselves and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner. (Adichie, *Single Story*)

I believe that these two corresponding trends of, on the one hand, politics fuelling the fear of foreigners and, on the other hand, the inadequate image of Africa and its inhabitants help to maintain or even increase racism, as they allow a denunciation of Africans as “all the same”. As a future teacher, I am interested in how far the educational system can contribute to creating more open-minded individuals who approach the world from a European rather than Eurocentric viewpoint and how pupils can be enabled to develop sensitivity for the fact that identities and meanings are always dynamic and to be negotiated.

Hence, the focus of this diploma thesis lies on how to respond to the just outlined grievances in the context of an Austrian EFL¹ classroom, in order to minimise the misconceptions about Africa and decrease the students' susceptibility to stereotypes and prejudices. To achieve these aims, a transcultural teaching approach, which describes culture and identity as hybrid concepts in combination with a depiction of Africa from an African's perspective, is what I argue to be most beneficial as well as practicable for the EFL teaching situation. The following four main chapters investigate on this claim and therefore move from a discussion of the necessary theoretical body of thought to practical considerations for the EFL classroom.

The first chapter of this diploma thesis substantiates my claim that Africa is misrepresented in Austrian public discourse with the help of Sturmer's investigation on media reporting about Africa in Austria (and Germany). Postcolonial and psychoanalytical theories serve to analyse reasons as well as the impact of these misconceptions and foreground the need for a “decolonisation of the mind”. This need finds a response in the Austrian educational system, which is the focus of the succeeding section.

The second chapter outlines the framework for deconstructing the prevalent thinking in binary pairs and the perception of cultures as fixed, opposed entities within EFL teaching. The Austrian educational policies are subject of discussion to identify the space within which education towards more open-mindedness operates. The educational principle of “intercultural learning” is thus investigated

1 English as a Foreign Language, henceforth EFL

in more detail and its revised version – transculturalism – is introduced. Hence, the different conceptions of culture according to the different paradigms are described, which can not be done without explaining Bhabha's notion of hybridity as well as Kramsch's *third place*. In order to find the most suitable of these two culture concepts for the EFL classroom, the respective propositions from Kramsch, Doff and Reiche are compared.

The third chapter moves on to a discussion on how the aims defined within the inter- and transcultural paradigms can be achieved. Using literary writings is claimed one of the most effective methods to foster awareness about cultural hybridity and nourish students' knowledge on the importance of perspective, which are both crucial factors to decrease stereotypes. For the particular context of this thesis, a distinction between postcolonial and New English literatures is then necessary, where a short statement on the importance of these literatures in comparison to the “literary classics” is added, to be enabled to move on to a discussion on African literature. The problem of definition with this body of works and the danger of exoticism inherent in teaching African writings are sketched in the last part of this section.

The fourth and last chapter serves to provide practical examples for teaching African literature with the inter- / transcultural approach. This section is devised according to the course of action a teacher has to follow when starting to include African literature. Thus, examples for preliminary, introductory lessons, that aim at achieving transcultural teaching objectives, are provided, before criteria to choose African literary works are mentioned. Following, Meja Mwangi's *Mzungu Boy* is introduced, as a novel fit for the transcultural EFL classroom. Its content is outlined in combination with a discussion of its usefulness in teaching. Activities for the classroom and concrete lesson plans are included in this last chapter, for which the necessary additional teaching material is to be found in the appendix.

The conclusion summarises the main findings of this thesis and assesses how the teaching of African literature helps to meet transcultural aims. Further, the importance of this topic for the teaching environment is stressed.

1) Setting the scene

1.1) The inaccurate depiction of Africa

My contention is that without identifying the major influences that shaped the inappropriate image of Africa, one cannot learn how to deconstruct these misconceptions. It is thus necessary at this point to look at postcolonial as well as psychoanalytical theories, in order to understand why the perception of Africa is in many cases a mere reproduction of stereotypes and prejudices.

The famous Nigerian writer Achebe claims in his essay-collection *The Education of a British-Protected Child*, that

[t]he perception problem is not in its origin the result of ignorance[...]. At least, it is not ignorance entirely, or even primarily. It was in general a deliberate *invention* devised to facilitate two gigantic historical events: the Atlantic slave trade and the colonization of Africa by Europe, [...] the two together stretching across almost half a millennium from about A.D. 1500. (As qtd. in Sturmer 33f.)

In order to legitimise slavery and colonialism, Africans were denounced as uncultured, subaltern beings, incapable of achieving Europe's cultural, technological, and scientific accomplishments. The belief in Western supremacy was established to justify the exploitation of other peoples. This is further confirmed by the fact that in Germany, during the times of Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the image of Africa was rather positive and started to deteriorate only when transatlantic slave trade reached Germany (Sturmer 34). In short, Africa had been made the "Other"².

[A]s a general rule, the experience of the Other, or the *problem of the "I" of others and of human beings we perceive as foreign to us*, has almost always posed virtually insurmountable difficulties to the Western philosophical and political tradition. Whether dealing with Africa or with other non-European worlds, this tradition long denied the existence of any "self" but its own. [...] The theoretical and practical recognition of the body and flesh of "the stranger" as flesh and body just like mine, the *idea of a common human nature, a humanity shared with others*, long posed, and still poses, a problem for Western consciousness. (Mbembe 2)

2 "Other" with a capital O as first mentioned by Lacan (Mbembe 3). See also Bhabha 74ff.

As Said discusses in the context of the Orient and Fanon focussing on *the Black man*, the so-called Western world needed to create an “Other” in order to strengthen the belief in itself and its supremacy. Further poststructural, gender, and postcolonial studies have shown that Western society permanently orders and organises using the “us and them” opposition, not only on the macro level but also on the individual’s experiences of everyday life (men vs. women, hetero- vs. homosexual, young vs. old, students vs. workers, etc.) (see Volkmann, *Kureishi* 399f., Bhaba 28f., Stein 253). The implicit problem is not the primal existence of an “Other”, because at the encounter of two self-consciousnesses one necessarily has to be degraded to the object of one’s realm, as there cannot be two totalities existing next to each other. (Or to put it more bluntly, when one I meets another I, one of them necessarily becomes the “Other”.) The relevant problem within this context, however, is the disguised, subliminal degradation and objectification of certain “Others” and the use of this opposition on a macro level, which leads to the creation of stereotypes and racism. As Wisker puts it,

Westernised imperial and colonial polarised thought processes (Black [sic!] or white, male or female, good or bad) [...] would not merely categorise as “Other” all that is not “self,” but [...] produce notions of hierarchy, making the “Other” secondary, subordinate, to be controlled, conquered, owned, or destroyed. (*Intro* 6)

In order to guarantee the belief in its own supremacy, the West needed to create an “Other” and denounce “it” on all possible levels. Political beliefs or ideologies seem to have determined (and, I fear, still do) which people embodied this “Other” who was used to elevate but also simply to create the image of the educated, powerful, cultured white men. “Culture has always marked cultural difference by producing the other; it has always been comparative, and racism has always been an integral part of it” (Young 54). Different times required a different amount of disguising the denunciation. To provide a rather obvious example, during the times of slavery, the black uneducated, brute savage served as “Other”. There was no need, in these times, for concealment, as it was considered a fact that the black man was subaltern to the white man.

Unfortunately, one is wrong to believe that the times of Western glorification (in opposition to Blacks, but also Jews, Muslims, Soviets, Turks, etc.) are over. On the contrary, the means are simply more subtle and well disguised or so deep-rooted in our belief system that one misses the wood for the trees. For example, Gilroy discusses in his essay “Joined-up Politics and Postcolonial Melancholia” that postcolonial thinking still has a significant impact on British legislation and Martin Sturmer’s analysis on German-speaking media reporting on Africa shows a dominance of what he calls “K-Themen”, i.e. “Kriege, Krisen, Katastrophen, Krankheit, Korruption und Kriminalität” (Sturmer 30). Sturmer concludes that this one-sided representation of Africa in the public discourse leads to an impediment to trade and tourism, hinders the willingness to donate in situations of humanitarian crises, and has a negative impact on integration of Africans in Germany and Austria (54ff.).

Der Journalismus trägt mit einer sensationsorientierten Berichterstattung, die großteils auf Katastrophenmeldungen aus Afrika spezialisiert ist, erheblich zur Assoziation von Afrikanern mit Problemen und Krisen bei. (Ebermann as qtd. in Sturmer 59)

In sum, the prevalent thinking in binary pairs and the objectification of an “Other” fosters the creation of stereotypes, which, in combination with the one-sided representation of Africa in public discourse, increases racism and prejudices against Africans. To antagonise this development, the journalistic depiction of Africa has to change (for suggestions see Sturmer) and the belief in a Manichaeian system needs to be fought against with what Ngũgĩ calls “decolonising the mind” (as explained in the next chapter).

1.2) The need for a decolonisation of the mind

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o develops the concept of a decolonisation of the mind in his book of the same title. His primary concern in this work is the issue of language (and why African writers should write in their native tongue). Important in the context of this paper is that Ngũgĩ touches on the issue of how influenced Africans are by their colonial history and thus shows that mental decolonisation is an act that not only the white man has to perform. Similarly, Fanon stresses in

his work *Black Skin, White Masks* that colonisation had enormous impacts on the minds and perceptions of *both* the black *and* the white men. Accordingly, the suppressed and the suppressors need help to “move away from the inhuman voices of their respective ancestors” (Fanon 206). That is, the colonized's feeling of inferiority as well as the West's feeling of superiority have to be overcome and the binarism of black and white needs to be discarded.

As has been argued in the preceding chapter, also Fanon and Ngũgĩ mobilise against the prevalent thinking in binary pairs and foster awareness of the subconscious influence colonialism (still) has. Although their works were written already a few decades ago, they have not lost of value and importance, as can be seen in the fact that, for example, Reiche in 2011 still has to discuss that “the static image of the self and the other will always separate them [the students] from true social interaction in the foreign language” (91) or when Benthall claims,

whereas the British public is now wise to the techniques of advertising it is still uneducated when it comes to seeing through the various types of negative racial image which the media may wittingly or unwittingly present. (qtd. in Gunner vi)

Although Benthall focusses in this quote on the British context, Sturmer's investigations on the depiction of Africa in German-speaking journalism shows that this argument is similarly valid in the Austrian and German context.

As a conclusion of this first “setting the scene”, I argue that we are in dire need of further education that opposes these subtle influences which lead to stereotypes, prejudices and racism. Open-mindedness needs to be fostered and perspectives on other cultures, countries, and ways of living have to be made available to pupils. It is necessary to stress at this point that education of that kind is not to be confused with anti-racism campaigns and teaching units which can already be found in nowadays educational agendas. The latter usually aim at a general understanding of racism and transfer the notion that racism “is wrong”, a guideline that the pupils will remember but which,

nonetheless, can hardly be expected to influence their perception of other cultures or cause attitudinal and behavioural changes. These campaigns thus focus on the far end in the development of racism, that is, they do not make approaching other cultures a subject of discussion and their objective is not to decrease stereotypes or prejudices but they start with the end result of what a misconception about other peoples may lead to. In other words, anti-racism campaigns try to treat the symptom and not the cause, which is not to be dismissed, however, calls for enriching the treatment. When looking at the educational policies, it seems that even the Austrian legislation has already responded to the just discussed grievance, as there is an educational principle called “intercultural learning”, which seems to aim at fostering understanding of and between different cultures. In the following, the educational principle “interkulturelles Lernen” will therefore be investigated in more detail.

2) The theoretical framework

2.1) Decolonisation of the mind in the Austrian educational system

The educational principles, to be found in the curricula of the Austrian ministry of education (Bildungsministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur), are intended as general teaching guidelines that are not limited to one subject but supposed to be covered throughout all subjects.

Unterrichtsprinzipien und Bildungsanliegen reichen über die inhaltlichen und methodisch-didaktischen Anforderungen und Begrenzungen eines einzelnen Unterrichtsfaches hinaus. Schülerinnen und Schüler erwerben dabei überfachliche bzw. fächerübergreifende Kompetenzen, die einerseits unterrichtsfachspezifische Anforderungen unterstützen und erweitern, und andererseits bedeutsame individuelle bzw. gesellschaftliche Aufgaben und Anliegen im Blickpunkt haben. (Weiglhofer 1)

[Aber] Unterrichtsprinzipien [...] sind nicht als zusätzliche Anforderungen zu den lehrplanmäßigen Inhalten der einzelnen Unterrichtsfächer zu sehen, sondern als sich gegenseitig stützende Elemente zur Erreichung der den österreichischen Schulen aufgetragenen Zielsetzungen. (3)

The educational principles are thus to be understood as a guideline and subliminal layer, which pervades a pupil's school career. The fact that the principles as such should focus on the individual and public duties and concerns, is a first indicator that they are the response to the shortcomings outlined in the previous sections.

The bmukk offers a total of twelve “Unterrichtsprinzipien”, amongst which “Entwicklungspolitische Bildungsarbeit”, “Politische Bildung”, but most of all “Interkulturelles Lernen” seem to promote education that aims at “decolonising minds”. Certainly, the recognition and application of these guidelines highly depends on the teacher. However, already the summary on the website of the bmukk on intercultural learning's objectives shows a strong relation to the above sketched problem: “The educational principle 'Intercultural Learning' should contribute to mutual understanding, the recognition of differences and commonalities, and a reduction of prejudices” (bmukk).

This description provides merely a first idea of the concept and it is thus necessary to investigate further and get a less vague picture of the actual impact on the teaching practice, which will be done by looking at curricula of certain school types or subjects. For example, the curriculum of the Ahs-Oberstufe³ addresses, already at the first page of the article, the importance of intercultural learning and claims “Akzeptanz, Respekt und gegenseitige Achtung sind wichtige Erziehungsziele insbesondere im Rahmen des interkulturellen Lernens und des Umgangs der Geschlechter miteinander” (bmukk, Ahs 1f.). This summary is advantageous, as it transforms the broad teaching principle into teaching goals, “acceptance, respect, and mutual esteem”.

In addition, the section on general didactic principles lists intercultural learning second and adds the following advice or information:

Interkulturelles Lernen beschränkt sich nicht bloß darauf, andere Kulturen kennen zu lernen. Vielmehr geht es um das gemeinsame Lernen und das Begreifen, Erleben und Mitgestalten kultureller Werte. Aber es geht auch darum, Interesse und Neugier an kulturellen Unterschieden zu wecken, um nicht nur kulturelle Einheit, sondern auch Vielfalt als wertvoll erfahrbar zu machen. (bmukk, Ahs 5)

This extract can also be found in the curricula for the Volksschule⁴, Hauptschule or Ahs Unterstufe⁵, which underlines that the educational principles are not changed according to the age or school type but should find realization throughout the students' educational careers.

These samples of the Austrian teaching policies show a response to the need for “decolonising the mind”. Austrian legislation has assigned a space for what I have argued above needs more attention in the country's educational system, and this space is labelled intercultural learning. What this concept means in more detail, will be the topic of the next section.

³ Allgemeinbildende höhere Schule, covers form 9 to 12.

⁴ form 1 to 4

⁵ form 5 to 8

2.2) Intercultural learning

Since the “communicative turn” in the 1970s, the main goal of language learning is “communicative competence” (Doff 358, Volkmann, *Moment* 114f.). This development describes a shift from a focus on grammatical structure and correctness towards a more holistic approach to language teaching which includes the question of appropriateness (style, register, etc.). Accordingly, knowledge about the target culture in form of facts and figures was no longer considered sufficient, but language teaching had to be enriched by the *social dimension* of language learning (Doff, Gehring). Thus information on everyday practices (e.g. forms of politeness or appropriate behaviour at dinner) received increased attention in foreign language learning. This education, which reached further than syntactic structure and vocabulary translation, was summarised under the concept “intercultural didactics”.

Der Begriff IK [interkulturelle Kompetenz] lässt sich [...] allgemein als Fähigkeit und Fertigkeit von Fremdsprachenlernern, ja überhaupt von Akteuren einer interkulturellen Begegnung begreifen, über Differenzen zwischen der eigenen und der Zielkultur zu wissen, diese in konkreten Situationen zu erkennen und Strategien zu entwickeln, einfühlsam auf die Gepflogenheiten der anderen Kultur einzugehen. (Volkmann, *Aspekte* 12)

It was not at last the result of globalisation and economy searching for employees, that could effectively communicate and negotiate with people from all over the world (Volkmann, *Aspekte* 13), that in the 1990s, the term “Interkulturelles Lernen” had made its way into didactics and teaching. Intercultural competence became a key ingredient for successful language learning. As Volkmann heroically describes it, “das Konzept der IK [interkulturellen Kompetenz] [führt] seinen Siegeszug in der deutschsprachigen Fremdsprachendidaktik” (*Aspekte* 16). In reference to Byram and the Europarat⁶, also Freitag-Hild stresses the importance of intercultural communicative competence, when she claims that it “is considered one of the key competences in the pupils’ future private and professional lives and has therefore been defined as one of the main objectives in foreign language learning in Europe” (Freitag-Hild 66). Teachers and methodologists seem to

⁶ who is mainly responsible for Europe's educational language policies

agree upon the importance of intercultural competence, however, its realisation and translation into concrete teaching objectives varies. Especially, as the heading “Interkulturelle Didaktik” comprises many different intercultural approaches to foreign language teaching, one of the most prominent in the German-speaking context is the conception of “Fremdverstehen”. In the context of this diploma thesis, a close distinction of these variations is dispensable as they all “focus on facilitating and supporting encounters with foreign cultures in the classroom” (Doff 357, see also Volkmann *Moment*; Doff and Schulze-Engler).

It seems that the objective “understanding and respecting other cultures” already satisfies the need for a decolonisation of our minds, however, there is a pitfall in this formulation. The stressing of “otherness” within the concept of interculturalism evoked profound criticism, as is “signalled by a change of the prefix 'inter' into, for example, 'multi-', 'cross-' or 'trans-' cultural learning” (Doff and Schulze-Engler, *Intro* 5). This will be topic of the next chapter.

2.2.1) Critique of Interculturalism

[W]hile interculturalism has the definite virtue of drawing attention to the political as well as aesthetic demands of cultural difference and diversity, it tends ironically to founder on precisely the hypostasized, even fetishised appreciation of 'other cultures' ('fremde Kulturen') to which its purportedly dynamic understanding of cultural exchange and interaction is designed to show the door. (Huggan as qtd. in Doff and Schulze-Engler, *Intro* 2)

Interculturalism and its call for mutual understanding, acceptance, and respect for *other* cultures thus “undeniably reinforces rather than dismantles 'strong' notions of cultural alterity” (Doff and Schulze-Engler, *Intro* 2). The extract from the Austrian teaching curricula mentioned above stresses “getting to know *other* cultures” and the just quoted definition of intercultural competence foregrounds the creation of empathy “for the conventions of *other* cultures”. This repeated focus on otherness does, however, not lead to common understanding and mutual respect but is more likely to foster distance and alienation.

As an example, and to draw a connection to the previous chapter, anti-racism campaigns might educate the students to understand or accept a certain group of “others”, however, this does not diminish the learners' focus on difference. On the contrary, such campaigns actually reinforce the notional grouping of “foreigners” which merely complicates to approach someone from a different cultural background in an unbiased manner. Even if the preconceptions are positive (which is the apparent goal of anti-racism campaigns) they will hinder an open-minded encounter between two individuals and foster expectation and prejudice. As Clifford describes more elaborately,

'Cultures' do not hold still for their portraits. Any attempts to make them do so always involve simplification and exclusion, selection of a temporal focus, the construction of a particular self-other relationship, and the imposition or negotiation of a power relationship. (As qtd. in Banerjee 40)

An even more fundamental criticism on the intercultural paradigm is implicit in the concept of transculturality, which moves away from the notion of culture as fixed entity or feature with certain definable borders to a notion of culture as a fluid concept, always prone to change and intermingling in relationship with another person's culture (as discussed in more detail in the following chapter).

[T]heories of 'intercultural' communication [...] create the very problem they set out to solve: they posit 'cultures' as separate entities and people as 'belonging' to these separate entities, thereby failing to acknowledge the fact that in an increasingly interconnected world, cultures are increasingly intertwined and people often constitute their cultural identities by drawing on more than one culture. (Schulze-Engler, *Intro* xii)

The conception of interculturalism with its goal to understand an “other”, clearly definable culture from the viewpoint of the opposed, own culture had to be developed further. The concept of transculturalism was born and, although interculturalism is still the dominant paradigm (especially in the teaching context), I argue that a transcultural approach is more appropriate in the venture of understanding culture.

For much of the 19th century, many people around the globe were firmly convinced that we live in a world of races. For much of the 20th century, many people were equally convinced that we live in a world of cultures. This idea still has its appeal, particularly in the humanities, but its heyday is clearly over. (Doff and Schulze-Engler, *Intro* 1)

2.3) Transculturality

The term transculturality first appeared in a paper of Fernando Ortiz published in 1940, in which he discusses the cultural situation of Cuba with its many different ethnical influences (Knopf 202f., Stein 255, Ashcroft 17). According to Ortiz, this diversity in Cuban society is no cause for concern but merely leads to transculturation, “a process of constant disadjustment and readjustment as well as of deculturation and acculturation, thereby creating new cultural phenomena” (Knopf 201). For 50 years the term received little attention, until in the 1990s, when the German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch revived it and turned it into “one of the key phrases or buzz words circulating in academic discourses” (Volkman, *Moment* 113).

According to Welsch,

deep differences between cultures are today diminishing more and more, [... and] contemporary cultures are characterized by cross-cutting elements – and in this sense are to be comprehended as transcultural rather than monocultural. (4)

The author concluded “that a conceptual update was necessary” (ibid.) and thus founded the concept of transculturality, which “is to a large part based on cultural studies, and of course also postcolonial studies, which have opened our eyes to the fact that there is no such thing as stable meanings, single truths, or static identities” (Reiche 80). In the meantime, transcultural approaches caused an innumerable amount of articles and books published on the topic. Even study programmes called “transcultural communication” or “transcultural studies” can be found and the paradigm made its way into many other disciplines – most relevant in the context of this paper: The discipline of teaching or pedagogy (see, for example, Doff and Schulze-Engler's *Beyond*

'Other Cultures').

In an attempt to move beyond this “break between separate cultures” [to be found within interculturalism], recent cultural and literary theory has shown a marked tendency to move away from proprietary notions of culture that see people (and texts) as determined by 'their' respective culture towards more flexible concepts such as hybridity, creolization or transculturality that relate to a growing interest in the specific modes in which individuals and groups 'do culture' as a social practice. (Doff and Schulze-Engler, *Intro* 2f.)

As already mentioned in the preceding chapter, globalisation, mass migration, and the modern means of communication caused an increased discussion of culture and lead to the questioning of cultural difference. Hence, transcultural approaches identify the notion of culture or identity as dynamic and fluid and replace the once believed monolithic entities by hybrid schemata. Moreover, they try to raise awareness for the prevalence of the often harmful binary oppositions in society. As Reiche describes it, “[i]n the transcultural approach, cultures, and also the closely related concept of identities, are seen as complex, non-distinct, overlapping, and in a process of constant dynamic development and exchange” (80). Volkmann claims that “culture or culture contact are defined as always in flux, constantly influenced by other positions, always exposed to the 'creative' forces of destruction and reconstruction” (*Moment* 133). As a consequence, “essentialist notions of 'gender', 'race', 'class' and, most importantly, 'nation' as conceptual and explanatory categories” (ibid.) lose influence, although they were previously regarded as essential for identity formation.

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (Bhabha 2)

Delanoy stresses that “the notion of one culture belonging to one specific area is abandoned in favour of a concept where many cultures co-exist and mix within one state, and where cultural exchange is practised across national

boundaries and over large distances” (*Transculturality* 233). However, this quote of Delanoy should not be misinterpreted as transculturalism taking place only on the macro level of cultures. On the contrary, the concept is to a high degree referring to identity formation and how two individuals create a transcultural or “third” space / place in their interaction (as explained below). Moreover, the conception claims a close relation between culture and the concept of identity, which shows that both these categories are considered equally heterogeneous, dynamic and fluid. Thus the basic claim of transculturalism is that cultures and identities are not clear-cut, fixed, homogeneous constructs which are to be treated like personality ascriptions. The conception rather suggests that culture is understood “as a polyvocal entity in which various cultures can co-exist and mingle with each other [... and] are characterized by inner differentiation, external networking and hybridisation” (Freitag-Hild 69, see also Schulze-Engler, *Perspectives* 27). The term “hybridisation” refers to the ongoing process of hybridity (Huddart 7), and “emphasizes hybridity as a continuous and unfinished process of intermingling and exchange, as a marker of resistances and transformations” (Mullaney 120). Being key-words in transcultural theory, the notion of hybridity and third space / place are described in more detail in the following.

2.3.1) Hybridity and Third Space / Place

The concept of hybridity, as developed in the 19th century, originally served to divide human-beings into different races (Young 6ff.). However, the term

has moved across time from being a way of speaking about racial intermixture or purity to one that ostensibly addresses forms of cultural intermixing or fusion that trouble received notions of cultural purity or discreteness. (Mullaney 120)

The postcolonial theoretician Homi K. Bhabha is one of the most influential thinkers on the concept of hybridity, which significantly influenced the transcultural paradigm. He was one of the first to discuss that social, and thus also cultural, differences “are not simply given to experience through an already authenticated cultural tradition” (4) and that accordingly, the representation of

these differences may not be interpreted as a *pre-given* which is locked in tradition. Hence, he argued for a fluid conception of culture with his claim that culture lies in the “beyond”. The beyond of “imperialist ideologies of self and other” (29), the beyond of “exploitation and domination [... through] discursive division” (30), the beyond of time and space (2), and – even – the beyond of ourselves (4).

[W]e find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. (2)

The very concepts of homogenous [sic!] national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, or 'organic' ethnic communities [...] are in a profound process of redefinition. (7)

Bhabha is not explicit about what this *beyond* is, however, it can be assumed that his notion of hybridity and the third space constitute a (or *the*) *beyond*. Hybridity, “employed in a cultural sense[, ...] serves to talk about phenomena that elude the given structure of familiar oppositions or to describe processes which transgress central boundaries like the one between colonizer and colonized” (Döring, *English* 35). The notions of elusion and transgression in this quote show a clear connection to the *beyond*, that is, the hybrid moments on an individual as well as cultural or communal level are a form of the *beyond* we set out to find. The third space also seems to have been understood by Bhabha as a basis or prerequisite that has to be established before communication can take place (see third space of enunciation, Bhabha 53). Still,

[i]t is far from clear what the notion of ‘third space’ actually represents, but it is evident that Bhabha wants to bypass simplistic interaction theory by pointing out the complexity of an encounter. The third space of enunciation is employed as a metaphor for the ambiguous virtual field that emerges when two or more individuals interact. (Fahlander 23)

In other words, although Bhabha is vague about a definition of the *third space*, it can be understood as the frame in which negotiation and meaning finding takes place “outside of binary ascriptions” (Reiche 82). This shows the importance of this notion for language teaching, where the question of “meaning making” is of

central concern (81f.). Kramersch appears to be the most prominent author that picked up the concept of *third space* in connection with teaching and changed the terminology into *third place*, a modification which did not only help to position the concept in another context but also increased the lucidity of the term.

The only way to start building a more complete and less partial understanding of both C1 [an objective native culture] and C2 [the target culture] is to develop a third perspective, that would enable learners to take both an insider's and an outsider's view on C1 and C2" (Kramersch 210).

From this *third place* (or perspective) learners "can express their own meanings without being hostage to the meanings of either their own or the target speech communities" (14).

Thus, hybridity and third space are the *beyond* we need to reach in order to overcome cultural differentiation. Kramersch's notion of *third place* appears more useful for pedagogic purposes than Bhabha's theory of hybridity and unclear notion of *third space*, because the former immediately evokes a spatial imagination of an all embracing common sphere in which two individuals or "cultures" create their common space, as compared to the intercultural notion, which would have to be imagined as two bounded circles next to each other with possible connections between them, however, with no intersection. This image makes the notion but especially the whole concept of culture as a hybrid paradigm more easily comprehensible. Still, Reiche warns that the *third place / space* "is not to be perceived as a new static and clearly delimited locus, which only substitutes the traditional marked-off cultures" (81) but it is as flexible and unbound as culture and identity.

We return at this point to the context of teaching, as Kramersch claims that the creation of a *third place* – the "mixing of cultures going beyond existing positions" (qtd. in Delanoy, *Transculturality* 240) – should be the aim and the result of intercultural learning. Hence, Kramersch does not discard the intercultural approach for its oppositions and limits in its conceptualisation of culture but seems to connect transcultural findings and teaching with an

intercultural approach. The hedging used in the former sentence is important, as it results from fact that Kramersch does not use the terminology “transcultural” or discuss that she includes transcultural findings with intercultural learning. It is rather the analysis of her approaches and goals which justify the assumption that she suggests a combination of these two conceptions.

As discussed above, the Austrian educational policies suggest teaching with an intercultural approach but as we have seen, there are limitations to the concept of interculturalism. Kramersch's combination of inter- and transculturalism is thus highly relevant for the context of this paper. Therefore, the next chapter will look at other theoreticians and teachers and their way of deciding for or against a combination of those two conceptions.

2.4) Combining Inter- and Transculturalism in Teaching

In her article “*Inter- and/or Transcultural Learning in the Foreign Language Classroom*”, Doff starts her analysis on inter- / transcultural teaching with a discussion of the development of teaching in the last 40 years. She states that since the “communicative turn”, the “main aim of foreign language teaching [...] has been to extend communicative competence to include the intercultural dimension” (358), taking the fact into account “that communicative acts in the target language will most likely not take place between two native speakers but, rather, in interactions across frontiers between speakers from different countries” (ibid.). In her argumentation, Doff does not focus on the two rather different views (on what culture is) of inter- or transculturalism but simply argues that “[i]n the EFL classroom, the cultural dimension of language learning is present in many areas” (359) and thus needs to be given particular attention. She believes that, by a deliberate choice of topics, texts, and materials and a focus on the culture-general rather than the culture-specific, the transcultural dimension has to be perceived as “a change of perspective rather than as a profound conceptual change” (364). Thus, teaching about the everyday life in the target culture is important, as it “facilitates processes of comparison and identification within and across culture(s)” (359).

This ideally also limits the danger – inherent in any teaching situation where “other cultures” are introduced – of confusing or equalising cultural education with the outdated “Landeskunde”, which was in many cases a mere presentation of facts and figures about the target country or people (Volkman, *Aspekte* 14f.). “[W]e should [...] replace the presentation/prescription of cultural facts and behaviors by the teaching of a process that applies itself to understanding foreignness or ‘otherness’” (Kramsch 206). Learners need to be encouraged to relativise their own values and beliefs but are not expected to forget them, which can be achieved, as Doff claims, by focussing on “areas of experience that are universal to humankind[, ...] for example, concepts of space, love, and friendship, death or illness” (362). In short, the author does not pay special attention to the difference between trans- and interculturalism but shows a way how to combine these two approaches, that is, teaching about other cultures by focussing on everyday life topics, that make pupils realise how universal certain feelings or concerns are.

Hence, Doff argues that transcultural elements are included in intercultural foreign language teaching by trying to show the pupils common grounds with people from a different cultural background, fostering feelings of similarity and familiarity, and accordingly creating a basis for the “third space”. This can be done by a deliberate choice of areas and topics which might change viewpoints, widen horizons, and facilitate the understanding of “others” ways of thinking. To further expand the transcultural element in intercultural EFL teaching, Doff suggests an inclusion of various cultures with a teaching approach “that stresses the culture-general rather than culture-specific features and that at the same time critically investigates the roles of stereotypes” (364). Moreover, different standards and varieties of English in written as well as spoken form add, on the language level, transcultural elements to intercultural learning (ibid.). Doff concludes her article with the belief that the EFL model she outlined in her writing “is flexible enough to include the concept of *transculturality* and transcultural learning as a process” (371). She clearly argues for the possibility to combine these two schools of thought.

Similarly, Stierstorfer defines *intercultural competence* as

eine dynamische Größe, die in prozessualer Ausfaltung dazu dient, die Kluft zwischen Mutter- und Fremdsprache, zwischen Eigen- und Fremdkultur zu überbrücken. Die Flusshaftigkeit dieser Entwicklung [...] ist als Vermittlungsprozess zu verstehen, der nicht nur das Neue der fremdsprachlichen Kultur an eine statisch bestehende, kulturelle Eigenidentität assimiliert, sondern gerade auch die durch reflexive Verfremdung dynamisierte Eigenkultur in diesen Vermittlungsprozess einbindet. (120)

Already the formulation of Stierstorfer's definition reminds more of a transcultural concept than of interculturalism. "Dynamic" and "fluid" are the two most striking words in his definition, which the author even excels, in his article on literature and intercultural competence, when he continues with a short comment on hybridity and identity formation. Despite not naming it, Stierstorfer appears to define intercultural competence in a transcultural manner. His theory can thus be understood as another example in which inter- and transcultural thoughts are equalised. (For further examples of a combination between the two concepts see Hallet or Freitag-Hild.)

Reiche approaches the discussion from a different angle and clearly argues in favour of a *transcultural* approach in the EFL classroom (79ff.). She is not as forgiving when it comes to the notion of intercultural learning as the aforementioned theorists and does not embrace this concept⁷. Reiche starts her investigation with a discussion on culture and how this notion has been perceived over the last decades. She then looks at communication theory and argues that, as transcultural approaches "focus on the individual, [...] instead of essentializing binary ascriptions, [...] every communication between two persons [...] is a new dynamic process in which the interlocutors negotiate dynamic and floating" (81) meanings. This implies that all communication is transcultural and shows that conversation is complicated when one of the interlocutors is linguistically not skilled enough to "express his or her meaning

⁷ Also Banerjee argues against the concept of "Fremdverstehen", a wide-spread realization of an intercultural approach in teaching in German-speaking countries (see *Beyond 'Other Cultures'*, 31-45).

adequately” (ibid.). In the teaching context, this further entails that the students need to learn to formulate their true thoughts and feelings, as opposed “to try as hard as they can to be someone else, to plagiarize as well as they can all sorts of linguistic and behavioral patterns from observed ‘authentic materials’” (Santoni as qtd. in Kramsch 181).

In Reiche's words:

If learners only memorize facts about an assumed foreign culture, [...] or are asked to act according to fixed communicational rules which allegedly are part of the target culture and thus ensure smooth communication with its members, as done in intercultural training [...], they act neither freely nor autonomously. (83)

Interesting is how different Reiche perceives intercultural competence as compared to, for example, Stierstorfer. Whereas the latter talks about self-reflection and a dynamic elevation in order to reach an understanding of the other in distance to one's own culture, Reiche sees intercultural training as a repetition of interactional and communicational rules. This shows that Reiche clearly rejects intercultural training. However, and this is of significant importance, what she actually seems to disagree with is the way in which the intercultural paradigm is translated into a teaching approach and that this realization of the concept appears to be a mere misinterpretation. This does not equal criticism of the goals it aims at. Her point is very valuable and worthy of consideration when teaching and I agree that

[s]tudents can only be enabled to truly and authentically communicate in a foreign language with people from all over the world if they have an awareness of and sensitivity towards the individual and dynamic character of their own and their interlocutors' cultural identities. If they stay locked in stereotypes and binary simplifications, the static image of the self and the other will always separate them from true social interaction in the foreign language. (91)

However, I do not think that the lines between intercultural and transcultural *teaching* can be drawn that easily, which is certainly different when looking at the theoretical concepts of interculturalism and transculturalism. Hence, the aforementioned points of critique are all valid, but, nonetheless, the actual

teaching practice is, I argue, not able to mirror the approach it follows to such an extent that one could distinguish so easily between inter- or transcultural approaches. As a consequence, it will not make a difference for the teaching practice if one tries, like Doff, to combine intercultural teaching with the transcultural notion of culture or if, like in Reiche's writing, a solely transcultural approach is promoted, as long as – and this was my impression in all these articles – the teaching objectives are the same. The authors want to reduce binary classifications and stereotypes by increasing awareness for the fluidity of “a culture” or “an individual” and by stressing similarities and the culture-general.

Therefore, it cannot be defined which term is the more appropriate and thus the reader may use the label s/he considers more suitable for this approach, as long as it promotes an awareness of the dynamic, fluid concept of culture and incorporates what Woyth-Gutberlet describes in the following quote:

An understanding of the other should imply accepting the other's way of seeing themselves and the world as well as avoiding judging them by the standards of one's own culture. Enabling the learners to comprehend the other's as well as their own perspectives, to relate them to each other and to mediate between them should represent the focus of EFL teaching. (293)

Throughout the rest of this thesis, the term transcultural will be used to describe the teaching approach that has just been outlined. Thus, at this point the relevant question is, how to make this almost visionary goal of a transcultural classroom happen?

Woyth-Gutberlet argues,

[c]oncerning the aim of understanding the other, literature proves to be the ideal medium to initiate processes which support the ability to put oneself in the position of a member of a foreign culture and reconstruct a situation from their point of view. (293)

Referring to Susan Bassnet, also Prusse argues, in his article *Towards a Cosmopolitan Readership*, that working on literary texts fosters pupils

understanding of the hybridity of culture, makes them question their perception of societies as fixed entities, and leads them to understand “that their vision of life is merely one possibility among many” (375). Literature is not the only means to achieve the aims of transcultural teaching. Therefore, Prusse also lists simulation games by intercultural trainers, inviting guest speakers or culturally aware travelling where pupils are given the opportunity “to experience ‘the Other’ themselves” (380). However, facing inevitable pragmatic limitations, literary texts seem to be the most practicable means to educate language learners according to the aims of transculturalism and we will thus investigate on this claim in more detail.

3) Teaching literature to achieve transcultural aims

Books are still the best ways to really come close to understanding complexity in our complex world. (Adichie, *Commencement*)

In der Vielschichtigkeit und Komplexität literarischer Texte bietet sich Gelegenheit wie sonst in kaum einem anderen Medium, den fremdkulturellen Kontakt differenziert zu erkunden, durchzuspielen und in all seiner Vielfältigkeit Gegenstand gut motivierter Diskussionen werden zu lassen. (Stierstorfer 135)

Literary texts enable to understand complexity and encounter other cultures, as they provide insight into the characters' ways of perceiving the world. In most cases, when we read a novel, we empathise with the main character or the narrator and thus experience the world through his/her eyes. In doing so, the reader realises that there is not just one way to perceive reality or only one way to describe a certain event.

Literary writings “provide insight into the consciousness of individual characters and their (fictional) life stories” (Freitag-Hild 68). Characters' “desires and worries, thoughts and feelings, attitudes, norms and values” (67) are described in novels and short stories and, as a consequence, provide the possibility to understand an “other's” perspective and empathise with the character. In Colum McCann's words: “When we read [...] we become alive in bodies not our own” (as qtd. in Adichie, *Commencement*). This development of empathetic ability is, however, not limited to the process of reading but supposed to affect the whole attitude of the reader.

Moreover, literary works often present “a *multitude* [emphasis added] of different character perspectives” (Freitag-Hild 68), which makes obvious that a change according to point of view entails a different description of an event and thus meaning has to be negotiated anew. In many literary works, this change of point of view is intensified by a change in narrative voice, i.e. different characters tell their perception of and opinion on a certain event, which makes the relativity of truth within the narration obvious. Hence, reading literature should make the students realise that there is no single, true depiction of an event, as a change

of perspective always leads to a change in perception. In the ideal case, they further notice how often we receive one-sided information on the media, although matters may appear very different when looking from another perspective. For the teaching practice, researchers and teachers advise role play activities (e.g. acting out scenes, role interviews or role monologues) to increase the ability to take over perspectives, to perceive the multitude of point-of-views, and to develop empathy (see Freitag-Hild, Reiche, Freitag)

„Rollengespräche stellen komplexe *tasks* dar, die Perspektivenwechsel und Einblicke in das Selbstverständnis von Personen aus der fremdkulturellen Lebenswelt ermöglichen. [...] Szenische Interpretationsverfahren im interkulturellen Literaturunterricht erleichtern den kognitiv-affektiven Zugang zu einer Figur. Indem die Lernenden probeweise die Perspektive einer fiktionalen Figur übernehmen und aus deren Sichtweise sprachliche Handlungen vollziehen, können sie u.a. nachvollziehen, wie diese Figur sich selbst sieht, wie sie von anderen gesehen wird und wie diese Faktoren ihr persönliches und kulturelles Identitätskonzept, ihre Sicht- und Verhaltensweisen beeinflussen. (Freitag 8)

To summarise, during the process of reading, an identification with the characters takes place, which fosters the ability to empathise and respect other people's ways of perceiving their environment. This process is intensified, when a literary work is read which presents various, maybe even strongly opposed viewpoints, as this shows how the perception of people and events can change according to a change of narrative voice. Hence, readers are enabled to relativise their own point of view and “develop a more open-minded and tolerant attitude towards ideas and ways of behaviour that are recognisably different from their own” (Freitag-Hild 67). In addition, they may realise how often they are confronted with one-sided representations in everyday life.

A further important issue for the teaching practice is that at the beginning of incorporating literature about “other cultures” in the classroom, the learners need to be made aware that they are still reading a *story*. A tale from *one* author who also describes the scene from his/her point of view and who has a certain past with experiences that influenced him/her. On this topic, the Nigerian writer

Adichie tells an amusing anecdote in her speech for the Kalamazoo college, as well as in the Ted Talk she gave in 2009:

I once spoke at a University in Oklahoma [...]. A well meaning student had read *Purple Hibiscus* and said that it was such a shame that Nigerian men were like the abusive father character in the book. So, I replied that I had just read *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis and that it was such a shame that all young Americans were serial murderers. Obviously I said this in a fit of irritation, but it would never have occurred to me to think that, just because I had read a novel about a young American character, that he was somehow representative of all Americans. (*Commencement*)

Adichie immediately justifies that she does not want to denounce this student but only wants to encourage to read many different stories in order to have various points of views, perspectives, and opinions. To have merely – what she calls – “a single story”, creates stereotypes and prejudices. And “a single story” does not refer to “having read only one book” but it means having read or heard or seen about a people (or an event) from only one angle. A single story is created by “show[ing] a people as one thing, as only one thing over and over again and that is what they [these people] become” (Adichie, *Single Story*). To use the example from the introduction one more time: The presentation of Africa in Austrian public discourse is incomplete, because (to stay with Adichie's terminology) it is only a “single story”. It is a highly one-sided representation and thus simply inadequate.

However, as Adichie's anecdote illustrated, any story will remain a single story, if the reader does not set the content in context. Also Wildburger discusses this

problem with literary texts[, which] lies in the fact that readers tend to view texts about a foreign culture as authentic information about it. [...] In the case of postcolonial texts, for example, the teacher will have to make students aware that literary texts can sharpen the reader's sensitivity to sufferings and injustices in the world. However, literary texts may also confirm stereotypes, and so it is important to raise the students' awareness for critical text reception. (134f.)

To diminish the danger of pupils taking the literary work they just read as authentic information, the teacher has to address the issue. Pupils need to know that they read a single story which has to be enriched by as many other

perspectives as possible. Because, still,

the main argument for using literary texts in the language classroom is literature's ability to represent the particular voice of a writer among the many voices of his or her community and thus to appeal to the particular in the reader. (Kramsch 130f.)

Hence, an important step towards a decolonised mind and the ability to approach others free from stereotypes or prejudices is reading literary texts that provide various perspectives and changes of narrative voice and describe the characters' feelings, attitudes, and thoughts. In cases where the reader manages to make meaning of a story line, a character's deed or thought without imposing his own experiences and beliefs, the creation of a third space takes place. In Hallet's words, "staging and introducing a variety of different texts and voices [...] and initiating an interplay and negotiations between all of them, including the students' own utterances and texts, [turns] the classroom [...] itself [...] into a hybrid, transcultural space" (59).

The argument for teaching literature can also be approached from a different, more pragmatic and less visionary angle. The final exams in German and Austrian secondary schools ask for more creativity and communicative competence (e.g. genre transformations, continuations of stories, finding alternative beginnings, spontaneous reactions and discussion skills) (Petersohn 302, Rau 110). Hence "[t]he great variety of literary forms as well as their constant modification provide a perfect teaching chance in this respect" (Petersohn 302). In other words, literature responds to many of the requirements of the EFL classroom and there are certainly further arguments for teaching literary texts, however, in order to stay with the focus of this thesis, I believe the aforementioned benefits are sufficient to support the claim that "literature matters" as it fosters understanding by providing insights into other's visions of life. Nonetheless, within the context of this paper, not any kind of literature is equally suitable for a transcultural EFL classroom. Therefore, the next chapters will narrow the scope of literature which particularly meets transcultural aims.

3.1) Transcultural literature

While reading literature generally serves transcultural aims, certain books appear to be more useful for a transcultural teaching approach than others. For example Reiche argues that

African American literature, as well as other postcolonial literatures, can claim a central position in the canon of transcultural foreign language education, since they offer the tensions, gaps and ambiguities which stimulate transcultural thinking. (91)

She further claims that these literatures challenge simplifying binary ascriptions and are thus particularly appropriate for transcultural aims (85). Similarly, in the introduction to their work *Beyond 'Other Cultures'*, Doff and Schulze-Engler promote what is often summarized under the term “New Literatures in English”⁸ for the EFL classroom, and argue that these works are “shaped by such 'influences of various origins' [... that they are] transcultural products per se” (*Intro* 4). According to these authors, what makes the New Literatures especially worthy of being taught is the fact that

[t]hey allow insights into the complexity of culture rather than laying bar 'other cultures', and they challenge readers to come to terms with cultural difference without falling back into the conventional wisdoms produced by a global alterity industry. (ibid.)

It can be concluded that postcolonial and New English Literature enrich the transculturality of an EFL classroom in particular, as these works usually present various points of views, which are in many cases very different to the pupil's previous experiences. Furthermore, they provide insight into the life of people who are in many cases under- and misrepresented in public discourse and thus foster a more open-minded approach to cultural diversity and hybridity.

So far, the terms postcolonial and New English literature have been used interchangeably, as if these two body of works would comprise the same writings. For example, Mullaney in her discussion on postcolonial literature indeed argues that “[p]ostcolonial literatures are [...] often variously termed the 'new literatures (in English)’” (3) and thus equals these two terms. However,

⁸ Henceforth “NELs”

already the label NELs suggests a categorisation according to language, which indicates that also British or American writing may be part of the NELs, whereas postcolonial literature is commonly understood as body of literature that – in various ways – tries to contradict, oppose or distance itself from the colonizers' way of writing (hi)stories. Hence, we will now look at a definition of postcolonial and in the following New English literature in order to discover in how far these two terms are rightfully considered compatible.

3.1.1) “Postcolonial” or “New English” Literature?

Schulze-Engler claims that “postcolonialism today can mean very different things to different people” (*Perspectives* 20), and thus argues that it is reasonable to make a first distinction – outside literary theory – between “(i) the use of the term 'postcolonial' to denote particular regions of the world; and (ii) the use of 'postcolonial' to denote a political ideology” (*Perspectives* 21). The latter “has little or no direct bearing on literature” (*ibid.*) and accordingly need not be discussed in the context of this paper. When looking at the meaning of “postcolonial” within the realm of literature, there is the possibility to further differentiate and group according to various aspects (*ibid.*). The most common understanding of the term is sufficient for our context:

[T]o speak of postcolonial literatures [...] for most people generally means to speak about the global field of writing where literature is being produced and circulated in English, or some variety of English, but where a distinctly non-English cultural influence is at the same time at work in the text. (Döring, *English* 6)

In this sense, postcolonial literature comprises works from Africa, the Caribbean, the Indian subcontinent, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and parts of Asia (*ibid.* and Schulze-Engler, *Perspectives* 21).

The term NELs refers to creative writing from Commonwealth countries, however, is more popular than the former term “Commonwealth literature” as it “introduced a distinctly anti-imperial perspective” (Helff 75).

[I]n the past they [the New Literatures in English] were often perceived as discrete national literatures, [but] today they are increasingly seen in terms of a globally linked communicative network encompassing Africa, South Asia, the Caribbean, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific as well as manifold interfaces with Britain and the USA. (Doff and Schulze-Engler, *Intro* 4)

Thus, the NELs are writings of anglophone origin and refer to almost the same works as “postcolonial literature”, however, with two distinctions: First, the NELs include works from Britain and the USA and, second, anglophone literature is a body of writings with fuzzy edges as authors may not write in their countries of origin but all over the globe, “and even where people stay put, ideas, texts, images, and sounds circulate through a globally interlinked network constituted by old and new media alike” (Schulze-Engler, *Intro* X).

These transnational connections not only link the new literatures to the former imperial centre, Britain, or to what many perceive as a new imperial centre, the USA, but increasingly constitute a multipolar network where various new literatures interact with each other. (Schulze-Engler, *Perspectives* 29)

As has been outlined, the term “New English Literatures” describes the same body of works as “postcolonial literature”, however, the term “NELs” is more comprehensive, as it includes writings from “the colonizer countries” and other anglophone literary works not necessarily published in a formerly colonized country. In addition, and I argue this to be a very relevant point, already the term seems to be more inclusive and less focused on political, historical or geographical circumstances. The labelling “NELs” does not suggest a particular content of a piece of writing, whereas the denotation “postcolonial” may evoke expectations on what the respective stories will address.

Nonetheless, also the term “NELs” is contested. For example, Helff mentions (in reference to Huggan) that the label may be perceived as bland, evasive, and apolitical (75), and thus criticises what I have just claimed to be an advantage of the term. The distance towards colonialism, which it seems to take, can hence not only be seen as a form of liberation from the past, but also be interpreted as unjustified alienation from history. Furthermore, the word “New” in “NELs” is

disputable, as it is unclear what this adjective is supposed to signify. A first reaction may be to interpret the word as reference to the “new era” after colonialism, in which no distinction between colonizer and colonized should take place. However, this positions the colonial times again as the decisive moment in history and, as a consequence, marks little difference to the former term “postcolonial”. Moreover, one may wonder what happens to literature written before or during colonialism in the respective countries, especially as something “new” is usually assumed to be something “good”, literature written before colonialism would thus automatically be turned into “old” and “less valuable” literature.

As can be seen, there are also limitations to the term “New English Literature” which one should be aware of when using this classification. Despite this fact, I argue the label to be more useful than “Commonwealth” or “postcolonial” literature, as it is less biased, more inclusive, and does not evoke expectations about the content of novels to the same extent as its predecessors.

3.2) New English Literature in comparison to the literary classics

It can be deduced that the NELs, as they are written by authors from various cultural backgrounds, nations, generations, religions, etc., develop the readers' understanding of the hybridity of culture. Making pupils read as many works from this field of literature as possible should thus be a high priority of language education. Unfortunately, many teachers still believe that teaching “the classics” is more worthwhile than reading New English Literature.

As Lindfors satirically argues:

The content, form, and style of the[...] revered classics did not matter so much as the fact that they were indeed revered classics. Any amount of genial scatology would be permitted so long as it were perpetrated by Shakespeare. Any queer dialect would be condoned if it came from the pen of Dickens or Hardy. Any aberrant or obsolete English word or unusual syntactical structure would be tolerated in a poem by one of the certified immortals. (12)

Besides clearly supporting the above mentioned claim for teaching not only the classics, this argument is further interesting for its discussion of obsolete English words and unusual syntactical structures. As, especially in discussions on African or African American writing, the use of pidgin language or uncommon syntactical structures is often criticised to be confusing or distracting for language learners. Further, African authors are sometimes claimed less advanced in their mastery of English than British, American or Australian speakers of English and are therefore believed to offer a less trustworthy model of English (as summarised by Lindfors as “linguistic argument” (11)).

This issue is certainly to be kept in mind when teaching beginners of a foreign language, however, at a higher level, modern language curricula even prescribe exposure to different models of English. And as Gunner declares, “[i]n many ways, [...] African writers bring new resources into their use of the English language: they endow it with a novelty and an unfamiliar richness of expression which strengthens rather than impoverishes the language” (vii). Moreover, Lindfors rightfully states that “[t]he English classics [...] are often far more difficult to understand than is generally admitted” (13).

[T]he best African literary works compare favorably with any of the titles currently on the literature syllabus and in many ways surpass them as verbal artifacts created out of images, metaphors, and symbols able to move the hearts and minds of living human beings.
(ibid.)

Africa's and other New English literary works are not (especially not a priori) less qualitative writing. Above all, if the literary works to be used in the classroom are carefully chosen, the danger of having a bad model of English will be avoided. There is simply little argument nowadays for making pupils struggle with understanding English spoken 400 years ago, instead of exposing them to present day dialects or pidgins of English.

As a point of clarification, it is not my intention to denounce the works of the Canon or argue for not teaching them. However, I am strongly against teaching *only* or *primarily* canonical works and disregarding the pedagogical as well as aesthetic value of works written by Non-European authors. I believe in the

necessity to counteract what Jensen summarised in the words, “post-colonial literature has to be argued for, whereas the relevance of British and American literature is taken for granted” (149).

Two further arguments for not prioritizing “the classics” are: (I) “curricula describing the goals of English language instruction demand that pupils be familiarized with the cultural background and customs of English-speaking people in general [...] do not limit the scope to the UK or the USA” (Prusse 374). (II) Textbooks very often present a “lopsided scope of traditional representations [...] in which white, middle-class, intact families used to be presented as the normative model” (Eisenmann, Grimm, and Volkmann, *Intro* VII). It is thus advisable to provide alternative models of ways of living as to be found in novels and stories. This receives even more importance as the amount of literary texts in textbooks is decreasing, which – as Petersohn argues – is “only the result of commercial interests” (301)⁹ and not a sign of a decreasing value of literature in teaching. It is thus necessary to use other media in one's teaching agenda which show a less distorted picture of reality and offer other perspectives. Besides including the NELs, also films may be used to achieve these goals, for further information on this issue I recommend the articles of Freitag-Hild or Knopf.

3.3) A practical study on the impact of the NELs

For those who are still not convinced that teaching the New Literatures in English has a positive impact on language learners, I want to include a study on the impact of African American Literature on University students in the Caribbean. The research has been conducted by Morgan, who wanted to test “the potential of literary study to demystify race, to undermine socially divisive stereotypes, and to promote greater understanding and appreciation of

⁹ Petersohn bases this claim on his findings that the same publishers, that are responsible for the textbooks, offer various forms of additional reading materials, which promote all literary genres, however, decrease the amount of literary texts within the textbooks.

diversity” (123). She used classroom observation, questionnaires, and double entry journals for her research on the responses of students from Trinidad and Tobago¹⁰ (121ff.) and concluded from this research that

the classroom exposure [to various African American literary works] had opened their [the students] eyes to the complexities and nuances of the African American *experience*, and even more so to the racialised and gendered grounding of American society. [...] Despite constant exposure to similar concerns via the electronic media, the close study of the literary texts proved revelatory and brought the issues home in a far more tangible manner. (128f.)

Setting the general agreement (on the importance of teaching the NELs and thus “opening students' eyes”) aside, a few issues need to be kept in mind, before fully embracing Morgan's study. First, the research was done in the environment of tertiary education, accordingly with more mature learners than focussed on in the context of this paper. As a consequence, it may be assumed that the students who enrolled for the course on African American literature already have a certain positive predisposition towards the topic. Second, it is very hard to judge if the responses and behaviours during the lectures really caused long-term attitudinal changes, especially as the students could predict which kind of behaviour and opinion was expected of them and as there was only one person evaluating their responses, which further makes the results rather subjective. As a last point of argumentation, the study took place in the Caribbean, which is remarkably more culturally diverse than Austria and thus makes learners grasp the significance of the topic more easily.

When bearing all these differences between the setting in which the study was conducted and the environment focussed on in this paper in mind, the study can no longer be taken as direct proof of behavioural and attitudinal change as a result of reading the NELs. Still, the research conducted shows that reading literary works has a positive effect on students' understanding of other people's experiences and creates the possibility to look at certain issues from a different angle.

¹⁰ The article by Morgan does not provide information on the amount of students that took part in the research nor reveal at which University the course(s ?) took place.

It has been shown that there are many misconceptions about Africa(ns) in Austrian society, which lead to the conclusion that a transcultural approach in (language) teaching is advisable. It has further been argued that the most practicable way to incorporate transcultural elements in the EFL classroom is to teach the NELs. However, bearing the focus on Africa in mind, it can be assumed that reading literature from and about Africa reduces stereotypes about this vast continent most successfully and thus enables pupils to move beyond having “a single story” (Adichie). The rest of this paper will therefore focus on African literature, beginning with a theoretical investigation of this body of works and showing its benefits but also its dangers in teaching.

There is, however, one more issue that needs to be clarified at this point: The reference to “African literature” should not be misinterpreted as a grouping of the whole continent as similar or “the same” (while I have vigorously argued against that, throughout the course of this paper). I use this comprehensive term, as I do not want to create the impression that, for example, Kenyan literature is more worthwhile than South African literature or vice versa. Further, I believe that pupils should be confronted with as many different viewpoints of and about Africa as possible. Thus, to focus on one nation in this thesis would unnecessarily limit the choice for teachers. Hence, I expect language instructors, who want to expand the students' views of Africa, to choose a particular focus (e.g. a certain region, author, topic, etc.) themselves and I thus need to stick with the umbrella term “African literature”, although this term constitutes an unjustified generalization, as will be explained in the following.

3.4) African literature

Although Africa and its literature was formerly the main focus of Postcolonial studies, from the 1980s onwards, Asia seems to have taken its place, not only in the context of literature but also when looking at popular cultures (e.g. Bollywood films) (Emig 2009). Also in the course of my research, I found that it is

hard to find information on teaching African literature, especially, in an EFL context. Nonetheless, Africa must interest us, as it “is indeed not only at our doorstep, but has one foot in the door, most noticeable in the stream of migrants who keep arriving on Europe's shores every day. Economically, too, Africa might become as important as Asia was in the 1980s” (ibid.). Accordingly, teachers have to prepare their pupils for getting in touch with African as much as with British or American cultures. As discussed above, there is hardly a better way to confront pupils with cultural diversity than through literature and thus, the inclusion of texts by African writers in EFL teaching should be obligatory. As Gunner argues, “exposure to African experience through literature is an important way of breaking down negative stereotypes of mindless, or at best, amiable savages inhabiting the depths of some Tarzanian jungle” (VI).

The body of African literature written in English developed mainly after 1950 and is usually divided by literary critics into three phases:

[F]irst, the period of cultural nationalism, where publications support independence movements and attempt to 'write back' to colonial misconceptions of African cultures. The second phase is characterised by a rising post-independence disillusionment that criticises abounding corruption and mismanagement. [...] The third, and present phase, comprises a growing variety, both of narrative styles [...] and of thematic concerns. (Berndt, *West* 67)

However, what defines African literature? That the work has been written in Africa, that the writer was born in Africa or that the setting takes place somewhere on this vast continent?

The issue of what constitutes African literature has been controversial ever since the emergence of modern African literature written in the metropolitan African languages. [...] Whereas in all the other continents literatures are classified on national and linguistic lines which invariably are identical, in Africa alone the literatures of the diverse linguistic, racial, cultural, social, and political groups, some of which are large and complex enough to have been regarded as nation-states should they have been elsewhere, are all classified together into a single continent-wide basket as African literature. (Dseagu 35)

It is indeed very surprising that this comprehensive body of literature was grouped under one label. Dseagu assumes that this 'compression' of Africa is

the result of the colonialist discourse, which claimed all Africans to be inferior, to which they had to respond that they are not¹¹. In both cases, a “grouping together [...] of] the disparate and multitudinous linguistic, cultural, racial, economic, and political communities of the continent into one common basket” (36) takes place. *Pan-Africanism* was the first definition that covered all “creative writing by colonized Africans as well as by colonized and segregated people of the African diaspora in the Caribbean and the USA” (ibid.). By the 1950s, the term and its according definition changed (e.g. Black-African nativism, Continental Pluralism, etc., see Dseagu 37ff.), however, the notional grouping of the whole continent remained in all these conceptions.

To counter this generalization, another more recent practice is to divide African literature into less comprehensive geographical units: East, West, and Southern African writing (see, for example, Eckstein). However, this simply narrows down the scope of an arbitrary geographical grouping and does not actually solve the problem (Snead 237). For instance, Nigeria counts more than 200 different peoples with different native languages, religious beliefs, and traditions (Berndt, *West* 66). Thus, already the fact that these peoples are grouped within one nation state is questionable, let alone considering all West Africa as similar enough to cluster its literary works.

The main complication is that the elsewhere used identification of a body of literature according to the language in which works were first published can not be applied in the African context, as many African writers wrote (and write) in English. One of the reasons for this fact is that most African countries cover many different native languages, which impedes having a literary industry for each of these tongues.

The category 'African literature' includes oral and written literatures in indigenous languages such as Kikuyu, Hausa, Sotho, Xhosa, Somali and Swahili, alongside those African literatures in Arabic, French, Portuguese, Afrikaans and English perhaps more familiar to those outside Africa. (Mullaney 15)

¹¹ As can be seen, for example, in the movement of Négritude which actually established in France by French and Algerian writers, however embraced all 'Black art' (see Dseagu 36f., Döring, *English* 110, Innes 18).

The question whether to write, as African author, in English or the regional tongue, raised heated debates, especially between the two famous Nigerian writers Chinua Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (Schulze-Engler and Davis 101ff., Collet 18f., Innes 26). Ngũgĩ claims that English is the colonizer's language, which has been imposed on the African people, and therefore, in order to preserve culture and tradition, he argues for writing in the native language (*Decolonising the Mind*). Achebe, on the other hand, believes that English is the language of instruction in Nigerian schools, simply because there are too many native languages to cater for all of them in one classroom (due to internal migrations, 5 teachers per class would be necessary (*Politics* 105f.)). He concludes that African authors *should* write in English, as national cohesion in an ethnically diverse country has to be increased by a common language.

While it should have become obvious at this point that the label "African literature" is a rather inappropriate compression, it has to be admitted that there are, not yet, any better alternatives. Within the context of this paper, the questionable classification is acceptable, because, as I have outlined above, it is used as an umbrella term and not supposed to treat all literary writings from or about Africa as similar and indistinguishable. In other words, for reaching the aims I set as a framework (increasing pupils awareness about their "single story" on the target culture, enriching their perspectives, and educating them to become more open-minded), it is important to show the students narrations written from an African perspective, no matter in which language originally published or from which country (a choice that has to be made by the teacher).

A further issue which can not be omitted when discussing African literature is the importance of orality within Africa's literary tradition (Mullanay 15). "[T]he oral tradition of African literature relies on characters to represent their community in an exemplary way rather than creating individuals who challenge society" (Berndt, *Search* 167). This positions a major difference to European ways of characterisation and has thus to be taken into consideration when

reading an African novel or deciding on its literary value.

The various forms of poetry and theatrical activity which writers and performers have produced in postcolonial Africa can generally draw on aspects of indigenous tradition and recreate or reinvent communal practices of oral culture for contemporary purposes. The case is very different for the novel, a modern European form [...], a written genre closely tied to middle-class values and habits of individual readership. African novels are therefore often marked by crucial and creative tensions: they negotiate different, sometimes opposing tendencies [...] and thus manifest [...] the transcultural realities that inhabit postcolonial writing. (Döring, *English* 115)

Thus, when choosing an African novel for the classroom, the teacher should bear in mind the importance of orality in African story-telling and may try to find novels which stress this important form of narration in African culture.

Before finally reaching the more practical part of this thesis (in which the criteria for choosing a New English literary writing for the classroom are outlined and teaching suggestions are provided), there is one more issue that has to be discussed in the context of teaching the NELs, and in particular African or Indian literature. The danger of exoticising the work of art will be the concern of the following chapter.

3.4.1) Exoticism

Jensen argues that the appeal of postcolonial writings often “lies not so much in the different perspectives and challenges it poses, but in [... its] statues as odd (quaint) and exotic (colourful)” (149). Ashcroft states similarly that also in Hong Kong, as the experience of colonisation was different there to most other British colonies, “the temptation is for students either to make simplistic analogies between colonies, or to exoticize the cultures of formerly colonized societies” (18). In particular African and Indian literature are often read for their promise to show exotic forms of living. At first glance, the depiction of an Indian market with its smells, colours and unusual hustle, is certainly more appealing than reading about the everyday life of an office worker in Delhi. However, particularly these

latter descriptions provide more similarities to the Austrian way of living and accordingly show the students that putatively exotic places also provide familiar themes. Thus, these depictions provide the commonalities that help to minimise the impression of foreignness and decrease fear. Unfortunately, not only readers tend to expect exoticism in postcolonial writings, but also authors are, to a certain extent, forced to meet these expectations of exoticism. As Adichie confirms when she talks about her experience of being told that her novel is not authentically African because the people in her story are too much like the educated middle-class, drive cars, and have enough to eat (*Single Story*).

For the teaching situation, a direct discussion of the issue of exoticism may be the best approach to tackle the problem. Talking with pupils about the similarities of African and Austrian life, showing them how many Africans also live in houses (as opposed to huts), have running water and enough to eat, and go to school (instead of herding goats) may reduce the perceived exoticism. The more advanced the pupils are, even a discussion about the fact that the West created these particular images of Africa for certain reasons may be advisable, however, this entails a further complication. As Petersen experienced, “Orientalism can be an empowering insight, leading to greater self-awareness and a changed perspective, but it can also be paralysing” (33). She found that the pupils very often feel like the enemy in postcolonial discourse, which makes them withdraw from the reading, and she thus stresses the need to encourage students and make them aware that “they do have a right to an opinion; that there is a difference between a European and a Eurocentric point of view” (ibid.).

There is no doubt, [...] that teaching an African text which looks critically at Britain's imperialist and colonial past can be an (initially) disturbing experience [...] because it may challenge deep-seated feelings of national pride and patriotism and therefore force individuals to re-think old ideas and ideals. Yet part of the role of good literature is to raise complex issues in a way that students [...] can deal with. Certainly teachers should remember that in dealing with African literature we are not participating in an accusatory black/white debate, but presenting Africa from the point of view of Africans, which may be a very different experience for many of our students, but one which surely should be available to them. (Gunner vii)

As a summary of the theoretical framework outlined so far, it can be stated that a transcultural approach to teaching is the most beneficial in preparing the learners for the increasingly globalised and culturally hybrid world we are living in. This approach highly recommends including literary works into the teaching agenda, as literature's complexity and hybridity encourage transcultural thinking. Teaching the New English Literatures is particularly rewarding because their content and inclusion of various perspectives make them transcultural products per se. As this thesis set out to deconstruct the "single story" many Austrian pupils are likely to have about Africa, a discussion of African literature followed and its usefulness in the EFL classroom was investigated on. In short, so far has been discussed *why* African novels should be used in the classroom, the relevant question for the rest of this thesis is *how* they should be included in EFL teaching.

4) The teaching practice

The following section is meant to provide information and suggestions on how to include African literary writings in the EFL classroom. In order to guarantee an easily comprehensible structure, the chapters below follow a possible teacher's course of action, i.e. accompany an imaginary teacher through the process of preparing and teaching an African novel. Hence, at the beginning, information on preparatory work – advisable before the actual reading – will be given. Afterwards, criteria to choose a literary work suitable for the classroom are provided and a novel will be introduced which meets these criteria to a sufficient extent. In the last part of this thesis, a possible teaching sequence will be outlined, including lesson plans and the necessary teaching material.

In my research on African literature in the classroom, I focussed on younger learners of English, as I believe that the earlier transcultural education starts, the more effective it is. Unfortunately, my findings showed that there is no research on using African literary works in a lower secondary EFL classroom and when African literature is taught to EFL learners, the pupils are at least 15 years of age. The most obvious argument is that younger pupils have not reached a sufficient language level to read New English Literature. However, at least in the Austrian context, schooling in English starts earlier than ever before and pupils are more surrounded by the English language, as a result of world-wide networking (e.g. social platforms or computer games). Accordingly, I believe that, with sufficient support by the language instructor, it is not blatant to claim that reading African literature with Austrian students from the age of 12 to 14 is not only possible but advisable. Thus, the following teaching sequence is designed for a 4th form lower secondary, which can be assumed to have a language level of about A1+, A2 according to the Common European Frame of Reference¹².

¹² henceforth CEFR. For further information, see Council of Europe, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Cadre1_en.asp.

4.1) Preliminary work

Before any decision in lesson planning can be taken, a course instructor needs to know what the goals of a certain lesson or project are. In the course of this thesis, many aims and objectives were listed according to different topics and in different chapters, however, in order to be able to start working towards these goals effectively, it is necessary to specify them at this point.

In the introduction to their edition *Beyond 'Other Cultures'*, Doff and Schulze-Engler divide the goals in transcultural teaching into three major objectives: “*awareness, skills and knowledge*” (7) and further describe these as follows:

Awareness: Fostering and sharpening the awareness of culture as an open and fluid cluster.

Skills: Encourage learners to move beyond binary oppositions and overcome fear and prejudices.

Provide room for learners and teachers to “contribute their own experience of the making and change of cultural complexity”. (ibid.)

Knowledge: Reading material has to be broadened, “i.e. a move 'beyond' the inner to the outer and expanding circles of the English-speaking world [...] as far as provenance and/or setting of literary texts are concerned”.

(as summarised from: Doff and Schulze-Engler, 7f.)

Further aims for the teaching section which meet the specific concern of this thesis can be formulated as:

- Pupils learn about Africa from an African perspective and have a more diversified perception. (Knowledge)
- Pupils formulate what a stereotype is. (Skill)
- Pupils give examples of stereotypical representation in present day public discourse. (Knowledge)
- Pupils find categories for stereotypes. (Knowledge, skill)
- Pupils take over the perspective of a fictional character. (Skill)
- Pupils identify with subjects from another culture. (Skill)
- Pupils detect differences in the interpretation of a text. (Skill)
- Pupils identify the subconsciousness of stereotypes. (Skill)

These objectives are the framework and guideline which inform the lesson plans below. As a general remark, I would like to add a quote from Reiche which briefly summarises a crucial point the reader may bear in mind when reading the following sections: “[T]he transcultural learning and teaching process is highly individual and [...] any kind of fixed teaching ‘recipe’ would be incompatible with the basic principles of transculturality” (87). This should certainly not prevent from sharing teaching ideas, however, indicates the need to adjust teaching activities and examples to the respective setting.

As the broad aims for the teaching sequence have been defined, the next step is to decide on the prioritization of certain aims, i.e. finding those objectives that constitute a foundation for the other aims. The teacher needs to determine those skills that question the underlying attitudes and thus have to be developed before building up new (or renewing existent) viewpoints. As a result of her own experiences with teaching African American women's writing, Wisker offers strategies that should enable the students to engage better with literary works. She provides a four-step sequence of strategies to introduce pupils to African American writing. These are:

- 1) *Cultural identification* – as an ice breaker but to enable awareness of the importance of experience and context in our reading and to celebrate those with more varied cultural backgrounds.
- 2) *Offering opportunities to identify with the experiences of Otherising* – this could be carried out in a classroom [...] through exploring the imaginative and formal ways in which writers deal with racism, silencing, marginalisation, and giving students support to talk about these experiences, feelings, and issues.
- 3) *Providing cultural, historical and political context for the reading of the works* – this enables students because they share knowledge about context and history, which helps understanding and dialogue with the texts.
- 4) *Moving forward from rather conventional contextual analysis and response* – using critics from African American background and statements by the writers themselves can help students to acknowledge that we might not easily be able to recognise the validity of different forms of expression, such as oral storytelling. (Wisker, *Intro* 15f.)

Wisker focuses on native speakers of English in her discussion and apparently

on the tertiary level rather than the school setting, accordingly, her strategies have to be adapted to fit the needs of the Austrian EFL classroom. Furthermore, also these suggestions should not be misunderstood as *the* and *only* approach, which is why the teaching examples provided below are inspired but not scheduled according to Wisker. Nonetheless, the author argues for a focus on the cultural setting of the pupils, before moving on to make them experience perspectives from the target culture, which is in line with my claim to first question underlying structures, before moving on to a confrontation with new insights and attitudes. Introductory questions such as “what is my culture?” or “what defines 'a German' or 'an Austrian'?” may be a reasonable way into this venture. However, a discussion on what 'culture' actually is requires a certain philosophical stance, one may thus consider these queries unsuitable for less mature language learners. As a consequence, I recommend an introductory phase on the topic of stereotypes (described in more detail below), as knowledge on this issue is a crucial prerequisite for encouraging the students to move beyond binary oppositions and overcome fear and prejudices.

4.1.1) Teaching Example 1 - “That's Austria!”

At the start of a teaching sequence, it is necessary to engage the learners with the topic and to raise their interest. This is commonly achieved by showing their involvement with the subject matter and / or stirring their emotions, which leads not only to increased participation and more fruitful discussions but also makes pupils see the connection between “a teaching topic” and “their life”. I thus suggest, for the current discussion, an introductory activity where the learners are confronted with stereotypes about Austrians. While arousing emotions and encouraging participation, this exercise is supposed to make them experience (as far as that is possible in the classroom) how it feels to be a victim of stereotypical depiction. Furthermore, as Volkmann stresses, introducing pupils to national stereotypes is “necessary to prepare students for cultural encounters” (*Aspekte* 19)¹³. Thus, although it may appear odd that a teaching

¹³ Volkmann provides various highly recommendable suggestions for teaching about stereotypes of Germans in “Aspekte und Dimensionen interkultureller Kompetenz” 20-23.

unit on African literature starts with a session on Austrian stereotypes, this should not be misinterpreted as a gap-filler to involve students and encourage participation. As Kramsch notes, “an intercultural approach to the teaching of culture is radically different from a transfer of information between cultures. It includes a reflection both on the target and on the native culture” (205). That is, before learners can be expected to go beyond stereotypical depictions in literature on other cultures, they need to be aware of what stereotypes are and in how far they are part of their everyday life.

Lesson Plan

Aims and Objectives: Pupils reflect on what “their native culture” is and give an example of a stereotypical representation of Austria(ns). They formulate what a stereotype is in their own words and give at least one example of present day stereotypes in public discourse.

Rationale: To activate pupils prior knowledge on their perception of Austria (and Austrians), they are asked to write adjectives on the blackboard which they connect with this country. They watch the trailer of *Sound of Music* and, as a while-viewing activity, fill in two columns about the representation of Austria (and Austrians) in the trailer (exercise 1 of worksheet 1, to be found in the appendix). In pair work, the learners discuss with a partner exercise 2 of the worksheet. In a common discussion, the teacher collects a few answers and impressions of the pupils and leads over to the topic of stereotypes. This exercise also lends itself to a focus on the various cultural backgrounds that may be present in the classroom. The teacher may, for example, ask the learners who are not (or whose parents are not) from Austria what they and / or their community thinks of Austrians. During this conversation, it is also reasonable to tell the learners that *Sound of Music* was very popular in the U.S. and that many Americans really imagine Austria similar to what is shown in the trailer¹⁴. This activity further serves to address the different forms of stereotypes (i.e. not only national but also gender, age, culture), by asking pupils if they can think of other levels on which stereotypes may appear. As a last exercise, the

¹⁴ I base this claim mainly on my personal experience as a traveller and tour director for North American high school students.

pupils formulate in their own words what a stereotype is (alone or in pairs they write a short “definition”). As homework, the students think of their personal experiences with stereotypes and write a short story in which they describe the situation where they were confronted with prejudices or stereotypical images and how they felt in this moment. In case they can not remember such experiences, they write at least 5 different examples of stereotypes to be found in public discourse.

| Time | Procedure | Interaction format ¹⁵ | Skills | Materials |
|------|---|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 5' | Brainstorm “Austria and Austrians” | CL | Writing, vocabulary | Blackboard |
| 15' | Watch the trailer of <i>Sound of Music</i> (2x) and fill in worksheet (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRPEpJHl9zg) | S | Listening, critical awareness | Beamer, PC, link to video |
| 5' | Pupils read their answers to the class (volunteers). | CL | Speaking, listening | |
| 10' | Discuss questions on worksheet in pairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What image is presented of Austria? ➤ Does the film show everyday life in Austria or does it depict stereotypes? ➤ What was shown in the trailer that does not fit Austrian lifestyle (or describes the lifestyle of only a few people)? ➤ Are there only national stereotypes or do they occur on other levels? | P | Speaking, critical awareness | Worksheet no. 1 |
| 8' | Discussion of conclusions (focus on cultural diversity in classroom), the teacher leads over to topic of stereotypes. | CL | Speaking, listening | |
| 7' | Pupils formulate a definition of a stereotype. | S or P | Writing, analysing | |
| HW | Write a text on your experience with stereotypes or find min. 5 examples where stereotypes can be found in society (e.g. man like big cars and women economical cars.) | S | Writing, reflection | |

¹⁵ S = individual work; P = pair work; GR = group work; CL = class work; T = teacher, HW = homework

If a teacher does not want to include *Sound of Music*, s/he can certainly replace it with another way of showing the pupils stereotypes of Austria(ns). For instance, by providing a list of adjectives that describe “the typical Austrian” or by letting pupils research themselves (on the Internet or by asking foreigners they may know), for useful websites see the last bibliography section: “Stereotypes about Austria”.

At this point of the teaching sequence, pupils should know what a stereotype is and be aware of its negative impact. Ideally, they also remember personal experiences with stereotypes. In the next step, they are made aware that, although they are likely to be convinced of the opposite, they also have prejudices. The next teaching suggestion thus attempts to make pupils realise their own subconscious prejudices and stereotypes. As a side remark for the actual teaching practice, I suggest to have one or two sessions on different topics before carrying out the exercise provided below (“Everyday life”). First of all, because it gives pupils time to digest and become familiar with the complex concept of a stereotype. As a more pragmatic second reason, as pupils may otherwise be able to predict the outcome of the following teaching activity which would lead to a distortion of the results.

4.1.2) Teaching Example 2 - “A day in the life of ...”

Lesson Plan

Aims and Objectives: Pupils group and categorise stereotypes (at least the two categories nationality and gender) in a mind-map. They provide ten different examples of stereotypes in public discourse and identify the subconsciousness of stereotypes.

Rationale: The learners see 4 different childhood photographs (one at a time) of infants from different cultural backgrounds¹⁶ with the help of the beamer. They create a short fictional story about how these children will develop (or what their

¹⁶ Examples can be found on worksheet 2 in the appendix.

adult life will be like) according to each of the images (and take a few notes). Their considerations should include where these people live, if and what they work, their family situation, etc. After having projected all four photographs, they are presented on the beamer again (each at a time) and some of the pupils voluntarily provide their examples. The teacher summarises (and groups) the answers and may visualise them on the beamer or the blackboard.

A short discussion on generalisation and categorisation should follow, i.e. the students should be told that it is a natural (and important) human reaction to classify and order input according to superficial criteria (Volkmann, *Aspekte* 19ff.), however, that these categorisations (at least in their application to human beings) are likely to cause stereotypes and prejudices, which might have become obvious in their assumptions about the future of the children in the projected images. Following, it is revealed that the photographs are actually childhood pictures from celebrities (as in the example on the worksheet in the appendix: Will Smith, Lady Gaga, Jackie Chan and Shakira). It will have become obvious to the reader by now, that, with this exercise, pupils should be made aware of the stereotypes they may have shown in their answers (for example, the girl in the dress is believed to become a housewife, dancer or prostitute, the dark-skinned boy has a low-esteem job, etc.).

As a second exercise for this lesson, the pupils categorise the stereotypes the teacher collected from their homework (as described in the lesson plan above). I advise summarising the pupils' responses and handing out a list of the ideas they came up with. Using this list, they group the stereotypes and categorise them in form of a mind-map (maybe on a poster). This categorisation is supposed to raise awareness about the prevalence of gender and nationality stereotypes.

| Time | Procedure | Interaction format | Skills | Materials |
|------|---|--------------------|----------|------------------------------|
| 15' | Projection of photographs (about 4 minutes per image), discussion on future life of these children. | P | Speaking | Beamer, photos (worksheet 2) |

| | | | | |
|-----|--|----|------------------------|--|
| 10' | Repeat projection for pupils to report their ideas. Teacher summarises the answers on the blackboard. | CL | Speaking, listening | Blackboard |
| 10' | Discussion of the categorisation, generalisation and the outcome of the exercise (Are there certain attributions that reoccur or are similar? Are these stereotypes? etc.) | CL | Speaking, listening | |
| 15' | Categorisation of stereotypes (in form of a mind-map on a poster) (Posters should be presented in the next lesson) | P | Speaking, categorising | List with stereotypes (from HW), posters, pens |

This first section of preparatory work can, off course, be extended by many further reasonable activities and, as aforementioned, has to be adjusted to the learners' language and maturity level and their previous knowledge. In the ideal case, the teacher may even build on a broad base of transcultural knowledge which has been established in previous lessons and by other teachers. This is in particular promoted by Kramsch, who provides various examples to include transculturality in the EFL classroom, also at early stages of language development. "Systematic training of learners in insiders' and outsiders' views of cultural phenomena should start early on with activities that require learners to adopt different ways of seeing" (229). The activities Kramsch suggests are: Writing a postcard to a friend (to develop the ability to take on the perspective of someone else), finding variants of old fairy tales (which often show different perspectives on the same event) or, for more advanced learners of English, writing a whole fairy tale, "giving it a psychological, social, moral, religious, or political meaning. As an example: 'What became of Snow-White and her Prince after they emigrated to America because of unemployment in Germany?'" (229f.). As these activities are very flexible in terms of topic or content, they can be used with various subject matters and an early start into transcultural thinking is thus not as difficult to achieve, as one may suspect when looking at

the concept of transculturalism. Nonetheless, it cannot be assumed (or taken for granted) that pupils received much of transcultural education and I would thus advise a smooth introduction to the topic.

This chapter set out to provide examples for what may be considered necessary preparatory work before confronting pupils with an “other culture”. The lesson plans outlined above were, in their core, supposed to sensitise pupils for the omnipresence of stereotypes and familiarise them with this notion. The activities by Kramsch, which were only briefly mentioned, prepare pupils for taking over others' perspectives and are ideally included into EFL teaching already at early stages of students' educational careers. As already stated, much more can be done to develop pupils' general global awareness, which would be beneficial for reading African literature. However, the focus of this thesis is on African literature and it is thus time to move on to the question of “how to choose an appropriate novel?” for EFL learners.

4.2) Criteria for choosing a literary work

Before deciding on a short story or novel to be used in the classroom, the teacher has to decide *why* s/he wants to include literature. If a syntactical analysis is the reason for using a literary work in teaching, the choice will certainly depend on other criteria than when a promotion of extensive reading is the teacher's intention. As stated above, before any decision on lesson planning can be taken, the teacher needs to be aware of the teaching aims. However, Rau suggests a few general points of consideration:

[T]exts are to encourage spontaneous reactions and criticism and are to elicit student responses that trigger discussions, initiate changes of perspective, serve as counterfoils and, above all, support the foreign language learning process [...]. A further very important aspect to be considered when choosing texts for foreign language courses is that the language should not be too difficult, so that it does not present insurmountable barriers, preventing students from relating to the text. Moreover, too many annotations spoil the fun of reading. (Rau 112)

Although not mentioned by Rau, an important element to increase the pupils' involvement and active participation in discussions is the choice of topic. Despite current teaching trends, which focus on developing skills and move away from topic-based approaches, in the context of literature teaching, it is still a crucial factor to choose a theme that interests pupils. Furthermore, to raise empathy and develop mutual understanding (which were above defined as goals of transcultural teaching) it is important that pupils are given the opportunity to identify with a character or the plot. Accordingly, the topics Freitag-Hild suggests are "family, friendship, identity and gender [as they] are not only central themes in black and Asian British fiction, but also important issues in any young adult's everyday life" (66). Kramsch, however, rightfully argues that the decisive criteria need to go beyond "thematic interest and linguistic simplicity" (138). She states further criteria to be taken into account, for example, the predictability of the narrative structure, the clarity of cultural allusions (to the foreign reader), and if "the text lend[s] itself more to an efferent or an aesthetic kind of reading" (ibid.).

A linear, predictable narrative structure on a familiar theme with easy-to-fill silences elicits more readily a response from a foreign reader, but it can also be deceptive and tempt students into reading only on an efferent level. A linguistically easy text might present a narrative sophistication that is unfamiliar to the students, thus raising their aesthetic curiosity. (ibid.)

Nonetheless, linguistic accessibility is one of the first decisive criteria and, as it is difficult to decide on the language level of a literary writing, there are nowadays many "graded readers" available. These readers are published especially for language learners and indicate the language level, hence decrease the teacher's effort. However, using these artificial or simplified stories is a rather controversial issue in literary didactics, as the trend in current language teaching is to focus on authentic experience¹⁷.

¹⁷ Although even this is a contested issue, as, for example, Kramsch argues that functional approaches are embraced too enthusiastically, as they present "authentic" speech in a too uncritical way (179). She thus questions "if the classroom could ever be, or even should ever try to imitate, the natural environment of restaurants and workplaces" (ibid.)

Besides the so far mentioned criteria to decide on a literary work, one major issue may not be forgotten: “the teacher's initial reaction to the text will be his most valuable asset in teaching it” (Kramsch 138). Hence, a teacher needs to choose a work also according to his/her personal liking, as one can not be expected to successfully encourage reading of a work that one would have preferred not to read him-/herself.

For the current discussion, the aim of including literature is foremost to meet the requirements of transcultural teaching and provide a new perspective on life in Africa. Thus, a major criteria is the content and setting of a novel. Accordingly Lindfors comically suggests:

[W]hen confronted with the problem of selecting one or two texts to represent the literary output of the entire African continent[, ...] the answer is clear: teach Achebe. If there is extra time, teach Soyinka too and then perhaps Ngugi and a few poets, but start with the most important writer and the most significant single text. Start with Achebe. Start with *Things Fall Apart*. (81)

As tempting as the simplicity of this argumentation may be, for the EFL classroom, the works recommended by Lindfors are unsuitable, as they require a rather high command of English and an even more advanced cultural awareness. For example, Gunner suggests to be using *Things Fall Apart* with native speakers from the age of 16 to 18 (45). I would thus recommend teaching this novel in the Austrian setting only if a class had been confronted with African writers before, had achieved a high language performance, and had the opportunity to receive a lot of guidance in terms of cultural allusions throughout the actual reading process. Certainly, the work should be available for pupils at the age of 16-19 for individual reading (e.g. in a class library), as their personal interests and experiences may facilitate understanding and thus enable the learners to enjoy this work of art. However, I do not believe that teaching *Things Fall Apart* as an EFL class reader is advisable before students have reached University level. Nonetheless, Achebe's novel is certainly one of the most discussed and recommended works when teaching African literature to native speakers or at University level and thus had to be mentioned in this discussion on African literature. It “is currently compulsory reading in secondary

schools in West Africa, East Africa, parts of India, and Australia” (Lindfors 14) and “is among the most popular and widely taught African texts in Britain[, ...] set at both 'O' and 'A' level” (Gunner vii). For further teaching information on *Things Fall Apart* see Klein, Döring, *English* 117f., Innes 21ff., Gunner 45ff., Lindfors 14, Ashcroft 28.

The already mentioned requirements for a literary work suitable for a transcultural approach in the Austrian EFL classroom could be summarised as: linguistic, thematic and cultural accessibility, provision of various perspectives, authenticity, and the depiction of transcultural relationships as well as spaces. As a consequence, it is not easy to find a work which meets all these requirements, in particular not for language learners with a lower level of English. However, as stated above, precisely this apparent difficulty to find literature for young teenagers was what stirred my interest. I was thus looking for a novel which meets the just mentioned criteria to a sufficient degree for Austrian students from the age of 12 to 14, thus lower secondary. To continue following a teacher's course of action (when teaching African literature), it would now be the instructor's task to read as many African novels as possible (or necessary) to decide on the outlined criteria and find a suitable literary work for the language level of the respective class. The outcome of my research was that Meja Mwangi's *Mzungu Boy* is the novel I suggest for teaching in a lower secondary EFL classroom.

4.3) Meja Mwangi and his work *Mzungu Boy*

Meja Mwangi was born in Nanyuki (Kenya), in 1948, a time and region which was particularly affected by the Mau-Mau rebellion. After schooling in Nanyuki and Nairobi, he worked in TV broadcasting until 1973, when his first novel *Kill me Quick* received enough attention to allow Mwangi to focus solely on writing. He won various national and international awards and prizes for his works, and wrote both adult's and children's fiction. Especially his earlier works broach the

issue of the Mau-Mau rebellion (*Carcase for Hounds* 1974, *Taste of Death* 1975). In 1992 he received the *Deutschen Jugendbuchpreis* for *Mzungu Boy*.¹⁸

Originally published 1990 under the title “*Little White Man*”, *Mzungu Boy* meets many of the requirements of transcultural literature, as defined by Hallet (53ff.):

- (1) [It] foreground[s] actions, perceptions, negotiations and discursive activities [...] concerned with problems of ethnic difference [...] and interpersonal relations that transgress cultural borders.
- (2) [P]resent[s] encounters, events and spatial constellations that allow for or enhance intercultural encounters.
- (3) Intradiegetic and extradiegetic commentaries establish a meta-fictional level that makes it possible to reflect upon, comment, ironise or problematise ethnic or cultural differences and/or their dissolution or hybridisation. (ibid.)

Further, the novel addresses the issue of empowerment of the colonised, a prominent theme in transcultural writing. (How these criteria are met in detail is implicit in the following discussion of the plot.) Looking at the just listed aims, one may get the impression that the novel is highly complex and unsuitable for younger learners (or less proficient speakers of English), however, *Mzungu Boy* achieves the just mentioned objectives in a context the pupils can easily identify with and uses fairly simple language. Besides, the elements of transculturality within the plot do not have to be identified as transcultural layers in order to understand and enjoy the reading. That is, the pupils do not have to know about transculturality (as a concept and its layers within the narration) on a cognitive level but will still be confronted with transcultural elements embedded in a convincing storyline.

Mzungu Boy is a story about the cross-cultural encounter between the 12 year-old Kariuki, a Kenyan village boy, and the 11 year-old English boy Nigel, who visits his grandfather, who is known under the name *Bwana Ruin*¹⁹, for the summer. The story is set in the late 1950s, during the time of the Mau-Mau rebellion, and told from Kariuki's perspective. The rebellion and the turmoil of these times are not the main focus of the story, which provides the opportunity

¹⁸ The information for this paragraph on Meja Mwangi was taken from the *Marabout* Webpage, as to be found in the “Online Resources” section of the bibliography.

¹⁹ The (obviously white) landowner to whom Kariuki's village and the surrounding areas belong, i.e. the colonizer. The word “Bwana” is the Swahili way of politely addressing a grown-up man and may be translated as “Sir”, “Mister” or “Lord”.

for the teacher to choose in how far Kenya's history should be addressed in the classroom (an issue which will be discussed in more detail below). Still, the uncertainty and anxiety, during the period in which the novel is set, is reflected in the description of everyday life. Structural violence as a result of the prevalent hierarchies, the interdependencies of the characters as well as their constant uneasiness and even fear show the impact of colonialism on African village life. For example, Kariuki's father is permanently concerned about losing his job as a cook at Bwana Ruin's farm, which further impacts Kariuki's decisions and behaviour (32, 40f., 77ff.). The strict hierarchies between the villagers are mentioned by Kariuki directly and in detail:

Everything in our village ran according to a hierarchy. Above everyone were Bwana Ruin, Mamsab Ruin and any white person who happened to come along. Then came the village men. Then came the women and girls. And then came the rest of us. The boys and the village dogs were at the bottom of the ladder, below the goats, the sheep and the chickens. We boys had no rights whatsoever. Not at home, not in the village and not at school. (49)

As in the village, everything in the church went according to a hierarchy. Bwana Ruin and the white people sat in the front rows. Their benches had cushions to sit on and to kneel on, while everyone else sat and kneeled on the hard wood. Our teachers sat behind the white people, with no cushions to sit on or to kneel on. The rest sat where they could [...]. Girls could sit with their mothers. Boys could not sit at all. Boys had no more rights here than they had in the village. (69f.)

Besides the strict hierarchy, physical violence is a recurring theme throughout the novel: The landowner harassing the villagers (7-10, 31, 96), the headmaster apparently beating his pupils rather for fun than by any reason (13-16), Kariuki's father (37, 40-41, 75), elder-brother (45-47) and the other village boys (17) beating, slapping and rapping the book's main character.

Looking at the setting so far (village life full of violence), one may argue that the novel does not meet the objectives I outlined above but describes what a Western reader might expect from Africa (rurality and brutality, as described in Wainaina, Sturmer). However, everyday life in the village is not depicted negatively in Mwangi's work. Although issues are presented which may be irritating for the Austrian reader and could increase withdrawal from the reading,

the positivity of Kariuki, and his first person narration in a matter-of-fact fashion rarely create feelings of disfavour or aversion (even in the scenes of mindless violence, e.g. 13ff., 41). The protagonist takes his circumstances as a given, without a trace of self-pity, i.e. the way Kariuki presents his world, despite all its grievances, is down-to-earth and often almost humorous.

The last time I told my father that someone had beaten me up in school, my father had called me a coward and gave me a rapping too. So I went back to school and walloped the bully right back. The bully's mother complained to my mother. She reported it to my father, and I got another beating for that.
I had long given up trying to understand the world of adults. (47)

Hence, the elements within the novel which may be called stereotypical depiction of African rural life are transformed by Kariuki's way of narration into a vivid and absorbing story. As already mentioned, this is achieved, on the one hand, due to his matter-of-fact (and if anything, then positive) way of storytelling, and on the other hand, as an effect of the first person narration. The protagonist's partly childlike view of the world make it easy, even for younger students, to realise the relativity of Kariuki's point of view, which is a central issue within transcultural teaching approaches. The more obvious it becomes for pupils that they are reading *a story*, the more openly they can embrace this further perspective on Africa without generalizing the provided depiction .

This is further enforced by the fact that Austrian readers are very likely to identify not only with the protagonist but also with Nigel. Thus, they may project their own view of the world onto Nigel's character, which makes them perceive the story from two perspectives (Kariuki's *and* Nigel's). Accordingly, the creation of a third space between the text and the reader is facilitated by the presence of a character within the narration, who is very similar to the Austrian lower secondary school pupil and thus encourages engagement with the plot. Furthermore, the high amount of dialogues within the narrative provide material for role plays and acting out scenes, which fosters the ability to take over perspectives and increases empathy (both important elements of transcultural teaching).

Odhiambo claims that *Mzungu Boy* can be considered a transcultural novel, as hybridity can be found on different levels throughout the narration and not only (as has been identified above as a general benefit of literature) between the text and the reader.

Little White Man is a merging of two worlds. The world of the colonized and that of the colonizer. This is juxtaposed with the children's world. Mwangi not only draws a comparison between the adults' experience and the children's experience but his choice of child characters is also representative of two worlds by virtues of their different races. Thus the text is a depiction of multiple level of hybridity developed against the backdrop of colonization. (269)

The author continues with a recapitulation of the plot, apparently setting out to identify these different layers of hybridity. However, the only level she addresses is the cultural hybridity the friendship between Kariuki and Nigel symbolizes. The other layers, hinted at in the above mentioned quote (colonizer – colonized, children – adult), seem to stay in their opposition throughout the novel and it is thus unclear in how far they can be called layers of hybridity. In particular as these different positions are not presented from an insider's point of view (they can thus not be called “different character perspectives”) but are all part of Kariuki's first person narration. The only further comment on this issue, to be found in Odhiambo's article, is about the scene described at the beginning of the novel where the villagers are held for a whole day without water, food or protection from the sun in the cattle enclosures, because Bwana Ruin's riddle had been stolen. In the meantime, the soldiers raid the huts and steal money as well as jewellery from the villagers, while the latter are trapped in the cattle auction pen. Thus, Odhiambo states that the “colonizer [...] partakes in the crime the colonized is accused of. The only difference lies in the fact [that] those soldiers by virtue of their race are not accountable to the blacks” (269). It could be argued that this foregrounding of similarity between the two “different cultures” and the fact that they share a common habitat is already a sign of transculturality. However, the colonial setting depicts a clear separation between these two worlds of black and white, which can also be seen in the comparison that Odhiambo draws between the power relations of the colonizer (over the colonized) and the dominance of the adults (over their children). All these

possible spaces of transculturality stay separated throughout the novel and are not elevated to a third space, where the different worlds would converge. Hence, it is questionable if one can argue that these instances depict hybridity and – besides the obvious transcultural moment within Nigel and Kariuki's relationship – Odhiambo does not provide sufficient argumentation for her claim that there are *various* layers of hybridity to be found in *Mzungu Boy*. Nonetheless, the friendship between the two boys is depicted in such a vivid and powerful manner, that it seems a sufficient element of hybridity within the plot to engage with transcultural ideas either passively or in an active discussion in the classroom.

This relationship depicts the dismantling of cultural and racial difference in favor of a brotherhood which unfolds as a result of the two characters' immersion into each other's world view. (273)

The development of this cultural hybridity starts with – at the beginning of their encounter – showing clear differences between Kariuki and Nigel. For example, their differently developed skills in fishing (or releasing a hook from a branch), Nigel's permission to fish in the Bwana's river, whereas the village boys were strictly forbidden to fish (Mwangi 28ff.) or Nigel's lack of understanding how the river could belong to only one person (31). The following scene describes this encounter of the two different worlds in a symbolic manner:

The branch where I sat was heavy with fruit. I picked a few of the deep purple fruit and ate one. It was rough to the tongue but very sweet, so I decided to [...] have some more.
 “What are you eating?” the white boy asked.
 “Fruit,” I told him. “Have some.”
 I threw him a few. He tasted one, spat it out and threw the rest into the river. [...] I was disappointed. I had expected the white boy to love the taste of wild fruit like any other boy. Then I remembered he had a whole orchard of exotic fruit to pick from. (31)

Despite a clear statement of experiencing difference between himself and Nigel, Kariuki does not try to avoid Nigel or a possible friendship. On the contrary, the boys experience each other's world without letting themselves be influenced by Bwana Ruin's and Kariuki's father's advices (or rather orders) not to have any contact with one another (43, 77ff.). Nigel offers to teach Kariuki how to swim and helps him with the household chores (44). In return, Kariuki teaches Nigel

how to chop wood (44) and tells him everything he knows about the forest and its animals (52, 57f.). As Kariuki states: “It was soon clear to me that he knew as little about my world as I knew about his” (50), however, as opposed to the adults, this does not lead the children to accusations or thoughts of superiority but simply makes them share their knowledge and experiences, which is touchingly illustrated when Kariuki narrates that “Nigel gave up his suits and started wearing khaki short and shirts. He took off his shoes when he was with me, and walked barefoot like me to see how it felt. I put on his shoes and walked in them to see how it felt” (72). This part seems to be a reference to the well-known metaphor “to put oneself in someone else's shoes”, which refers to the experience of (trying to) see the world through another person's eyes. This clearly reminds of the previous chapters of this thesis, which argued that reading fosters the ability to empathise and thus decreases stereotypes and prejudices. It appears that also Mwangi believed that experiencing the world from another person's viewpoint fosters transcultural understanding.

Despite [...] differences, they [Kariuki and Nigel] erect no barriers or inhibitions and prejudices between them. Instead, their revelations to each other open up new horizons in their understanding and appreciation of each other's world. [...] At a personal level thus, the relationship between Nigel and Kariuki depicts hybridity as a site of social reconstruction. The claim to superiority is downplayed by the fact that each child discovers something new in the other thus resulting to a hybrid conception of the world. (Odhiambo 271)

Besides this layer of hybridity within *Mzungu Boy*, there is another transcultural element to be found: The use of Swahili words. Already the title of the book depicts the merging of English and Swahili which may be interpreted as mirroring the boys' friendship. The word “Mzungu” was originally used amongst Swahili speakers to refer to the colonizers (thus, the British), however its meaning changed in the course of time and, nowadays, *Mzungu* is used all over East Africa to refer to a white person. The references to the white landowner also include the Swahili way of politely addressing a grown-up men, “Bwana”. In return, also Bwana Ruin talks to the people as *watu* (“people” or “humans”) and the children as *toto* (“children”). In his speeches to the villagers (Mwangi 9, 98-

101) Bwana Ruin uses further typical Swahili expressions and often incorporates the discourse marker “aye?” (9, 39f., 42, 98ff.), a rhetorical device that anticipates the conversation partner's agreement (as well “aye”), which is frequently used amongst Swahili speakers. The use of the protagonist's assumed mother tongue occurs to an extent which again provides the possibility for the teacher to address the issue in particular, however, if the interests of the class or pragmatic issues (e.g. time constraints) do not allow paying special attention to these Swahili expressions, the pupils will neither be hindered in understanding the plot nor irritated by the confrontation with another foreign language. Döring discusses this use of “certain lexical items from the indigenous language” (*Meaning* 203) and claims that

[i]ts function is to constitute some elements of otherness, usually by means of cultural references from oral tradition, and so to alert English-speaking readers that they are engaging with a text crucially deriving also from non-English sources. (ibid.)

Thus, the use of Swahili establishes notions of “otherness” which are deconstructed throughout the reading (and teaching). These experiences of difference are embedded in an absorbing novel with a storyline interesting to pupils in a lower secondary.

Furthermore, as Hallet notes, “a good deal of the transcultural dimension of a novel is constituted through the way its characters are presented” (55). Hence, the insight we gain into Kariuki's way of thinking, his feelings, and his behaviour provides a valuable asset to the transculturality of the novel. A closer look at Nigel's character may also be beneficial in the classroom, as the tension between Kariuki's presentation of the white little boy and the identification of the readers with Nigel may lead to interesting discussions. Kariuki's appreciation of Nigel's knowledge and experience (Mwangi 32, 44, 53) in contrast to his realization that “this white boy [...] knew so little about everything” (51) creates an interesting contradiction and shows that, depending on what one focusses on, Nigel can be perceived in a very different light. This provides a suitable starting point for a discussion on stereotypes and one-sided representations with younger learners. In general, a close look at certain characters or character dynamics in *Mzungu Boy* is highly advisable. “Although [...] a character-related

approach is not exhaustive, it is effective in bringing to light much of what we perceive as being transcultural in a novel” (Hallet 55).

A further interesting and (for the classroom) useful aspect, which the teacher should focus on, is the depiction of Kariuki's misconceptions about white people within the narration. These partly ludicrous assumptions offer not only comic relief within an actually serious setting and context, but they also provide a very good basis for a discussion on various aspects of stereotypes.

Nigel's green eyes were full of wonder. he had a broad face, a freckled nose, red cheeks and a happy smile. I had no doubt he could see in the dark too, like Bwana Ruin. (Mwangi 53)

Was it true, I asked, that they [white people] were all close cousins of Jesus? [...]

Was it true that all mzungus were rich and had big farms and many cars? Was it true that they did not eat anything that was not sugared and sweet? Was it true that they could not lie and did not steal? Was it true that they did not bleed even if you cut them? Was it true that they were the only true people of God? Was it true that witchcraft could not kill them? Was it true that if they died they went straight to heaven? (70f.)

These quotes of Kariuki offer a valuable resource for going into more detail about the racial prejudices between black and white and encourage an examination of the question “who profits from these stereotypes?”, which can be used further to transfer the setting to Austria and work on the question who profits in this environment from racism and who might thus promote it? Besides, Helff notes that

“[t]ogether with a situation of unreliable narration, the transcultural novel, with its deep currents of doubt, represents the transcultural qualities of modern life far better than narrative patterns claiming absolute authority about truth and identity” (87)

Kariuki's misbeliefs about white people are not only a start into a discussion about stereotypes but further support a realization of the unreliability of the protagonist's narration, which stresses the importance of point of view and leads to a more transcultural understanding of perspective.

After this discussion of *Mzungu Boy* we may now return to our imaginary teacher whom we follow step by step in the process of using African literature in the classroom. S/he has now decided on a Kenyan children's novel, read it carefully a few times to filter the parts that should receive particular attention (as they require clarification or guidance) and / or that may be examined in more detail to improve the students' language skills or cultural understanding. Before finally showing ways of how to include the book in the EFL classroom, there is one more issue to be discussed: In how far should the students be introduced to the historical context in which the novel is set?

4.4) Teaching the historical context

As aforementioned (chapter 4.1), Wisker provides four strategies to foster pupils engagement with an African literary work. The first two teaching examples given in this thesis should meet the requirements of Wisker's first two suggestions²⁰, the third "*Providing cultural, historical and political context for the reading of the works*" (Wisker, *Intro* 15) will be discussed in the following.

The most immediate problem [...] was – and remains – the students' ignorance of the African historical and cultural background. Before you can teach a novel like *Things Fall Apart* you have to fight your way through a vast amount of history and sociology. [...] You as a teacher can occasionally find yourself, if not changing lives, then at least challenging firmly-held convictions or clarifying diffuse opinions based on ignorance or plain prejudice, mostly as a result of inadequate newspaper reporting. (Petersen 32)

Referring to Cora Kaplan, Wisker argues similarly in her work on *Teaching African American Women's Writing*, "if we are not African American women ourselves we need to read ourselves into the history and the context of their writing in order to identify what key issues, themes, and modes of writing might be present" (Wisker, *Intro* 9). It seems evident that a certain amount of history teaching is necessary before diving into an African literary work (Collett 13, Morgan 123, Sankaran 413f.). Especially younger learners in Austria – a

²⁰ (*Cultural identification and Offering opportunities to identify with the experiences of Otherising*)

country without colonial history – might need to be introduced to basic facts about colonialism, before providing contextual information on the setting of a certain text within the NELs. However, the teacher needs to decide what background information s/he considers necessary, which is certainly not an easy choice when discussing colonialism and its impact. Moreover, teaching history might fall in the trap of presenting the target culture only through an imperialist lens (Wisker, *Intro* 9). It is difficult for a teacher in Austria to present Africa from an open-minded perspective without reproducing the one-sided, Eurocentric form in which most of history was written. Furthermore, Jensen adds a valuable point to the discussion when he claims that

in an English-as-a-second-language situation, [...] time is often consumed trying to establish defining characteristics for the specific cultures that are then subsequently to be exploded by adopting alternative approaches. [...] The teaching of post-colonial literature presupposes the knowledge of the history, institutions, texts etc. against which the post-colonial texts operate". (148f.)

In other words, the teacher first provides information and increases the students' knowledge – in order to facilitate their understanding of the reading – which is then supposed to be deconstructed by the literary work. The teacher is thus left with the choice of not providing information on historical and cultural context or running the risk of reproducing Eurocentric notions of Africa. I argue that the decision on whether or not to teach history has to be taken according to the literary work, the pupils, and the reasons for teaching a certain novel. For instance, upper secondary pupils will need a different preparation for reading *Things Fall Apart*, than will lower secondary learners before they read *Mzungu Boy*. Nonetheless, Sankaran states that "[w]e notice time and again how the sensitivity to the experience depicted can suffer if students are not well-informed about the socio-cultural background" (Sankaran 414), and I thus believe that a certain amount of contextual knowledge is required, before the learners are confronted with an African novel, however, neither the amount nor the sort of knowledge which are important can be generally defined.

4.5) The teaching sequence

The methodology to include *Mzungu Boy* in this teaching unit is a combination and modification of what Engelbert Thaler called the “Sandwich Approach” and the “Appetizer Approach” (105f.), i.e. parts of the book will be read, hoping that pupils get curious and continue reading in their free-time²¹. There are two major reasons why I argue against reading the whole novel as a class reader in the face of the transcultural stance taken in the present context. First, in order to foster the ability to take over perspectives and empathise with “others” by reading literature, the learners should read as much as possible. However, extensive reading is more likely to be encouraged when pupils have a choice in terms of *which* novel they read but also *when* they read. In other words, making a certain novel obligatory reading will not raise their enthusiasm for reading and should therefore be avoided. The second reason why I chose to leave out certain parts of the novel is closely connected to the language level of the pupils. It can be assumed that not all students in a lower secondary are proficient enough in English to read the whole novel, thus, the “Sandwich Approach” provides the opportunity for the teacher to choose the more accessible parts and – more importantly – to prepare students for certain vocabulary items or expressions to be found in the part they are going to read. As a consequence, also the lesson plans below provide pre-reading vocabulary exercises to facilitate understanding and include only those parts of the novel which serve for achieving the aims, outlined in the course of this paper, most effectively.

4.5.1) Lesson 1, African landscape

The first lesson of the teaching sequence serves as an introduction to the African environment and thus as a facilitation of the pupils' access to the setting of the novel. With this teaching unit, the teaching aim to increase students'

²¹ I claim my approach to be a modification of Thaler's approaches, as the author defines within the “Sandwich Approach” that the information which is left out is provided in form of other activities. This will however not be done in the teaching section designed below. The “Appetizer Approach” uses only one passage of the book and not various sections and does hence also not sufficiently describe the approach I have taken.

awareness on Africa's geographic diversity is met (in order to decrease the misconception that African landscape is either desert or game reserve). Further, the pupils are prepared for the detailed description of the protagonist's environment, to be found in the first section that is read in the classroom (the beginning of the second chapter). For this lesson, photographs of African scenery as well as a map of Africa and Kenya are used and vocabulary items necessary to read chapter two are provided.

I would like to mention that I will make use of my own experiences in Africa in this lesson, i.e. I include my own photographs for the “landscapes” activity and would tell pupils that these pictures were all taken in Africa. I made this choice for two reasons: First, it foregrounds the information that “Africa is diverse” more effectively, and second, it arouses pupils curiosity when the teacher includes his or her own experiences and may trigger a conversation, i.e. an authentic speaking activity.

Aims and objectives: Students assign vocabulary items of different landscapes to the respective images. They activate their prior knowledge on Africa, they locate Kenya on a map, and know its capital. The pupils give 10 examples of landscape types to be found in Africa and are aware of the geographical diversity of the African continent. They (understand and) draw the sceneries described in the passage (19-22) of *Mzungu Boy*.

Rationale: In the pre-reading phase, pupils align different vocabulary items on landscapes to the respective photographs on a worksheet. In a brainstorming activity, their prior knowledge on African scenery is activated (in which the pupils are asked to write (on the blackboard) what comes to their mind when they hear “Africa's scenery”). Following, a map of Africa is projected with the help of the beamer and pupils may first guess and are then briefly told in which areas which pictures have been taken (not more than 5 photographs). Kenya and Mount Kenya are pointed out in particular and pupils are told that *Mzungu Boy* is set there. The book cover of the novel is shown to the learners and they discuss with a partner their ideas on its content. In the following, the students start reading chapter 2 of the novel (the first 4 pages). In case all pupils finished

reading a few minutes before the end of the lesson, the teacher may ask pupils to draw one of the various landscapes that Mwangi describes in this short section (and show it to their neighbours and make them guess which part of the novel they tried to depict). This activity further consolidates their understanding of the landscape vocabulary items.

In the short passage that the pupils read, items such as “a plain”, “a river bank”, “the log bridge”, “the forest”, “river rocks”, “mountain waters”, “fish pool” and “cave” appear, which explains the need for a preceding vocabulary exercise and shows in how far the reading serves as a consolidation of the vocabulary from the previous activity. The reading exercise can also be done as homework, however, as I planned this section for younger learners, to familiarise them with the process of reading, it may be more rewarding to start the process of reading together. Nonetheless, I would not advise reading out loud, as it turns the reading exercise into a speaking and listening activity.

| Time | Procedure | Interaction format | Skills | Materials |
|----------|--|--------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 10' | Align landscape vocabulary items to photographs. (Comparison with the help of the teacher.) | S or P (CL, T) | Vocabulary (listening, speaking) | Worksheet 3 |
| 5' | Brainstorm “African landscapes” (write on blackboard) | S, CL | Writing | Blackboard |
| 7' | A map of Africa is projected and the pupils guess where the (max. 5) photographs have been taken. Teacher points out Kenya, Nairobi and Mt. Kenya. | T | Speaking, listening | Computer, beamer, digital map of Africa |
| 8' | Activating prior knowledge: Cover guessing (pupils discuss what the book may be about) | P | Speaking | Book-cover |
| 15' | Read page 19-22 (or further) silently. | S | Reading | Novels |
| 5' or HW | Ask pupils to draw 2 sceneries from these 4 pages. | S | Reading (scanning) | |

4.5.2) Lesson 2, Kariuki

The second lesson of this teaching sequence can be understood as an immersion in the plot and as raising empathy for a character from an “other” culture (i.e. the ability of the students to see the setting from Kariuki’s point of view). Thus, at the heart of this lesson is the monologue the pupils write from Kariuki’s perspective. As with the previous lesson, in order to increase pupils’ chances to read the following passage without hindrance, certain vocabulary items have to be clarified before the reading.

Aims and objectives: The students fill the correct vocabulary items into gaps within short descriptive texts of images. They recapitulate what they already know about the novel *Mzungu Boy*. The learners write a monologue from a character’s perspective (thus they identify with an individual from an “other” culture).

Rationale: The pupils first do a vocabulary exercise (see worksheet 4) which should facilitate their understanding of the passage they are going to read. After this exercise, a short recapitulation of what they know about the novel is advisable (e.g. set in Kenya, Kariuki is the main actor, what is the environment he lives in, etc.). At the bottom of this worksheet, information on Bwana Ruin is provided, which is required for understanding chapter three. After the pupils have read this informational paragraph, page 28 – 33 of *Mzungu Boy* are read together (again silently). When the learners have finished reading, they write a monologue about Kariuki’s feelings and thoughts during the encounter with Nigel (to be finished as homework), which fosters their ability to empathise and take over others’ perspectives.

Depending on the pupils’ prior writing experiences, it may be useful to discuss “key phrases or sentences” within the reading section. For example, the class may collect the passages that might evoke Kariuki’s emotions in particular (e.g. Nigel is allowed to fish although he does not know how to do it properly, he was in Nairobi and went with an aeroplane – pleasures that Kariuki can only dream of). When attempting such a thought collection, the teacher has to be very careful not to influence and manipulate the students’ reading of the section and

I therefore did not include this collection in the lesson plan. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to guide pupils with their first writing activities and it is thus up to the teacher to decide, if the danger of manipulation is a greater threat than overwhelming the students with a too difficult writing task.

| Time | Procedure | Interaction format | Skills | Materials |
|-----------|---|--------------------|------------|-------------|
| 10' | Assigning vocabulary items to pictures | S | Vocabulary | Worksheet 4 |
| 5' | Recapitulation of what the pupils already know about the novel (and its setting) in the plenum | CL | Speaking | |
| 5' | Reading information on Bwana Ruin | S | Reading | Worksheet 4 |
| 15'-20' | Reading page 28 6 th line ("Bwana Ruin fished there for trout") to page 33 "...but I did not tell him this". | S | Reading | Books |
| 10' - 15' | Writing a monologue: Students write (from Kariuki's perspective) the thoughts and feelings he may have had during the encounter with Nigel. | S | Writing | |
| HW | Read chapter 4 | S | Reading | |

4.5.3) Lesson 3, One-sided representations

The third lesson aims at fostering pupils understanding of what Adichie calls, “the danger of a single story”. Therefore, the pupils will look at the description of a character within the book and divide these attributions in positive and negative (and maybe also neutral). When focussing on either the positive or the negative, a significantly different impression of the character is created, which helps the learners to realise how misleading one-sidedness can be. A discussion in plenum helps to consolidate this finding and to further transfer it to other contexts and discuss its reasons and impacts.

To show the students how easily one-sided representations are created, 8 volunteers receive cards with a short text which are presented to the class (either reading or acting out, depending on the pupils' preferences). There are always two cards which discuss the same incident, however, the cards are presented at random and the learners have to guess which cards belong together. This exercise may also be transferred to a group activity in which every pupil becomes a card and the students have to find their “partner”. The value of this exercise is to show the pupils how often we are confronted with one-sided representations in everyday life and that such a reduction is not always a result of bad will or a conscious decision.

Aims and objectives: Pupils extract character descriptions from a chapter in a novel and divide them in positive and negative attributions. They realise how inadequate it is to focus on only one side of a character or event and are aware how often they are presented with one-sided representations in everyday life. They can identify different descriptions of the same person or event as belonging together.

Rationale: The students read chapter 4 of *Mzungu Boy* (which had to be prepared as homework), filter the descriptions of Nigel, and reformulate them into sentences in the form of “Nigel is / has ...”. These sentences are collected on the blackboard and sorted into positive and negative statements about Nigel (two columns on the board). The teacher then covers up (or erases) one column and asks pupils how the character of Nigel appears when only this side of him is

presented. Following, one-sided representations are discussed in plenum (when would Kariuki present Nigel only from a good / bad angle? When and where are we confronted with one-sided representations? Who is prone to be misrepresented? What is the conclusion?).

As a last exercise, 8 volunteers act out (or read) different descriptions of characters or events and the learners have to find which of these describe the same scene or person. After the solutions have been compared and the pairs read their cards again, a short summary of the purpose of this lesson should follow (the prevalence of one-sided representations in public discourse, how often we focus on only one side of the story in order to achieve a certain response of the hearer, etc.).

| Time | Procedure | Interaction format | Skills | Materials |
|------|--|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 15' | Pupils scan for Kariuki's description of Nigel in chapter 4 and take notes | S or P | Reading (scanning) | Books |
| 10' | Collection of pupils' findings on blackboard in two columns (positive and negative) | CL | Speaking | Black-board |
| 5' | Plenum discussion on one-sided representations. | CL | Speaking | |
| 15' | 8 pupils read or act out the situation described in a short text. The audience finds pairs (incl. solution re-read of pairs) | CL, S | Listening, speaking | Cards with event / person description |
| 5' | Summary of purpose of lesson | T | | |
| HW | Read page 66 and 67 (preparation for lesson 4) | | | |

4.5.4) Lesson 4, Different perspectives

The last lesson in this sequence is supposed to make pupils aware of how different texts or stories can be interpreted. Therefore, a scene from the novel is chosen in which the protagonists show behaviour which is prone to different interpretation. In acting out this scene, the various possibilities to perceive the characters' feelings should become visible to the learners. Page 66 and 67 have been read as homework for this lesson.

Aims and objectives: Pupils detect differences in the interpretation of a text and realise that there is more than one way of perceiving a story. Pupils take over the perspective of a fictional character and act out a scene.

Rationale: At least 6 volunteers should be found for an acting activity. This 6 pupils are sent to wait outside of the classroom and prepare themselves for the acting (they get the passage of the novel as extra hand-out in dialogue form). 2 pupils are asked to act out the scene in front of the class. It is important to make the actors aware that they should transfer how Nigel and Kariuki felt in this moment and that their English performance is not the main focus of this activity. The other pupils are given observation sheets to judge how Kariuki and Nigel appear (happy, irritated, sad,...).

Depending on the maturity or acting experience of the pupils, the teacher may choose to instruct the acting learners on how they should act out the scene (e.g. the first couple plays Kariuki curious and Nigel serious, the second couple plays Kariuki insecure and hesitant in his questions whereas Nigel is amused by his naivety, etc.). When doing so, the opportunity for pupils to identify with the character is decreased, however, the possibility for the audience to detect differences in the acting is increased. Further, the aim of identifying with the character is the focus of the homework (see below), hence, if pupils' acting experiences are little, it will be reasonable to assign the actors a way of interpreting the performance.

A common evaluation of the results serves to reach the conclusion that all the Kariuki's and Nigel's seem to have felt a bit different and, ideally, the pupils thus understand how different literature (and to a certain extent also life) may be perceived.

| Time | Procedure | Interaction format | Skills | Materials |
|------|---|--------------------|--|-------------------|
| 10' | "Actors" prepare for the acting, audience is introduced to their task. | T | | Dialogue p. 66f. |
| 20' | The three couples act out their scene (each approx. 5 min) while the others watch and fill in the observation sheet | P, CL | Acting, identifying difference in interpretation | observation sheet |
| 10' | Pupils answer the question on the worksheet individually | S | Identifying diff. I. | |
| 10' | Class discusses their answers to the questions. (Was (and in how far) the appearance of the characters different? So, who of the actors was right?) | CL | | |

4.5.5) The teaching sequence in context

As has been discussed in the theoretical section on teaching literature, pupils have to be made aware of the fact that they are still reading *a story* which is not representative of every Kenyan schoolboy's life and does not depict every Kenyan's (let alone every African's) daily routine. This issue has to be addressed in the classroom, however, a theoretical discussion should not be the only effort to reduce the risk of presenting merely "a single story".

As a consequence, the students need to be confronted with further viewpoints on and depictions of Kenyan and African life. Therefore, it is advisable to provide further literary writings from or about Africa in a class (or school) library and to use some of these texts as class readers. Besides, not only novels but also other (shorter) writings (such as short stories, poems, articles) or song lyrics, films, and webquests can serve to present a more accurate (as more diversified) picture of Africa and its countries.

My personal suggestion to enrich the teaching sequence outlined above is to use parts of the South African novel *Road to Jo'burg* in subsequent lessons. This novel is set in South Africa and shows a different setting and other concerns (life under Apartheid) than *Mzungu Boy*. Still, it has the same advantage of using fairly simple language and is rather short, accordingly, it may even be read in class as a whole (for example, in the following school term). Another suitable literary writing, which I recommend for the EFL classroom, is the Ugandan novel *Song of Lawino*. It discusses various issues from the perspective of an Acholi woman who defends her tribe's traditions against her husband, who adjusts to the modern, Western trends that find their way into the villager's life. The language used in the novel is slightly more complex than in *Mzungu Boy* or *Road to Jo'burg*, thus, this work should be read *after* the two just mentioned novels. For book recommendations for upper secondary or University level, I advise to consult Jean's *African Novels in the Classroom*, O'Brien's *A Teacher's Guide to African Narratives* or Gunner's *A Handbook for Teaching African Literature*, as all these works provide detailed information on different literary works from Africa, and the latter even includes practical teaching suggestions.

Conclusion

The purpose of this diploma was to demonstrate how a transcultural approach to teaching African literature helps to decrease misconceptions about “other cultures”, and in particular Africa, and thus diminishes prejudices and racism. The anecdotal evidence, concerning Austria's public discourse about foreigners provided in the introduction, was supported by Sturmer's investigation on German-speaking journalism to find that Africa is – indeed – misrepresented.

The theories on *otherness* and *Orientalism*, to be found in the first chapter, served to find reasons and causes for this inadequate depiction, which lead to conclude that the Western world appears to have difficulty in recognising other cultures, as this poses a threat to the belief in its superiority. In order to antagonise this Manichaeian world view, cultural education needs to receive more attention and the concept of intercultural learning has to be enriched by transculturalism, a paradigm that perceives identity and culture not as fixed, definable entities but dynamic concepts which are in constant flux. The second chapter thus showed that such an approach promotes teaching the New English literatures, as they offer various opportunities to experience cultural hybridity and different perspectives. Accordingly, the third part of this diploma thesis was concerned with teaching literature and gave an account of the general benefits of reading literary writings, its possible dangers, and the potential of the New English literatures for the EFL classroom. As the African context is at the heart of this diploma thesis, special attention was paid to African literature in this section.

The fourth and final chapter was devoted to put the theory into practice, and thus followed a teacher's course of action when including African texts into the teaching agenda. Therefore, ideas for preparatory lessons as well as the criteria to choose a certain novel for the classroom were provided, before moving on to the discussion of a certain novel suitable for the lower secondary EFL classroom. The Kenyan children's novel *Mzungu Boy* was investigated in detail for its transcultural elements and a possible teaching sequence with this novel

was designed at the end of this thesis.

Using New English – and in particular African – literature in the EFL classroom must not be misunderstood as an “exotic experience” for the pleasure of pupils and should not be (ab)used to raise antipathy against one or sympathy for another people, as this would be a continuation of thinking in cultural opposites. I argue for reading African literature, as this complex body of writings provides valuable insights into substantially different viewpoints and ways of thinking, and simultaneously shows similarities with characters that may appear to be crucially different at first glance. As a consequence, these texts increase the ability to understand cultural hybridity and enable to respect the difference from others by realizing the sameness. Literary writings from Africa shall thus be included in educational agendas for their transcultural elements and the ability to educate students to more empathetic and open-minded individuals.

Globalisation and the steady rise of migration forces education to react to its impacts. If teachers close their eyes to the fact that they have to prepare students for the transcultural world we are living in, many children will be confronted with the one-sided representation of foreigners and “others” to be found in medial discourse, which fosters the creation of stereotypes and racism. If these children are not given the chance to acquire “other stories” within this context, they will have no tools to question or negate these misrepresentations and stay locked in their single story. Therefore: New English literature matters. And it should be granted more room in our educational system.

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Appendix

Worksheet 1, "That's Austria"

Worksheet 2, "A day in the life of ..."

Worksheet 3, "Landscapes"

Book Cover

Worksheet 4, "What you need to know..."

Cards for lesson 3, "One-sided representations"

Support sheet "Mzungus see in the dark?"

Observation sheet "Mzungus can't see in the dark!"

That's Austria!



Exercise 1, “Sound of Music”:

You are going to watch the trailer of the film “*Sound of Music*”, which is about a family living in Salzburg. Please try to find out how Austria is presented in the film, and how Austrians are shown. Fill in the two columns like in the two examples given.

| Austria is presented... | Austrians are presented... |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| ...as a very sunny country. | ...as conservative people. |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Exercise 2, Discussion questions:

Please discuss the following questions with a partner:

- How is Austria (are Austrians) presented in the trailer?
- Does the film show everyday life in Austria or does it depict stereotypes?
- What was shown in the trailer that does not fit present-day Austrian lifestyle (or describes the lifestyle of only a few people)?
- Why does the film present this image of Austria?

A day in the life of ...

Look at these babies' / children's pictures and imagine them as grown-ups.

Imagine (with a partner) what a normal day in the life of these children could look like once they are old(er). You may include (for example!) where they live, when they get up, what and where they are working, if they have a family life,...

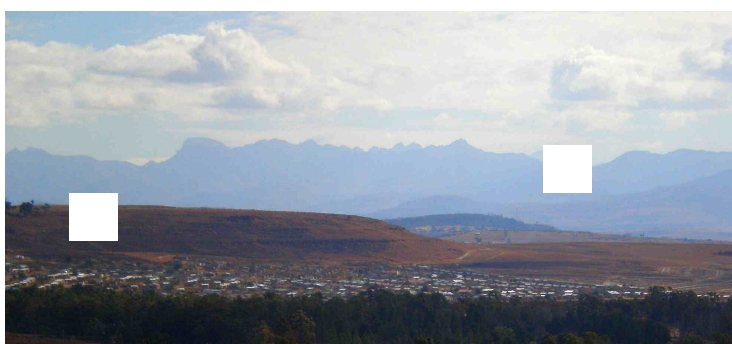
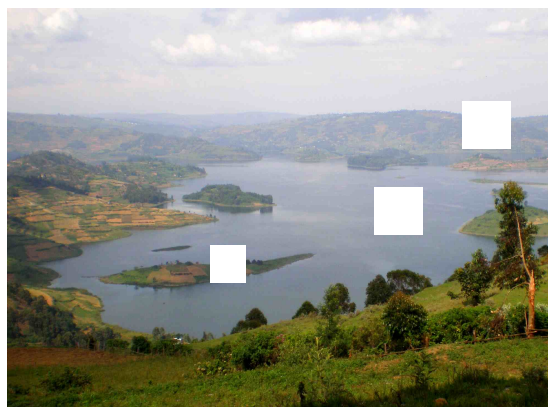
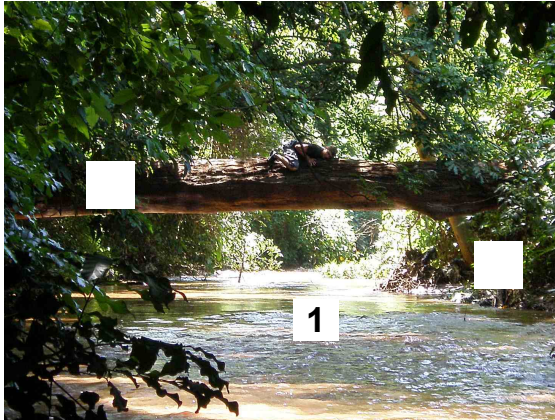
Take a few notes for each of your scenarios (you will need to be able to repeat what you came up with).

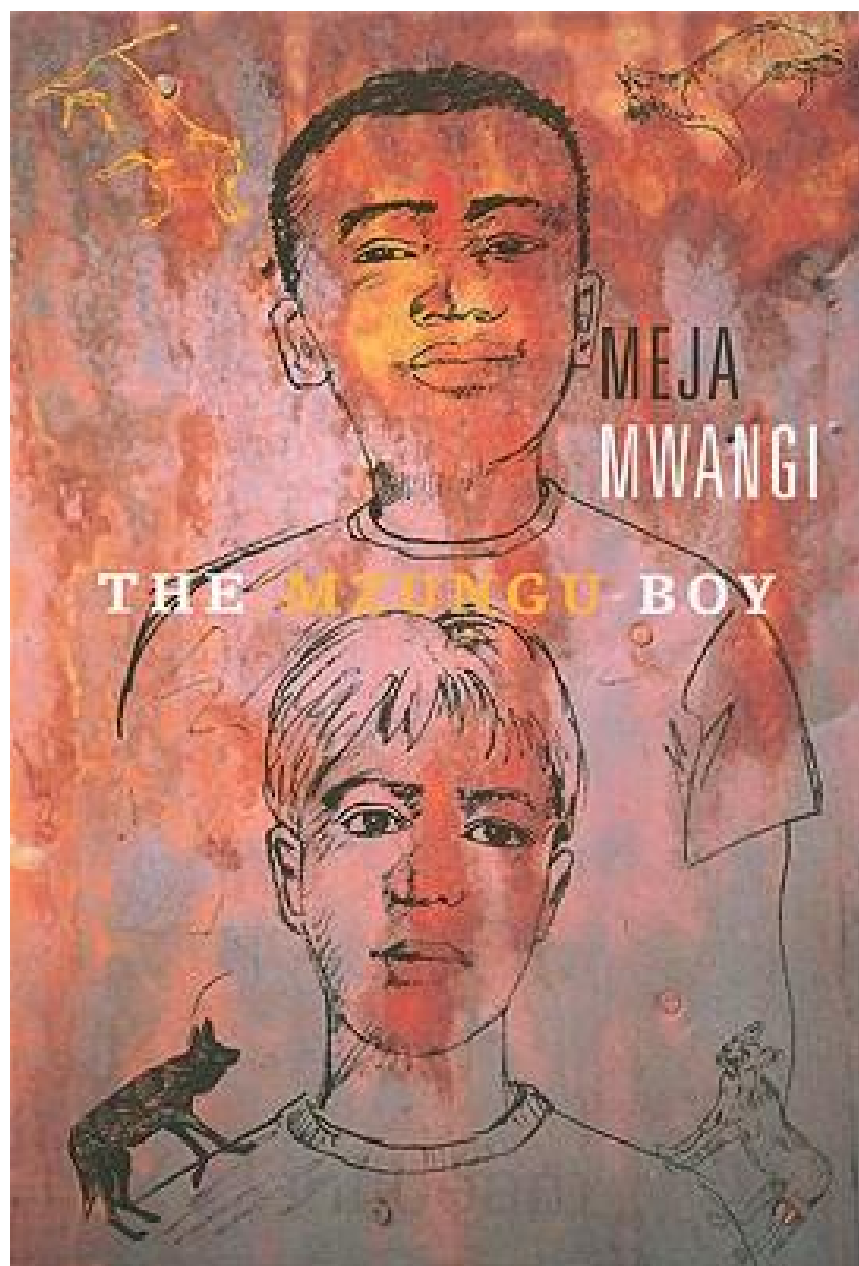


Landscapes

Align the following words (to describe scenery) to the pictures below:

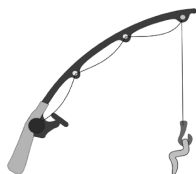
- | | | | | |
|-------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| (1) a river | (2) a plain / grassland | (3) a mountain (range) | (4) a log bridge | (5) a pond / fishpool |
| (6) a beach | (7) an island | (8) a river bank | (9) a waterfall | (10) the sea |
| (11) a cave | (12) hills (a hill) | (13) rocks (a rock) | (14) a plateau | (15) a lake |





What you need to know...

Exercise 1, Vocabulary: Please fill the correct words in the gaps:



For fishing, you need a _____ with a _____ on the front end of the line, and a _____ attached on top (in this picture, it is a worm, but it may also be something else.)

The top part of the tree is called the “crown”. Below it, there are different _____ which usually end up in one _____. At the very bottom, to connect with the ground, the tree has roots. A garden or field with a lot of trees that carry fruits is called an _____.



We planned to fish for _____ because that is the fish that I like eating the most, but when we got to the lake, we saw on the sign that “fishing is _____”.

In the film “The Lion King”, Simba has two friends, Timon and Pumbaa. The picture on the rights shows Pumbaa, who is actually a _____ (Tip: which kind of animal?).



The cowboy in the picture is riding on a horse and holds a _____ in his hands. This is a tool with a handle and a leather string to beat persons or animals.

| | | | | |
|-------------|-------|-------------|---------|---------|
| fishing rod | whip | bait | warthog | hook |
| branches | trout | not allowed | trunk | orchard |

Exercise 2, Bwana Ruin: Read the following passage about “Bwana Ruin”

Bwana Ruin is a character in the novel “Mzungu Boy”. He is a rich British man who bought the area near Mount Kenya where Kariuki lives. This means, Bwana Ruin is the “landowner” who rules over the village and the people. He does not allow the villagers to fish in the river or pick the fruits from his orchard. All the villagers work for him but he does not pay them well. When Bwana Ruin catches children fishing in the river or eating the fruits from “his” orchard, he whips or beats them.

<<http://bestclipartblog.com/>> (27 February 2014)

<<http://www.dreamstime.com/stock-image-fishing-not-allowed-image18688571>> (27 February 2014)

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>She is funny and intelligent and has really good grades in school. But she is not snobbish about it and always supports others when they need help in class. Besides, she is really sporty and the fastest runner that I ever saw. I am really happy that she is my friend!</p> | <p>She is a complete snob... Just because she has good grades she believes that everyone is happy if she helps them with the exercises we have to do at school. I wonder if she thinks that we are all stupid. Besides that, she constantly shows off in PE because she is such a wonderful athlete...</p> |
| <p>They were flirting all evening. He was asking her questions all the time and pretended to be sooo interested. And they were laughing and fooling around constantly, so, I am sure they will be a couple soon!</p> | <p>We had a good time. I like her and know her for quite a while now, so there are many things we talk and laugh about. She is the only one I can ask about other girls, so, I am really happy that she gives me advice!</p> |
| <p>I think it is important to help with the household and therefore I do whatever I can to support my wife. I do the dishes, I wash the laundry, I clean the floor and I cook. I am happy to help and I think it is important to really share the duties to be done at home.</p> | <p>He does not realise when the dishwasher is ready, he does not see when the floor is covered in dust, he only realises that the clothes need to be washed when he doesn't have underwear anymore. I always need to <i>te//</i> him what to do. He simply doesn't see it on his own. Yes, he is not complaining when I boss him around, but I don't want to be the organiser all the time. I wish he would know what to do on his own...</p> |
| <p>I love sports because they keep me healthy and fit. My dad already had two heart attacks because he is just too fat and the rest of my family is also overweight. I am working out an hour every day because I do not want to end up like my grandparents or my mum and dad. It's simply dangerous to be so fat!</p> | <p>It is simply too much! She hardly has time for friends because she works out like crazy! It seems to be sooo important for her to be thin! I think she watched Germany's next top model too often, otherwise she would not try sooo hard to lose weight. She actually has a nice body... I really don't understand why she is so fanatic about being thin.</p> |

Mzungus can see in the dark?



With a partner, prepare to act out this conversation between Kariuki and Nigel in front of the class (one of you is Kariuki, one is Nigel).

Pay special attention to the way Kariuki and Nigel have felt in this situation and try to act out these feelings.

You do not have to learn the text by heart, and you do not have to pronounce the text perfectly, but **act as good as you can!**

Good luck! =>

| | |
|----------|--|
| Nigel: | It's scary! |
| Kariuki: | Hold my hand. Now you lead and I will be with you. I can't see in the dark. |
| Nigel: | I can't see in the dark either. |
| Kariuki: | What's wrong with your eyes? |
| Nigel: | Nothing. I can't see in the dark. Only animals see in the dark. Cats and dogs and such creatures. |
| Kariuki: | But Bwana Ruin can see in the dark, your grandfather can see in the dark. |
| Nigel: | No he can't. His eyes are just like mine. |
| Kariuki: | Can your grandfather see what I'm thinking? |
| Nigel: | No. |
| Kariuki: | They say in the village that he can see into your head, ... see what people are thinking. Can he do that? |
| Nigel: | He cannot. No one can do that. |
| Kariuki: | But can he see in your heart? Can he know when you are telling a lie? |
| Nigel: | No one can do that. He is like other people. He can only see with his eyes. |



Mzungus can't see in the dark!

You are going to see three different performances of the same conversation between Kariuki and Nigel. It is your task to identify how Nigel and Kariuki have felt during the conversation (you can choose more than one adjective to describe them).

(Examples: happy, silly, amused, irritated, angry, sad, serious, curious, bored, annoyed, ...)

Performance no. 1

Kariuki was: _____

Nigel was: _____

Performance no. 2

Kariuki was: _____

Nigel was: _____

Performance no. 3

Kariuki was: _____

Nigel was: _____

Answer the following questions:

Did Kariuki and Nigel seem to feel different in the three performances or did they behave very similar?

Can you imagine a different way to play Nigel or Kariuki? So, do you think the characters would actually have behaved (and felt) different in this situation?

Why can the performances of *the same* text be different?

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit untersucht das Potential und die Möglichkeiten im österreichischen Englischunterricht mit Hilfe von afrikanischer Literatur transkulturelle Unterrichtsziele zu erreichen. Ausgangspunkt der Arbeit ist die Vermutung, dass Ausländer – und Afrikaner im Speziellen – im österreichischen öffentlichen Diskurs unzureichend und oft fälschlich repräsentiert werden und folglich Wege gefunden werden sollen, diesen Falschdarstellungen entgegenzuwirken.

Zu Beginn der Arbeit wird daher auf die These der inadäquaten Repräsentation näher eingegangen. Eine Untersuchung der deutschsprachigen Berichterstattung über Afrika, sowie postkoloniale und psychoanalytische Theorien bestätigen die anfängliche Vermutung (der unzureichenden Darstellung) und geben Einblick in die Gründe und Auswirkungen der Stereotypen über Afrika. Im nächsten Schritt wird jener Teil der österreichischen Curricula gesucht, der auf die zuvor definierten Missstände eingeht. Dieser wird im Unterrichtsprinzip des „Interkulturellen Lernens“ gefunden.

Eine genauere Betrachtung des interkulturellen Paradigmas zeigt aber, dass die inhärente Auffassung von Kultur als statisch und abgeschlossen nicht angemessen ist. Deshalb wird die Weiterentwicklung des Konzepts, das transkulturelle Prinzip, näher beleuchtet und als sinnvollerer Zugang zu Unterricht definiert. Die Ziele transkulturellen Lernens werden zu einem großen Teil im Lesen von literarischen Texten erreicht. Dementsprechend widmet sich das dritte Kapitel dieser Diplomarbeit dem Unterrichten von Literatur und dessen Auswirkung auf transkulturelle Unterrichtsziele. Dazu werden zuerst generelle Vorteile von literarischen Werken für den Englischunterricht dargelegt, um im späteren genauer auf die Besonderheiten von postkolonialer bzw. „neuer englischer Literatur“ einzugehen und eine Differenzierung dieser beiden Begriffe vorzunehmen.

Der letzte Abschnitt dieser Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit der praktischen Anwendung der zuvor erarbeiteten Theorie. Vorschläge zur Vorbereitung der SchülerInnen auf kulturell komplexe Texte werden gegeben und Kriterien zur Auswahl von literarischen Werken aufgezeigt, um danach auf ein spezifisches

Werk afrikanischer Kinder- und Jugendliteratur einzugehen. Meja Mwangi's *Mzungu Boy* wird ausführlich auf die inhaltliche Qualität für den transkulturellen Unterricht untersucht um eine konkrete Unterrichtssequenz mit diesem literarischen Werk zu entwerfen.

Das Ziel dieser Diplomarbeit ist zu zeigen, dass der transkulturelle Ansatz und afrikanische Literatur einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Dekonstruktion von unzureichenden Darstellungen von Ausländern und Afrikanern im öffentlichen Diskurs beitragen und daher eine Reduktion von Stereotypen und Vorurteilen erzielen.

Lebenslauf

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