DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

"Expanding Horizons – Teaching Anglophone African Fiction

A Contextualised Reading of *The Spider King´s Daughter* and its Introduction to the Austrian EFL Classroom"

verfasst von

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Magistra der Philosophie (Mag.phil.)

Wien, 2015

Declaration of Authenticity

I confirm to have conceived and written this Diploma Thesis (Diplomarbeit) in English all by myself. Quotations from other authors are all clearly marked and acknowledged in the bibliographical references, either in the footnotes or within the text. Any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors are truthfully acknowledged and identified in the footnotes.

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Hinweis

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Introduction

> 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* 6:03-6:28)

Recently, I facilitated a brainstorming exercise on Anglophone Africa with a group of Austrian teenagers. It yielded very similar results to the associations brought forward by the popular Nigerian writer, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The triumvirate Sahara, Safari and Starvation were mentioned. Poverty, Illiteracy, Development Aid, Genocide, Ebola, AIDS and Migration were all among the first contributions. One can infer an under- and/or misrepresentation of "Africa" in public discourse[1] and consequently in schools (see e.g. Gohrisch and Grünkemeier). This evident disproportion prompted me to work on a feasible alternative, seeking to enable young people to engage with multiple other facets of the neighbouring continent and its people.

For an in-depth insight textbooks and non-fictional texts mainly proved unhelpful. Such texts often failed to provide the necessary differentiated depiction. More often than not, they were merely re-producing the superficial prejudices exemplified above. Fictional narratives by African voices presented the solution. Numerous Anglophone African countries exhibit a vibrant literary scene, but Nigerian writing has traditionally been at the forefront of artistic innovation. Besides, Nigeria is Africa´s most populous country and has its strongest economy. That is why, Nigeria assumes a leading role in Africa and is predicted to become a future global powerhouse. Combined, these facts make for a substantial list in favour of hypothetically allocating contemporary Nigerian literature an integral space in the modern English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom.

As a teacher and youth worker, self-directed learning approaches which offer sustained, personalised learning opportunities are close to my heart. Soon, it became clear that the aim to encourage a broader perspective on African realities was most likely to be met by exposing learners to extensive reading of contemporary fiction. For this purpose, *The Spider King´s Daughter*, a fun but thought-provoking novel was chosen. Its author,

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[1] For more information you may consult Sturmer´s survey of German-speaking media reports on Africa.

Chibundu Onuzo, is young and approachable (via her blog, e-mail address and Facebook account). This adds to the appeal of the narrative and its author to adolescent learners.

The paper strives to supply a sound academic background to teachers interested in incorporating *The Spider King´s Daughter*, or comparable novels, into their syllabus. The contextualised reading focuses on representations of modern, diverse and disparate Nigeria and its people. The interpretation operates within a mainly temporal, spatial, relational and thematic context. The thoughts on relationships and identity primarily touch upon the characters´ psychological make-up, their development and constellation. A more traditional structure of literary analysis – focusing consecutively on narrative technique, characters, themes and motifs etc. – was intentionally dismissed. The reason for this being that such an approach would be hard to consistently implement in schools, due to the comprehensive literary meta-knowledge required for a thorough traditional interpretation. Therefore, my approach highlights potential topic areas relevant to adolescent readers. It seeks to comprehensibly interweave the traditional analytical entities with issues relevant to teenagers. With this target audience in mind, the sub-chapters in the literary analysis were chosen. It is assumed that upper-secondary English learners would benefit from a treatment of the three major themes addressed by the book and analysed in the contextualised reading section.

In the first chapter, a historico-political survey of post-colonial Nigeria antecedes an engagement with the nation´s literary history. A familiarisation with the context of the narrative is crucial to detect layers upon layers of meaning. Overall, the opening chapter draws attention to the rich and diverse tradition of writing in Nigeria. It outlines its major paradigms as well as socio-political events which exerted considerable influence on literary development. The initial chapter is equally concerned with turning points in artistic representations as it is with historical milestones that impacted on authors and their work. Moreover, it addresses relevant challenges Nigeria is facing today. Most of those issues are germane to the majority of post-colonial states and could potentially serve as starting points of further discussions or comparative analysis for each reader individually or in class.

What follows in the second chapter is a contextualised reading. It builds up on the socio-political survey and forms the bulk of this paper. Initially, the author and her novel are situated within the current Nigerian literary scene. The first sub-chapter examines in how far Onuzo fits the label "Third Generation Nigerian Writer". It studies whether and to

what degree her situation, style, themes and genre preferences fit the paradigms and where – and to which effect - her writing differs from the works of her contemporaries. Subsequently, the leverage of the Nigerian film industry with the novel is revealed. The preoccupation with how the text negotiates its relationship to local realities continues in a sub-chapter on the fictional representations of wealth and poverty. From the macro-viewpoint of a global issue, such as inequality, the analysis zooms in on the relational set-up of the most important characters. The tools used to narrate the protagonists' friendship are discussed alongside fictional depictions of parent-child relationships. In a final step, the micro-viewpoint of identity construction yields further insight into the universally human appeal of Onuzo´s debut novel. This last sub-chapter of the contextualised reading section deals with representations of growing-up in the bildungsroman tradition as well as the nexus between migration and identity.

Lastly, the third chapter is devoted to practical didactic considerations and educational theory. The legal justification for expanding the literary canon to Anglophone African novels is explored. My hypothesis states that the themes featured in *The Spider King´s Daughter* allow a connection to the juridical instructions expressed in the Austrian national curriculum. Another research aim is to clarify whether and how the novel could be used for preparing students for the new standardised A-levels. Through establishing such links, the necessity to teach contemporary fiction outside the traditional canon is approached from different angles and is, I hope, likely to become evident.

Preliminary Considerations

"Decolonialisation of the mind" is at the core of this thesis. Not, however, in its original sense. Ngugi, who is said to have coined the expression, positioned himself radically against writing in English – the language of the coloniser to him – in any African context. I conceive a decolonialisation of mind and action mainly in a conduct that strongly opposes notions of superiority. Whereas the use of English in any post-colonial setting undoubtedly adds complexity and ambiguity, it simultaneously allows anyone proficient in it to participate in a global discourse. Besides, it is not anymore only those formerly colonised who utilise English; communicating in English is rather a world-wide endeavour. Embracing the lingua franca allows a German native speaker to review an Anglophone book by a young woman, whose mother tongue is Igbo, in English. Paradoxically, in the age of globalisation, it is the former "language of the coloniser" that enables us to become truly global citizens and meet each other on equal terms. The previous "subaltern speaks" (Spivak) and in doing so is heard, interacts and ultimately adds to an acceleration of decolonialising the mind. Meeting on equal footing and avoiding exoticism, or any other type of prejudice, is at once the basis and the aim of my approach. In this sense, this paper seeks to initiate an international scholarly discussion on Onuzo´s first novel as well as to further debate how to incorporate Anglophone African literature in English Language Teaching (ELT) in a contemporary, respectful and effective manner. Ideally, the fruits of this discussion will benefit learners of English, who in turn are thereby equipped with the skills to enter the growing global reading community of Anglophone African fiction.

An in-depth involvement with contemporary African texts written in English pre-supposes a certain familiarity with post-colonialism. Since much has been written on the subject, a very brief overview of the most influential scholars in the field needs to suffice for the purposes of this paper. Post-colonial criticism emerged post-World War II., when an increasing number of states in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean struggled for independence. In its early days, it condensed critique of established Western theories of representation (cf. Bhaba). Soon, post-colonial studies diversified and developed into a more general criticism of the "domination of the West over the world in realms of knowledge production, and culture" (Krishna 4).

Said tracks the creation of a colonial "Other" to Western claims of supremacy. *Orientalism* is certainly one of the key texts which sheds light on the genesis of othering in

order to strengthen Eurocentrism. In any case, not only Western stakeholders in post-colonial domination were condemned. From a Marxist perspective, scholars like Frantz Fanon accused the new black African bourgeoisie of simply imitating their former oppressors. He holds the new post-independence middle class responsible for social stagnation. To the French philosopher, their worshipping of capitalism can be seen as a re-production of post-colonial politics and as such the birth of neo-colonialism. Those concepts tie in neatly with another idea Fanon introduced to the post-colonial school of thought, the notion of "white masks". It describes the adoption of Western values and behaviour and its inherent paradoxes. On the one side, assimilation paves the way for accessing the dominant culture. On the other side, it further devalues one´s original traditions.

One fierce critic of post-colonial studies is Gayatri Spivak. Her most famous contribution is the essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?". It is a powerful text, which reveals problematic ambiguities in post-colonialism. Her line of argument accuses the scholars in the field of silencing the exact people they want to give a voice to. In other words, once academics point out the "subalterns'" need for support and representation, post-colonialists undermine the agency of marginalised groups and individuals to speak up for themselves. It is crucial to point out that Spivak does acknowledge the need to speak *about* groups at the fringes of power, but warns to speak *for* them. This insight is essential and will guide me through writing this paper and in conducting future lessons on post-colonial literature.

Apart from post-colonialism, the starting position for this paper can be traced to cultural studies. A cultural studies approach, is highly aware of the influences of a variety of discourses on a text. It roots a narrative in the historical moment of its production. This paper offers a combined approach. On the one hand, the thesis utilises *The Spider King´s Daughter* as a medium to access present-day African realities and as such is pre-occupied with the insights it can trigger. In this regard, the question is paramount how teachers can spark a non-stereotypical engagement with the African realities the book depicts a slice of. On the other hand, the paper attempts to acknowledge and reflect the current discourses on Nigeria and its literature. It does not comprehend literature as a one-to-one reflection of a "given" reality, but tries to detect the conflicting perceptions of realities within fictional writing. This thesis attempts to be highly sensitive to the mutual interaction of literary

discourse on Onuzo´s narrative and vice versa. And it hopes to be particularly relevant, above all because it is the first academic analysis of *The Spider King´s Daughter.*

1. Historical Context

1.1 Selected Issues in Nigerian History, Politics and Economy

The geography of production and circulation of *The Spider King´s Daughter* cannot be unequivocally limited to a certain place, as will be reflected on later; but the novel´s themes are to a large degree influenced by its setting: Lagos, Nigeria. This could already be reason enough to shed light on current trends and conflicts in Africa´s most populous country (UN) and its largest city of more than 18 million (Auswärtiges Amt). However, the title of my thesis (*[…] Contextualised Reading […]*) makes a thorough involvement with the Nigerian context all the more relevant. So does the focus of the thesis´ didactic part on political and transcultural education. Some of the aspects discussed in the following are directly addressed in the novel, such as poverty, child labour, female dependency on male income, corruption and human trafficking. Other pressing issues, like reliance on oil, politicised ethnicity or sectarian violence, are not explicitly mentioned in the narrative. Nonetheless, these are the main problems shaking Nigeria today and as such crucial factors in an understanding of the complexity of the narrative´s setting. To begin with, a brief outline of relevant cornerstones in Nigerian history will be presented.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw what is now known as the "Scramble for Africa". The invasion, occupation and partition of Africa by European colonial powers had a formal commencement in the Berlin Conference. At the 1884 conference European powers divided Africa according to arbitrary borders that merely reflected imperialist aims to regulate colonisation. Certain parts of what comprises Nigeria today had been occupied prior to the Berlin Conference (Ezeh). As early as 1861, the Lagos lagoon area was annexed and integrated into the British Empire (Malachy 13). It was not before 1914 that all regions encompassing modern Nigeria were subsumed under a single authority. (Ezeh 229)

Cutting complicated matters short, a global wave of colonisation criticism after the Second World War reached Nigeria, too. Efforts to agitate for independence culminated in the mid-1950s (Ezeh 235), leading to independence shortly thereafter, in 1960. Just six years after Nigeria became a sovereign state, the young nation was shaken by a military coup. Between 1967 and 1970 the political situation deteriorated into the civil war. With up to three million estimated casualties (Falola and Heaton 180), many of which died of starvation, the Biafra War brought the troubled young nation onto the international media

stage for the first time. The war has marked a tragic nadir of ethnic separation (Ajala 5; cf. Duruji) and continues to occupy Nigerian authors[2]. National integration was therefore a prime goal in the aftermath of the civil war period (Malachy 15). Despite several innovations and reforms, the military-governed post-war era has been marked by intensifying contention between the respective ethnic elites battling for access to federal institutions. To date, tribalism and nepotism seem to be as persistent, because such notions are still frequently appealed to and manipulated for political ends. (Malachy 15-16) From an economic perspective, the decline in agriculture and increasing dependency on oil has been an ongoing process for the last four decades. The post-war efforts to reconcile and reconstruct materialised in the development of infrastructure in the urban centres. The rural majority, however, was left neglected and alienated. That is why this period nurtured the divide between urban and rural areas and gradually led to intensified migration to the cities and thus urbanisation. (Decker 256-259)

Besides the drift to the cities, the oil boom and ethnic fissures, the period between 1970 and 1983 was characterised by a growing disconnection of the governing elite and its subjects. Two military and one civilian government mismanaged the growth of the oil industry. With it came the rise of a small, but exceedingly wealthy class of entrepreneurs and politicians (Wright 797) as well as perpetual poverty for the majority. (Falola and Heaton 181-186) After 1983 Nigeria was in the hand of military rule for fifteen consecutive years. Its leaders - Buhari, Babangida and Abacha – became infamous for overseeing the nation´s further economic decline as well as their ruthless elimination of opposition. It was not until 1999 that the former military ruler Obasanjo was elected head of a civil administration and the Fourth Republic was proclaimed. Although the eight years of Obasanjo´s presidency have been the longest civilian rule in Nigerian history, his numerous opponents claim that this milestone was only achievable due to severe tampering with the political system. (Falola and Heaton 209-242) After a power vacuum due to an illness of his successor, President Yar`Adua, Goodluck Jonathan became acting president in 2010 (BBC "Jonathan acting president"). Under his presidency various issues have remained unsolved, but his administration managed to be confirmed by democratic elections in 2011 and keep

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[2] A recent addition to fictitious accounts of the Biafra War is Adichie´s immensely successful *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Abani´s *Song for Night* is not explicitly set during this time, but the geographical hints and accounts of the child soldier protagonist strongly suggest a civil war background.

the effects of global economic turmoil to a minimum (Birrell). Jonathan held office until May 2015, when he peacefully handed over power to Muhammadu Buhari. For the first time in Nigerian history, one elected president relinquished the presidency to another elected candidate.

Nigeria is often said to be a "nascent superpower" (Kwarteng ix) and has recently seen considerable economic growth. In 2014, its estimated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) overtook South Africa´s, making Nigeria the largest economy in Africa and ranking it as the 26th largest economy worldwide (Provost). In addition to substantial oil reserves, other natural resources such as gas and untapped mineral resources are abundant (Davis and Jones 20), topping the agricultural and human wealth of this country. Apart from cultural diversity, human wealth is evident in Nigeria´s exceptionally young population. In 2014 the median age stood at 18.2, compared to 44.3 years in Austria (CIA n. pag.).

Despite almost ideal economic preconditions, there is one word that possibly describes Nigerian economy best: paradox. Poverty levels are decreasing globally, but the numbers of Nigerians living in poverty are on the rise. After periods of declining poverty levels in the late 1980s as well as in the years prior to 2004, recent rates have been calculated around 60 per cent and the shocking upwards trend is estimated to continue (BBC "Nigerians living in poverty"). In total figures such percentages amount to approximately 112 million Nigerians living on less than 1 USD per day (NBS, data from 2010). This coincides, paradoxically, with the perceived success of Nigeria´s economy. So far, economic success has not been translated into prosperity for the majority of Nigeria´s citizens. The country´s extreme wealth in regards to human and natural resources is contradicted by rising poverty levels. Simply put, the wealth is there, but extremely unequally distributed.

The failure to promote human prosperity, most basically through providing security, healthcare and education, has led to the constant looming danger of disintegration. One major reason for instability is the marginalisation of minorities due to the political oligopoly of the three main ethnic groups. A concomitant issue, presenting immediate threats to nation building, is sectarian violence (Ajala). Ethno-religious discontent is fuelled by dissatisfaction with political and economic structures (Ajala 4). Therefore, symptoms of economic mismanagement such as unemployment, rising poverty, brain drain or corruption need to be incorporated into an analysis of Nigeria´s economy. The same holds

true for other inequalities like the persistent gender gap. The historico-political and socio-economic survey presented in this paper is an attempt of such a holistic approach. It initially examines the consequences of politicised ethnicity and its manifestation in the political structure of federalism. Then it proceeds to exemplify why religiously motivated violence and terrorism go hand in hand with politicised ethnicity. In a further step aggravating factors in the widening of the poverty threshold are investigated. Those selected for presentation include the non-diversification of the economy through its dependence on oil, urbanisation, corruption and gender inequality.

1.1.1   Federalism, Ethno-Religious Tensions and Recent Terrorism

Culturally, the state territory of Nigeria is extremely rich and diverse. It is home to approximately 250 ethnic groups (Akinwumi 150) speaking more than 500 languages (CIA n. pag.). The largest ethnic groups – Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo – have dominated post-independence Nigerian politics (Thomson 65). Hausa-Fulani compose approximately 29 percent of Nigeria´s total population, 21 percent are Yoruba and 18 percent are registered as ethnically belonging to Igbo/Ibo (CIA). Each ethnic group is associated with a geographic region of influence. In the North the majority is Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba live primarily in the West and Igbo are associated with the South and East. However, Thomson warns against a simplification of circumstances along ethno-geographical lines. On the one hand, there are numerous other ethnic minorities and on the other hand there are a variety of sub-ethnic identities. Furthermore, an intense intra-state migration has been attested, which finally discredits a simplified geographical distinction. In addition, one has to regard the history of ethnicity in an African context (Thomson 66). It illustrates that the notion of ethnicity is relatively modern and socially constructed. The introduction of ethnicity, initially as the concept of "tribes", dates back to British imperial rule. In the colonial period intensifying loose affiliations to compose a tribe was seen as a necessity; for both the colonized – with regards to lobbying the colonial authorities – and the colonizers, who encouraged institutional consolidation in order to facilitate administration and missionary work (Thomson 66-67).

Islam and Christianity are the main religions. 50 percent and 40 percent of the country´s citizens adhere to each religion respectively, while the remaining 10 percent are

said to practise traditional religions (CIA n. pag.). In order to understand Nigeria today, the history of implementation of the two main religions needs to be taken into account. In Nigeria, Islam has a tradition of one-thousand years (Falola and Heaton 29-30) and is now the largest religion. By the time colonial administrators arrived, they realised the high standard of Islamic education and the determination of the people to defend their faith. Christian missionaries were deliberately denied access to the North and Islamic leaders were purposefully incorporated into colonial rule (Akinwumi 16). The second most widely practised religion is Christianity, even though early missionary endeavours by the Portuguese showed no long-term impacts (Falola 40). A renewed missionary interest followed the abolition of slavery, due to the engagement of converted liberated slaves in the evangelisation of Southern Nigeria. The expansion of Western education in the region is strongly linked to those missionary efforts and entailed privileged starting positions for the South shortly after independence. (Akinwumi 16-19)

Post-independence politics have been heavily influenced by the contest for predominance of Islam and Christianity. The rivalry between the (predominantly Islamic) North and (largely Christian) South partly stems from historic religious divisions, which have just been exemplified. To date, believers on both sides are overly concerned with a "fair" representation of both major religions in the Nigerian body politic. To complicate matters further, religious affiliations are complicatedly intertwined with ethnic ones. (Akinwumi 16-21) This ethno-religious nexus in Nigerian politics has lead Kirk-Greene to conclude:

> Fear has been constant in every tension and confrontation of political Nigeria. Not the physical fear of violence, not the spiritual fear of retribution, but the psychological fear of discrimination, of domination. It is the fear of not getting one´s fair share, one´s dessert. (19)

The north-south division along religious lines is linked to the political partition in terms of federalism. In Nigeria, the concept of federalism has frequently been abused to serve the political leaders´ own interests and power plays. It was politically institutionalised during colonial times and has been a prime tool for manipulation ever since (Akinwumi 150-152). Post-independent leadership has not departed from such practises, quite the contrary. At independence the country was administered via three regions plus a capital territory. Today 36 states and a capital territory comprise the modern nation state. Hill (44-66) analyses the role of federalism in contributing to the country´s failure. He has indicated four disadvantageous consequences of federalism. As has been discussed, it impairs ethno-

religious relationships and spurs tension. Federalism has proven harmful in its role in disempowering thousands of Nigerians who are precluded from certain services. One of the key laws associated with federalism in Nigeria dictates the allocation of public goods. Certain public goods and services are exclusively granted to those officially registered in their respective "state of origin". However, in many cases the state of origin neither corresponds to the person´s place of birth, nor their current place of residence. Once again, such legislation fosters sectarianism and is undermining the nation´s unity. Thirdly, federalism can damage political rights as federal voting systems and the sustained practice of rotating senior political posts between ethnic groups undermine direct democratic influence. Finally, the creation of new regional governments and other political bodies present new opportunities for corruption. By implication, federalism encourages disintegration into non-national units and therefore threatens national unity. The result of decades of fiercely promoting federalism has, besides other issues, lead to the escalation of the north-south divide, subverted democracy, aggravated corruption and has firmly established ethnicity as a heavily influencing factor in political choices.

Since the early 2000s a growing number of political as well as literary figures have raised their concerns about the possibility of Nigeria joining the growing list of failing or even failed states (Hill 25f.). Among them is Africa´s first Nobel prize laureate Wole Soyinka, who compared the ruling Nigerian elite to a "theatre of the absurd" and did not "rule out Nigeria breaking up" as a result of "what can happen to a failed state" (Howden n. pag.). One of the most severe challenges posed to the unity of the country is the recent rise of the radical Islamist sect Boko Haram[3]. As regards intent, evolution and process of radicalisation, political science offers two main approaches to understanding the disposition of terrorist groups like Boko Haram and the MEND[4], namely state-failure and

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[3] What we understand as Boko Haram today initially emerged as an unarmed commune of approximately 3000 individuals in 2002. Without showing any ambitions of imposing their religious views on anyone, the members sought to live pious, reclusive lives resembling the ones of early Muslims. Since, the group has transformed into ruthless militia with the declared goal of establishing an Islamic state in Nigeria and its neighbouring states. (Hill 26-29) The number of casualties killed by Boko Haram has rocketed. Notorious are the terrorists´ abductions of young women, such as the kidnapping of 200 schoolgirls in Chibuk, which triggered the global outcry #bringbackourgirls in 2014. January 2015 saw further escalation culminating in the "deadliest massacre" (Amnesty International) perpetrated by the militant groups as yet.

[4] The Niger Delta has long been one of the most contested and unstable regions in Nigeria. As early as 1990, organised groups claimed environmental and economic justice for the people living in one of the most oil-producing as well as most severely contaminated regions in the world. Nowadays, the "Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta" (MEND) is the most powerful insurgent group in the delta. Similar to Boko Haram, it has been operating for roughly a decade, although it has been a fighting force from the start and

frustration-aggression (Maiangwa et al. 41). Whichever thesis one adheres to, the root of the looming threat lies in state deficiencies, above all arbitrary military brutality and infrastructural shortcomings (Hill 26.). Combined with the impotence of the political leadership to deal with the increasingly audacious and well-organised militia such defects have led to a "level of insurgency never before witnessed in [the public space of] Nigeria" (Maiangwa et al. 41). So far, political leaders failed to address and, most importantly solve, the new problems in a constructive manner. Just like the threat of a failing state before, now the failings of the government to counteract ethno-religiously motivated violence have become taboo. Putting it in Soyinka´s words again, Nigerian leaders deny the imminent dangers of Islamist terror and practise a "political correctness of action, not just words" (BBC "Boko Haram"). The question originally posed by Akinwumi - whether religious entrenchment in Nigerian society should be considered salvation or doom - seems to currently be answered with the latter. A heatedly debated topic is also whether Nigeria´s oil resources present a blessing or curse. This is a complex issue and the focus of the next sub-chapter.

1.1.2   Nigeria´s Black Gold – Blessing or Curse

Oil is the driving force behind the nation´s economy. Oil accounts for 75 percent of government revenues (Thomas) and 95 percent of Nigerian exports (CIA). Yet fuel has to be imported, due to a severe lack of the capacity to refine oil. Such shortcomings apart, the reckless exploitation of this natural resource has far-reaching consequences.

For once, oil-generated wealth is yet to trickle to local communities inhabiting the regions where oil is sourced. Insurgent groups, like the MEND, benefit from public discontent and general approval to sabotaging pipelines, and the like. Attacks on oil facilities are frequent, yet there have recently been fewer incidents, partly due to the country´s 2009 amnesty programme. In return of amnesty and a monthly allowance, 26,000 armed rebels surrendered their weapons. The costs, estimated at 400 million USD per year, are covered by additionally generated oil revenues. While many try to jump on

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has developed less dynamically. Another distinguishing factor is the stability of the MEND´s demands. Since their formation, they request compensation payments from oil producing companies and the return of half of the Federal Government´s revenue from oil to the people living in the affected areas. So far, the majority of the frequently declared ceasefires have not been observed and the group is yet to renounce its way of handling the dispute. (Hill 29-32)

the bandwagon, the underlying causes of dissent remain neglected. Amongst the most pressing in the Niger Delta region are the general suspects of poverty and a widening income gap, corruption, a partially privatised education sector as well as impunity for politically sponsored violence and environmental degradation from oil spills. (HRW "Violence and Poverty" 2)

The Niger delta is among the most severely damaged regions in the world. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) advocates a comprehensive clean-up of the region, formerly self-sufficient, alongside renewed pipelines and containment of sabotage. Even if immediate steps to mitigate the contamination are taken and one billion USD are expended, it will take more than twenty-five years until the degradation can potentially be reversed (UNEP). Meanwhile the environmental disaster has prompted Nigerian authors to foreground the issue and in doing so making it accessible to an international audience. Most prominently *Oil on Water* by Helon Habila featured the entanglement of international oil enterprises with the conflict through large scale cover-ups of medical surveys, allocating blackmailing money for the release of hostages, etc. as well as the almost indescribable extent of pollution caused by Nigeria´s number one export.

Despite petroleum being the motor of Nigerian economy, it ironically is the cause of its vulnerability. The overshadowing oil industry is held responsible for a comparatively small entrepreneurial community, because "[d]ependency on oil appears to have profoundly discouraged would-be innovators and entrepreneurs from other sectors, such as the 'smart' industries of finance or telecommunications" (Africa Research Bulletin 3). Recently a task force has been initiated with the objective to foster healthy economic growth. It is concerned with improving transparency and fiscal management as well as the crucial diversification of production. (CIA) In order to guarantee sustainability, diversifying the economy needs to be paralleled by substantially downsizing the public sector. Since independence the government has remained the nation´s number one employer. The over-bloated public system has led certain analysts to call government-generated employment one of the country´s largest welfare schemes (Decker 253). Additionally and at great public expense, extensive corruption is practised, not only but also by high-and low-level officials.

1.1.3 Corruption

A definition by Lipset and Lenz describes corruption as "efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means – private gain at public expense; or a misuse of public power for private benefit" (112). Corruption is a global problem. As we know, Austrian politicians and officials are by no means immune against corrupt and self-enriching behaviour. Over the course of the last four years, Austria´s relatively clean reputation has been discredited. Regarding the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), Austria fell from position 16 in 2011 to the 26[th]rank two years later (Die Presse). Corruption in Nigeria, it seems, takes the issue to a whole new level. Criminal activities connected with fraud and graft have led to a "culture of corruption" (see D.J. Smith´s eponymous anthropological survey).

Corruption is, of course, hard to measure and any data has to be scrutinized carefully. The globally recognized watchdog organization Transparency International has ranked Nigeria´s public sector the 39th most corrupt worldwide (Transparency International n. pag.).[5] Human Rights Watch (HRW) has voiced similar concerns:

> Corruption is so pervasive in Nigeria that it has turned public service for many into a kind of criminal enterprise. Graft has fuelled political violence, denied millions of Nigerians access to even the most basic health and education services, and reinforced police abuses and other widespread patterns of human rights violations. (HRW *Corruption on Trial?* 1)

The image of the public sector has been damaged through widespread corruption among police forces, politicians and administrative personnel. It is by no means the only area where corruption is extensive. The oil industry has long been considered one of the sectors most seriously affected. Therefore, it comes as little surprise that the state-owned oil firm "Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation" (NNPC) has been troubled by alleged corruption and mismanagement (Africa Research Bulletin 2).

However, not only well established sectors are facing corruption. There are new criminal "economic branches" developing using fraud as their only source of income. Fraudulent e-mail scams have become "emblematic of Nigeria´s worldwide reputation for corruption" (D.J. Smith 28). Advance-fee fraud, internationally known as 419, first emerged during a time of economic decline and political turmoil in the 1980s (Smith 29 f.). Most

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[5] 175 countries have been examined by Transparency International. The data evaluated consists of a composite index, drawing on data from business surveys as well as experts. The Corruption Perceptions Index seeks to describe how corrupt the public sector of a country is perceived. The scores range from 0 to 100, with 0 representing the most highly corrupt option and 100 the cleanest. Nigeria´s score is 27.

internet scams still work according to similar patterns of classic confidence tricks. Scammers try to lull their victims into disclosing their bank details or making an advance payment with the pretence of much larger profits ahead. As regards internet fraud, Smith pleads to not just focus on a simplified picture of criminal activity, but to consider the broader context of inequality (28 ff.). He adds force to his argument through foregrounding the high level of education amongst young scammers, their socialisation within a highly corrupt society and their conception of the world and history as an Africa-exploiting system. As a side remark, such topoi of scammers´ professionalism and their interpretations of retributive justice resurface in a promising Nigerian debut. *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* by Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani is another example how current issues, 419 scamming in this case, reappear in literature. The novel gives insight into the life of a young ambitious man who was forced into scamming by bleak future prospects and strong family ties. Moreover, the narrative holds a mirror up to Western society and mocks those susceptible to scams. The protagonists justify their criminal behaviour with slavery and the exploitation of the Niger delta. They fashion themselves as African Robin Hoods who backtrack money from the West.

There are other endemic strands of corruption bleeding Nigeria dry. The foundation of new churches is one instance of thriving corruption, so is fraudulent management of NGOs. Both areas allow the extraction of large sums from the international donor community. (Smith 88) Despite the merit of widening contexts for interpretation and explanation in line with Smith´s stance, it goes without saying that scammers are criminals who assist prolonged poverty, instability and corruption in Nigeria.

The government´s most promising effort to fight high-level corruption was the establishment of the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) in 2002. Even though it was the first institution publically challenging the impunity of the Nigerian political elite, it seems that the EFCC has not managed to live up to either its own high expectations or to what the Nigerian public had hoped for. The HRW 2013 World Report´s closing sentence on corruption is significant. It states that "not a single senior political figure in Nigeria [has ever served] prison time for corruption" (2).

Even though the scope of corruption is hard to describe and even harder to prove, one conclusion is certainly apt. A mere attempt at an examination soon makes evident that corruption - in any of its manifold forms - is one of the most serious threats to political

stability and sustainable development in Nigeria. Another often neglected issue that harms growth is unequal opportunities for women, which will subsequently be addressed.

1.1.4 Gender Inequality

> No doubt women are Nigeria´s hidden resource. Investing in women and girls now will increase productivity in this generation and will promote sustainable growth, peace and better health for the next generation. (British Council and UKaid iii)

At last policy makers seem to acknowledge the necessity of empowering females, but the Nigerian reality often draws a different picture and radical reforms are yet to be implemented. Numerous strong and independent Nigerian women fostering change do exist – famous Nigerian authors are most prominently among them. Only there is not enough political will to provide adequate opportunities for girls and women. In a first reasonable step, international and pan-African campaigns were supported. The women´s rights legal instrument "Protocol of Rights of Women in Africa" has, for instance, been signed. Yet domestic implementations of the endorsed bills remain dilatory (Kazeem n. pag.).

This is why the current situation for girls and women is precarious. A 2012 report issued by British Council and UKaid provides a comprehensive and up-to-date analysis. Certain problems of national significance manifest even more dramatically for women. The discrepancies between urban and rural areas are of general concern, but affect females most. Due to the fact that up to 79 percent of the rural labour force is female, it is they who suffer most from urban-rural income distribution inequality. In addition, women have to face the reality of the gender gap within their own communities. Despite comprising the majority of the rural labour force, women are five times less likely to own land. Obviously, this reduces female independence and influence. The report further criticises that political decisions are primarily taken by men. On all levels of politics (communal, state and federal) women are underrepresented. In total numbers this leads to only 25 (of 360) female MPs.

As regards employment, only one third of young people securing a job within the formal sector are women. Similarly, there is an underrepresentation in public sector employment. Again, less than one third of public employees are female. This might be partly due to considerably lower levels of education among girls. Nigeria has the largest total figure of children who are out of school. An estimated 10.5 million does not attend

school. The issue is most pressing in northern regions, where 97 percent of girls do not complete secondary education. Approximately 70 percent of women in the North-West aged 20-29 cannot read. This is attributed to school fees, family planning, poor quality of education and sexual harassment of students by male teachers. (British Council and UKaid)

The comprehensive report suggests action steps to balance gender inequality that need to be immediately taken. They should involve the reduction of school drop-out rates, domestic violence and maternal mortality as well as improving women´s health and entrepreneurship.

1.1.5   Poverty, Child Labour and Human Trafficking

"Poverty has been [a] historical reality of Nigerian societies […]" (Decker 241). Decker holds "civic nationalism, politicized poverty, government welfarism and environmental degradation" (241) responsible for tenacious post-colonial poverty. Doubled poverty rates since the 1980s (British Council and UKaid i) paint a bleak picture and statistically show the difficulties and setbacks of social integration processes. Tragically, the lingering threat of poverty is not only a statistical truth, but has become a perceived reality for the vast majority of Nigerians. In a recent survey almost 94 percent of respondents considered themselves poor, compared with 76 percent in 2004 (BBC "Nigerians in poverty").

The widening gulf within Nigerian society also becomes obvious in the substantial urban – rural divide. Rural areas host the most significant natural resources for export and are therefore exposed to extreme environmental degradation (Decker 254). This situation is severely aggravated by the preference given to industrial agriculture and a lack of support of small-scale farming. That is the main reason why, rural communities are facing increasing economic strain. In the search for instantaneous relief, poor decisions are made. Unrestrained exploitation of resources and hazardous farming methods create a vicious cycle of low productivity and degrading to the environment. In the long run, this aggravates conditions for subsistence among the local population. Insufficient infrastructure is just one result of communal mismanagement and can exemplarily be shown through significant statistical factors, such as access to clean water. Juxtaposed with 80 percent of the urban population who has access to safe drinking water, the percentage for rural citizens is striking, as it stands below 40 percent (Ichoku and Leibbrandt qtd. in Sunkanmi 24). While

deprivation is hard on anyone forced to face it, it is often the most vulnerable which suffer most, like children.

Child poverty has far-reaching consequences as it affects education prospects – and thus future options to climb the social ladder – as well as health. This aspect is thoroughly explored in *The Spider King´s Daughter*, as is the poverty-wealth dichotomy in general. From a scientific point of view, Okpukpara et al. have suggested that the extent of future contributions to society is determined by treatment and physical condition during childhood. Such claims accentuate the importance of combating child poverty. In relation to a child´s health status, the main influencing factors are assumed to be parental education levels, household size and economic status (Sunkanmi). These mutually influencing factors make evident the interrelations between poverty and child development in its entirety.

Another issue with its root in poverty is child labour. The data available on child labour illustrates that close to one in three Nigerian children has to work (CIA). In 1991 efforts to improve child welfare and diminish child labour symbolically peaked at the ratification of the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The problem has intensified since. Partly this can be attributed to a demographic explosion, leading to an exceptionally young population and therefore a pressing need for child-related infrastructure. Child labour is inextricably bound to school drop-out rates, because labouring and schooling are often mutually exclusive. Nonetheless, there are an estimated eight million children working part time to afford education fees (UNICEF). Even though higher figures in girls drop-out rates might suggest that child labour is also linked to gender, such assumptions are contested by a 2005 UNICEF factsheet which supposes equal proportions of working girls and boys.

The same factsheet highlights the particularly exploitative and often abusive situation of child domestic servants. In Lagos, half of the young domestic employees have reported to know of sexually harassed servants (UNICEF 1). In regard to domestic child labour human trafficking plays a role (US State Department). Often through middlemen, children and adolescents are sent to unfamiliar households to work as servants; some are trafficked to Western countries (Pennington). A 2013 report examines human trafficking from Nigeria to the UK (Cherti, Pennington and Grant). It illustrates the highly complex inter-dynamics of a globalised world. Generally, the main areas of exploitation range from

domestic and forced labour to begging, organ harvesting or prostitution (Okoje) – such as in the fictitious case of *The Spider King´s Daughter´s* Aunty Precious.

Attempts to tackle the issue culminated in the foundation of the "National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons" (NAPTIP). This initiative has not yielded any detectable result yet. Trafficking within Nigerian boarders, so called internal trafficking, is presumed to have increased in recent years (Okpukpara et al. 4). As a consequence of increased awareness of the issue in urban areas, traffickers have intensified their efforts of targeting rural regions (Cherti, Pennington and Grant 25). Through such practices, trafficking has additionally exacerbated the situation for rural communities, which were already lagging far behind urban centres.

Like any other issue discussed here, a diversified and highly complex picture of child labour and child poverty becomes obvious. While most problems Nigeria is facing have their roots in the past, they present an immediate danger and extreme pressure to state structures today. To counteract, Nigerian leadership has to act on managing its human capital now. Especially when taking into account the global context of poverty, one should realise that worldwide manifestations of poverty change expeditiously and dynamically. I am aware of the transitory nature of the issues addressed, but primarily hope to raise awareness for global interconnection as well as promoting an enhanced understanding of Nigerian literary output and *The Spider King´s Daughter´*s in particular.

1.2   The Evolution of Nigerian Literature

Within literary criticism it has become common practice to group Nigerian literary output along generational lines. Each generation "is presumed to share formal and political qualities and represent a distinct stage in national literary development" (Dalley 15). Spinning this thought further, each stage in Nigerian literary history consists of a generational frame of roughly twenty-five years (Adesanmi and Dunton "Nigeria´s Third Generation" 14-15). The dates mentioned as turning points here are by no means definite, but rather a tentative timeline for reference and aligned to Adesanmi and Dunton´s suggestions, outlined a decade ago. Although the two scholars delivered the most comprehensive account of third generation literature produced so far, there are certain flaws to their argument. In their recent scholarly engagement, their distinction between the three generations is rather blurry. Sometimes generational breaks and continuities are not made sufficiently clear. If one wants to establish a third generation in the academic field, the two preceding generations need to be discussed and understood in order to visualise where exactly new writers depart from and why. Even though literary categories are never easy to confine, a working frame for discussion is suggested in the following section. Through focusing on most influential authors and paradigmatic themes, approximate turning points as well as continuities should become transparent.

Generational frameworks are commonly applied to African literature. Those born in the first half of the twentieth century are subsumed under the label "first generation African writers". They have experienced colonialism at its peak and in full force. In the Nigerian context, the best-known writers of this era include Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Amos Tutuola, Christopher Okigbo and many others. The literary output of the first generation reached its climax in the 1950s and 60s. Achebe´s *Things Fall Apart* was published in 1958 and is frequently mentioned as the starting point for international recognition of Anglophone African fiction (i.e. Izevbaye 484). The "second generation" was also born during British imperialist rule, but most heavily influenced by independence and subsequent stagnation and disillusionment. Several new authors, like Niyi Osundare, Femi Osofisanor Odia Ofeimun emerged. Certain writers of the first generation, one example being Flora Nwapa, also participated in this literary turn and gained wide recognition during the 1970s and 80s. In 1986 Wole Soyinka was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, because he fashioned the drama of existence "in a wide cultural perspective and with

poetic overtones" (Nobelprize). The gradual emergence of a "third generation" was characterised through protagonists born at or after independence. Authors like Ben Okri, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Chris Abani, Helon Habila or Sefi Atta have no first-hand experience of colonialism. Like their francophone counterparts, they could be termed "les enfants de la postcolonie" (Waberi). For the Anglophone African context Nigerian literature adopts a pioneering role. Nowhere else is third generation fiction and poetry as dynamic and sophisticated in qualitative and quantitative terms (Adesanmi and Dunton "Nigeria´s Third Generation" 15).

Turning to themes and motives, the intricacies of a supposedly smooth generational flux become blatantly obvious. Artistic expression has developed more fluidly than historico-political incision. While historical events like independence, civil war or military coups mark comparatively clear breaks, literary progression is characterised as referential and borrows from a variety of cultures and styles. As Izevbaye has expressed it, the multi-layered "cultural strata have had such a strong influence and writers borrow so freely across cultures that it is not always possible to determine the essential African element from the invasive or the syncretic product" (472). It is true that Nigerian literature has borrowed heavily from its own oral and performance heritage on the one hand and Anglo-European literary traditions on the other. While this fact certainly accounts for the complexity of Nigerian fiction and adds to its appeal, the search for "essentially African elements" might present a dead and essentialist end. So does the binary opposition of "African orality" and "European writing". My approach to Nigerian literature and its history acknowledges the blurry affair postcolonial writing simply is. But rather than separating so-called "African" and "European" influences, one could detect and cherish the innovative, creative and subversive elements that the distinct Nigerian context has brought to blossom.

Carving out distinct features for each generational category is almost as hard as allocating geographical influences. Stylistically early Nigerian literature drew heavily on oral heritage. Interestingly, the first recordings of traditional orality were carried out by European anthropologists. (Izevbaye 472-473) It is yet another twist of the colonial past that authors seeking "authentic" African inspiration had to turn to sources originally collected by the coloniser. The partial return inherent in putting into writing ancient forms of story-telling presented a nationalist refuge for the authors and their contemporaries who were longing for independence. The optimism with which they were awaiting

sovereign rule distinguishes the first from subsequent generations. Their idealism was paralleled with an explicit political agenda. Through providing a counter-discourse to imperialist literature, those writers sought to "restore the pride of Africans who had internalized a negative image of the self after years of denigration and mental dependency, and of being obliged to see the self through the negative representation of Africans in the discourses of others" (Izevbaye 484). The reaction was a rising pan-African consciousness, African nationalism and obsessive depictions of the rural and folkloric. An elegiac and tragic mood is typical of early novels and plays. The main aim of authors like Tutuola was to reveal a written supposedly "African" alternative to realist and rationalist Western conventions. This is also why he and others prominently employed non-standard English like the Nigerian pidgin variety.

One of the major breaks from generation one to two is the transition from pan-African idealism to the realism of independence (Izevbaye 476). The formerly idealised western-educated African hero, modelled after the early writers themselves, gave rise to more complex, often satirical or even absurd characters. New African leaders were challenged and had to justify their incapacities. This was reflected in literature assessing their accomplishments in pursuing the former dream of home-rule. Like other postcolonial writers, second generation Nigerian authors explored the "new (national) space for the [formerly] colonized" (Gikandi 310). The nation was thus a prevalent topos. Continuity can be found in prolonged reliance on the "urtext" of traditionalism, developed by earlier writers. In other words, the second generation´s contemporary narratives were largely informed by the country´s past and tradition (Adesanmi and Dunton "Nigeria´s Third Generation"15). As of the 1970s, a growing postcolonial consciousness appeared, alongside concerns and fascination with American cultural hegemony and neo-imperialism. Criticism of Nigerian leaders became fiercer and increasingly, artists committed not only their fictitious protagonists, but themselves to political action. Soyinka´s imprisonment or most tragically Ken Saro-Wiwa´s execution are two incidents marking peaks of political despotism targeting writers.

Coming back to stylistic innovations, growing feminist criticism has to be mentioned. Not only were female viewpoints largely absent before, literary portrayals of women were either one-dimensional or idealised or both. Similar observations were described as "Achebe´s empathy and Armah´s attachment to […] matrilineal values"

(Izevbaye484). Women writers like Buchi Emecheta and most prominently Flora Nwapa wrote against idealisation, introduced differentiated female viewpoints and in doing so openly challenged the male-dominated industry and society alike. Generally, Africa´s second generation´s "novels of disillusion" (Ravenscroft) featured a realistic mood of despair and have thus also been termed "the new realism" (Irele 63-64).

A preference for the realist mood can be regarded as a continuum from second to third generation. However, the first and second generations´ decidedly national political agenda dissociates their exponents from third generation literature. The new generation has become truly global and as cosmopolitan citizens deal with themes such as globalisation and migration. As outlined on the basis of first and second generation, the term "third generation writing" encapsulates the mind-set of introducing significant innovations in themes and style as of the turn of the millennia. Why Chibundu Onuzo could be subsumed under this category and what distinguishes new Nigerian authors from their predecessors is highlighted in the next chapter.

2. *The Spider King´s Daughter* – A Contextualised Reading

2.1 Chibundu Onuzo – The Author as an Exponent of a "New Generation of Nigerian Novelists"

Chibundu Onuzo is an aspiring Nigerian author, currently based in London, and the youngest female to sign a Faber & Faber two-books-deal, at the age of nineteen. In her own words, she is "Christian, Author, Nigerian, Lagosian, Aunty, Daughter, Igbo, Yoruba, Wazobia" (via Twitter).[6] Born in Lagos in 1991, Onuzo went to boarding school in England, graduated in History from King´s College, completed her MSc in Public Policy at UCL and recently returned to KCL, where she is working on her PhD, which seeks to examine the West African Students´ Union. Her debut novel *The Spider King´s Daughter* was shortlisted for the Dylan Thomas Prize and the Desmond Elliott Prize in 2012 (Stevens) as well as the Commonwealth Book Prize the following year (Kasumu). Besides writing fiction, she publishes comments on personal and political events on her blog and is a contributor to *The Guardian*.

There is more to authorship studies than mere biographical investigations into the writer´s material, psychological and educational environment. In fact, one might ask the question whether literary studies should deal with the author as a person and his/her situation of writing at all. Barthes postulated the "death of the author" in his eponymous essay and in doing so challenged traditional creator-centred approaches to interpretation.[7] While Barthes´ considerations revealed the meaning constructing power of language and fostered the birth of the reader, there are, indeed, certain aspects of unity found in a text´s origin.[8] More recent scholarly work, particularly within the field of gender as well as postcolonial studies, attempts the author´s "resurrection" (Irwin; see also Berensmeyer,

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[6] Such a multi-layered identity is typical for third-generation Nigerian writers. The popular Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie expresses her reflections on identity when she writes "I find it reductive that the different identity labels we carry must somehow be arranged in some sort of ascending or descending order. I am Igbo because I grew up speaking Igbo and was raised with Igbo cultural norms – I did not quite grasp some of the subtle differences […]. I am Nigerian because of the passport I carry and the football team I root for […]. I am African because I find similar concerns, similar ways of looking at the world, in a lot of African people and literature and history. And I am all of these and more at the same time." (49)

[7] The point made becomes clearest in Barthes´ own words:

> The author still rules in manuals of literary history, in biographies of writers, in magazine interviews […] the image of literature to be found in contemporary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his history, his tastes, his passions […] the explanation of the work is always sought in the man who has produced it, as if, through the more or less transparent allegory of fiction, it was always finally the voice of one and the same person, the author, which delivered his "confidence". (142)

[8] Cf. Barthes´ original quote which reads as follows:" […] the true locus of writing is reading. […] the unity of a text is not in its origin [author], it is in its destination [reader] […]."(144)

Buelens and Demoor; Jannidis, etc.). An emerging understanding of the author as a "conveyor of action in a socio-cultural context" (Schönert 1) can be observed. In line with such new approaches towards authorship studies, the historical, sociological, educational, political and literary discourse of Chibundu Onuzo´s reality and in how far her writing experience relates to the concept of *Third Generation Nigerian Novelists* will be under scrutiny in this paper.

For the field of literary study today, Berensmeyer, Buelens and Demoor assume a double function of the author. First, they re-introduce the *quantitative author function*, which declares the author a significant navigation tool in the sheer abundance of texts available. This point can hardly be overrated in a globalised and digitalised era, above all in the fast changing, expanding, competitive and world-comprising market of Anglophone literature. Secondly, the *qualitative author function* describes the writer as the focusing agent which in his/her role serves the reader as a point of reference. (21-22) Onuzo fulfils both functions within and beyond the emerging concept of new Nigerian novelists. The following section seeks to define this new category and Onuzo´s role in it. In a first step, the subsequent literature review traces the origin of this comparatively recent field of scholarly investigation.

Ever since two special issues were published on "Third Generation Nigerian Literature" in peer-reviewed journals (*English in Africa*, 2005 and *Research in African Literatures*, 2008), the concept has been firmly established as a valid grouping and point of reference for the analysis of contemporary Nigerian poetry and fiction. The term "third generation Nigerian" exclusively describes works produced by authors born after independence in 1960. The young artists have no first-hand experience of colonialism. Their texts´ are most significantly distinguishable through their departure from the urtext of traditionalisation. The paradigms of the urtext were established by first generation writers, who experimented with the creation of distinctively "African" alternatives to dominant Western models. Characteristic features of early Nigerian writing are the incorporation of local, pre-colonial forms of story-telling into Western formats, such as the novel. The master-narrative for first and second generation writers placed high value on rural settings and traditional influences, such as proverbs and folktales. (Adesanmi and Dunton "Nigeria´s Third Generation Writing")

Both special issues constituting the field were edited by Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton, who are quite aware of the limitations of the category they coined (cf. "Provisional Notes" 13) – so are their contributors (i.e. Garuba 51-52). According to them, the spark of interest in defining a new paradigm of categorisation was lit in 1998. At that time, a creatively distinct body of work - then primarily poetry - was rapidly expanding while meeting hardly any acknowledgement by academia, not even in Nigeria itself ("Nigeria´s Third Generation Writing" 7). There has been a surge in international interest to those new novels[9]. The rise in academic interest, albeit delayed, can partially be attributed to the growing number of international readers of Nigerian fiction. A generic shift from poetry to the novel assisted the increasing popularity of third generation texts. In this sense, contemporary Nigerian writers conformed to the current preference of the novel by the global audience. Another key reason for the proliferated popularity is the new Nigerian novels´ capacity to meaningfully comment on pressing issues of global concern. That is why, it seems helpful to shed light on certain paradigmatic themes.

Early on, traditional post-colonial themes characterised new Nigerian writing. The urban setting and concerns of deprivation, human rights abuses in a globalised system and the arbitrariness of neo-colonial power plays were conceived as paradigmatic, during the transitional period from second to third generation writing (Adesanmi and Dunton "Nigeria´s Third Generation Writing" 11). Those themes have not lost their topicality and continue to be addressed by contemporary Nigerian authors. This also holds true for the obsession with education and literacy. Third generation narratives tend to conceive books and literature as counter-offers to despotism, which explains their often downright idolatrous depiction. More recently, topoi evocative of transcultural and migrant fiction such as loneliness, displacement and surviving trauma have increasingly appeared.

Due to the absence of a ritualistic centre (Garuba), the creative space that third generation authors are exploring allows for much more "fluid plot[s], faster-paced narrative[s], and language shorn of the domestication-impulse" (Adesanmi and Dunton

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[9] Among the first internationally acclaimed novels were Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie´s *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), *Waiting for an Angel* (2002) by Helon Habila and the metropolitan novel *Graceland* (2004) by Chris Abani. All novels were considered for internationally renowned prizes. *Purple Hibiscus* was short-listed for the Orange prize and long-listed for the Booker, Habila won the Caine Prize for fiction in 2001 and Abani´s *Graceland* was short-listed for The Commonwealth Writer´s Prize in the "Best Book" category.

"Nigeria´s Third Generation Writing" 16). Together with an urban setting and euro-modernist ambience, all features mentioned before are traits of Onuzo´s writing.

A shifting focus away from rural backdrops is representative for third generation literature, which is frenetically occupied with urban settings. New writing departs from highlighting tradition and the rural and thereby breaks with earlier conventions seeking to infiltrate colonial master-narratives. Fictional investigations into the urban experience have so far been undertaken by numerous authors, including Abani´s *Graceland*, Adesokan´s *Roots in the* Sky, Atta´s *Everything Good will Come*, Cole´s *Every Day is for the Thief* and Habila´s *Waiting for an Angel.* All these novels are set in Lagos. In their collections *The Thing Around Your Neck* and *Nights of the Creaking Bed* Adichie and Kan respectively, explore the Lagosian urban space in several narratives through the short story. Indeed, the pulsating African megalopolis is often more than just a background to a narrative. It serves simultaneously as a means to drive the plot forward through lending its dynamics and presenting the author with infinite possibilities as well as constituting an object of research itself. An urban setting adds to the appeal for international readers of contemporary Nigerian novels. Urbanisation is a global phenomenon and places third generation texts at the heart of transnational textualities.

Another issue of global significance is migration. Numerous Nigerian novels explore the realities of migration and living in diaspora[10]. One might go as far as naming the authors´ experiences of migration one of the key influencing factors on recent texts. The most successful writers initially published their texts abroad and many still live outside of Nigeria (Abani, Adichie, Atta, Habila, etc.). Therefore, the study of diaspora writing is strongly connected to a scholarly engagement with third generation Nigerian literature.

Onuzo has a personal history of migration. She came to the UK aged fourteen. For her, it was the distance from the familiar environment which made setting her stories within a Nigerian frame possible. Differently put, it was not before her country of birth was physically removed that she could perceive it as a place special enough to constitute the

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[10] Due to the fact that the study of diaspora has recently been adopted by various disciplines and consequently diversified, Morawska´s definition is provided. This is done in order to clarify what "diaspora" means for the purpose of this paper:

> […] the term ´diaspora` [refers] to ethno-national groups whose members reside out of their home country (moved from there either forcibly or voluntarily) and who retain a sense of membership in their group of origin and a collective representation and concern for the wellbeing of their homeland which plays a significant role in their lives in both a symbolic and normative sense. (1030)

setting of a narrative. Her first attempts at writing adduce a predilection for American themes and settings (Onuzo interviewed in Channels Television, 2:20-3:08) and indeed she stated in an interview that she "didn´t see [Nigeria] as fiction-worthy" (*InTouch*, n. pag.). Onuzo exemplifies a shared experience by post-colonial writers whose initiation into reading was heavily influenced by primarily British and American classics.[11]

Writing in diaspora is one of the fields where Nigerian paradoxes are paramount. On the one hand, Nigeria is believed to be the cradle of numerous award winners (a Nobel laureate amongst them) and seen as a driving force of African Anglophone writing, past and present. On the other hand, it has lately been associated as the place of birth of now exiled intellectuals and estranged artists (Diala 5). Parallel to these opposing images, there is the persistent romantic stylisation of the artist as a detached genius (Smith 275). Morawska attempts to adjust three intransigent claims dominating the study of diaspora literature. Firstly, the presumption that authors physically separated from their homeland produce either merely idealising or unambiguously hostile texts. Secondly, critics frequently base their argument on the notion of distance to the artist´s host country. Lastly, a potentially artificial distinction has been established between transnationalism and diasporism. Presumably clear-cut boundaries should always be met with suspicion, particularly when dealing with a concept as complex and dynamic as diaspora. The first dogmatic assumption will be re-adressed while analysing Onuzo´s novel. However, one can certainly not accuse the narrative of a one-sided portrayal of Nigeria, the author´s country of origin. Issues concerning emotional detachment from Britain will be disproportionally harder to explore in Onuzo´s debut novel, which is exclusively set in Lagos. Thus, this question is beyond the scope of my interpretation, so is the third common prejudice of diaspora literature, namely the distinction between transnationalism and diasporism.

The research carried out on diaspora writing has revealed a certain rivalry between third generation authors based in Nigeria and those who relocated to the West. In Nigeria, the publishing situation presents a particularly pressing problem for local writers and sheds a different light on issues related to migration. Publishing in Nigeria does offer prospects,

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[11] Adichie largely dedicated her essay "African ´Authenticity´ and the Biafran experience" to reflections on the Western books she was first confronted with, their depictions of Africa and Africans and how they have shaped her expectations of the UK and US respectively. In her childhood, Onuzo was also confronted with mainly British and American books. For a brief overview of the first novels Onuzo read as a child see the interview in the appendix (i).

albeit non-fictional works are preferred and the market is subjected to corruption. Some authors escape through the means of self-publishing (see Chukwumerije). So far, Onuzo has not managed to publish her novel in Nigeria, although she frequently expressed the desire to do so (Awomodu). For young authors who are based in Nigeria the high risks of local publishing is a source of resentment against their fellow writers abroad. Noo Saro-Wiwa (daughter of the murdered environmentalist Ken Saro-Wiwa) vocalizes a notably telling conversation with a young student from Ibadan University in her travelogue *Looking for Transwonderland*. Insecurities and concerns shared by (yet) unknown Nigerian writers are encapsulated in the student´s questions:

> It seems that Nigerian writers who make it are from the diaspora. I want to write a book, but I´m scared. Will I be able to publish it? People don´t seem to want to read books by Nigerians living in Nigeria. Do I have to travel abroad for people to like my work? (90)

While Nigerian-based authors struggle with publishing and for recognition, their colleagues abroad are in a difficult situation too. Internationally successful writers find themselves within an ambiguous net of intercultural expectations. Whereas Western reviewers crave for stories of victimisation and oppression in Africa, they are reluctant to embrace narratives of –isms (sexism, racism, nationalism, etc.) set in Europe or North America. Conversely, (female) authors are exposed to the scrutiny of predominantly male critics at home, who repeatedly negate the authenticity of novels set in Nigeria, but published abroad. The accusation to cater exclusively for Western tastes is as frequently raised as persistent. (Atta, Azuah and Unigwe in Azuah 109-111)

How Onuzo´s use of Nigerian Pidgin was discussed by some Nigerian reviewers is a good example of such authenticity debates. The Nigerian Pidgin displayed by Onuzo has been subject to major critique within the Nigerian literary community (UCL Podcast, 4:44-5:41). Even though this might not be as relevant for my argument, it certainly adds another fascinating layer to the issue of writing in diaspora. The Nigerian critics find fault in what they perceive as an inability by the writer in diaspora to adequately depict a linguistic phenomenon as vibrant and dynamic as English in a colloquial Nigerian context. What they are implying by such criticism is that a writer detached from his or her home country cannot fully grasp the complexities and dynamics of contemporary Nigeria.

Let us come back to the reception of third generation Nigerian literature. One preliminary consideration, already briefly touched upon, concerns the discontinuity of

attention paid to third generation writers. Whereas authors classified as "third generation Nigerian" receive significant journalistic coverage, the academic interest in their works remains comparatively narrow and low (Adesanmi and Dunton "Provisional Notes" vii). Similar observations can be made in the case of Onuzo. Despite being shortlisted for various prizes (see previously), named one of *The Guardian´s* top ten African women achievers in 2012 (Allen and Ifeachor) and having featured in numerous articles, interviews, videos and podcasts online; to date (status as of June 2015) no sustained scholarly analysis of her work has been published.

Underrepresentation frequently ties in with gender inequality. There have been paradoxical tendencies as regards female writers and their representation in literary and public discourse. While others perceive female authors as "the face" (Adesanmi qtd. in Azuah 109) of third generation Nigerian writing, they themselves tend to believe to be "twice marginalized" (Unigwe in Azuah 110). Some feel that they are pushed to the fringes as writing women and as migrant writers (in their respective countries of residence). The fact that a literary glass ceiling, even in the West, still exists has been made evident on numerous occasions. Further proof is added by the empirical approach of organisations such as *VIDA: Women in Literary Arts.* The chart below was published by VIDA and visualises gender inequality in the prestigious *Times Literary Supplement*, in the year Onuzo was featured in one of its reviews.
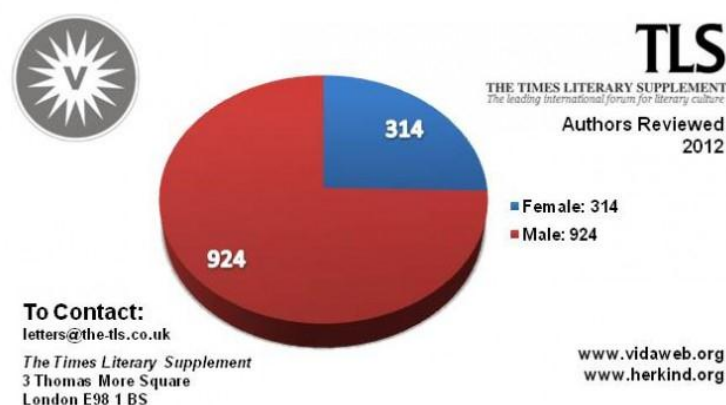

Fig.1: VIDA Count 2012 - "Times Literary Supplement"

A different aspect relating to gender inequality and Anglophone West-African literature is the patriarchal status-quo in the respective countries of origin. Certain female Nigerian authors (see Azuah) claim that only through and in literature they can escape

patriarchy. The factor of female empowerment has been particularly pressing within Igbo society, because their oral tradition is heavily centred on men (Unigwe in Azuah 111). Some analysts name this argument as the main reason for the preponderance of Igbo women among third generation novelists.

Turning to the preferred format of contemporary Anglophone Nigerian writing, the novel can safely be suggested as both the most popular and prestigious form; at the expense of formerly flourishing live performances and poetry (Adesanmi and Dunton "Nigeria´s Third Generation Writing" 12). However, the supremacy of the novel is not unique to the Nigerian context and can be observed on a global scale. Within the Nigerian literary scene, Onuzo is in good company; well-known authors like Biyi Bandele, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Chris Abani, Helon Habila, Sefi Atta[12] and others favour the format of the novel. Adesanmi and Dunton go as far as terming current tendencies the "phenomenal revival of the Nigerian novel" ("Provisional Notes" viii).

In this quote resonates the notion of literary forefathers, such as Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka. It fosters the assumption of a golden era in Nigerian literature culminating shortly before and after independence that is yet to be revived to its former strength. Indeed, the question arises whether a genealogical categorisation is expedient. One might criticise that it encourages beliefs of a clear-cut, homogeneous, new-born and hence "pre-/immature" generation of novelists seeking to emulate the grandeur of their literary predecessors. Obviously, such perceptions oversimplify mutual interference, creative references and inter-generational stylistic innovations. Dalley was among the first to outspokenly question the prevalent categorisation on the grounds of its dependence on "spatio-temporal constructs that fail to account for the complexity of the texts it classifies" (15). Not only the quantity of texts available, but also their ambiguity and global interrelations require approaches transcending the national-generational frame. On the other hand, such a guiding framework allows for synchronic and diachronic comparisons of literary trends. To a certain extent, such literary categories subvert prevailing romantic ideas of the writer as a genius and instead apprehend them as being children of their own time.

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[12] A selection of their acclaimed novels include *Burma Boy; Purple Hibiscus / Half of a Yellow Sun / Americanah*; *Song for Night / Becoming Abigail / Graceland*; *Oil on Water / Measuring Time / Waiting for an Angel* and *Everything Good Will Come* respectively, to mention but a few.

Despite the validity of critique, the potential of categories to focus and sharpen the mind is striking. Let us, therefore, re-direct the discussion to the benefits of concepts such as "third generation Nigerian literature". This chapter has already shown that meaningful results can be gained through a comparison between texts comprising this new category and its authors. It has also proven beneficial to detect and compare influences from previous generations of writers. Similarly, literary categories facilitate a summary of problematic aspects.

Undoubtedly, (Western) scholars are treading on thin ice and have to reflect continuously whether common accusations, claiming that Western media and academia try to usurp Anglophone Nigerian literature, might hold a grain of truth. Or, to put it in other words:

> [They] run the risk of reinforcing the generalized perception – in Nigeria – that the third generation novel, like its predecessors, has been hijacked by Western mechanisms of legitimation and validation, with attendant consequence of a new canon being formed and consolidated by Euro-America […]. (Adesanmi and Dunton "Provisional Notes" ix)

This paper can be perceived as an attempt to counter-act such mechanisms. Through choosing *The Spider King´s Daughter*, this paper introduces and values a previously neglected novel to the academic discussion and thereby challenges the prevailing canon.

Pinpointing the location of literature is influenced by questions of production and circulation. In the Nigerian context of production, the university cities of Ibadan and Nsukka have defended their reputation as seeds of literary innovations. In addition, Lagos has entered the scene alongside a growing number of Western cities that the writers have moved to. It is exactly this entanglement with mobility and globalisation that characterises this body of work and differentiates it from what has been created by previous generations. Transnational books and migrant writers complicate the matter and annihilate assumptions of *a* national literary tradition and its continuity (Walkowitz 527-528). One might attribute weakness to Walkowitz´ proposition to read contemporary migrant literature "within several national traditions" (529). Perhaps a reading beyond the national would be more representative for the narratives we deal with. A useful alternative is, for instance, the notion of "networks" of tradition (Damrosch). This concept has been established to cater for the "variety of worlds" (Damrosch) underlying, presented and deconstructed in World Literature. While this paper relies on the notion of a national literary tradition too, it is

highly aware of that and tries to transcend the national whenever possible. Reading *The Spider King´s Daughter* through networking eyes and resisting the temptation of thinking inside (national) boxes, while concurrently employing categories - when necessary and beneficial - has been an important principle of the literary analysis that is to follow.

2.2 Reading the Contemporary Nigerian Novel – Selected Themes in *The Spider King´s Daughter*

The previous chapter has explored the author´s background and the possible influences current literary trends might have on a narrative and its reception. This chapter is devoted to the possibilities the prose form of the novel presents and how the author chose to employ these options. It will therefore be concerned with plot, narrative strategies and influences of filming techniques on the novel´s structure. Initially, it will only briefly touch upon narrative technique, as the effect of such tools will be readdressed in the thematic chapters (2.2.2 - 2.2.4).

2.2.1 Plot and Structure in *The Spider King´s Daughter*

When analysing prose fiction it has proven useful to distinguish between categories subsumed under the question of what is told – the story – and how the narrative is told – the discourse level. The evaluation of the story level generally comprises events, characters and setting, while discursive approaches towards narratology are concerned with the narrative transmission, chronology and character identification processes (Lethbridge and Mildorf). The overall question applied to any investigation into literature is how to unravel formal codes to determine their influence on the construction of meaning. Different periods in literary scholarship favoured different areas of investigation. The present situation is characterised by the absence of a dominant paradigm. Therefore, it seems reasonable to combine several approaches and place individual emphasis on relevant topics. In this literary analysis a clarification of terminology will anticipate an engagement with images of modern Nigeria, followed by investigations into the characters´ relationships and questions of identity. These questions, traditionally not subsumed under discourse, will be interwoven with aspects of narrative transmission. While such an approach deviates from the common structure of literary papers, it allows to put teenage learners´ interest centre stage.

Since the late 20th century the focus of literary studies has shifted towards narratology. This tendency has been subsumed under the term "narrative turn" (Fludernik "Conversational Narration"). Even though narrative theory has diversified in recent years and various subdisciplines have emerged – psychoanalytic, feminist, postcolonial and

cultural studies-oriented approaches are most prominently among them (Fludernik "Histories" 37) – structuralist terms form the analytical basis for the majority of scholars in the field. To date, structuralist terminology - in line with scholars like Genette or Stanzel – still commonly constitutes the foundation of narrative analysis. Genette and Stanzel use different terminology, but some of their concepts largely correspond[13]. Therefore, a familiarity with their core terms is expected – they are applied without further explanation in the sections of this paper which analyse the narrative situation. This is not to say that recent paradigm shifts, above all in the field of cognitive narratology and a fashionable concern with emotive aspects (see Fludernik "Narratology in the Twenty-First Century" 926) will be ignored, on the contrary. They will resurface during the analysis. Narrative Ethics and Narrative Empathy will additionally be considered when discussing the novel´s appeal for young adult readers. It can be argued that focusing on narratology helps to stake out the intersecting sphere of multiple forms of art and story-telling mingling within the format of the novel, as will be addressed in chapter 2.2.1. Due to the fact that this debut novel was written by a young, still relatively unknown author and has yet to attract academic interest, a brief plot summary is provided.

On the story level, *The Spider King´s Daughter* is the tale of a friendship between a dissimilar pair of protagonists; the street hawker, Runner G, and a wealthy young woman of roughly the same age, Abikẹ Johnson. They meet when Abikẹ, from the vantage point of her air-conditioned jeep, buys ice-cream off the hawker, who makes his and his family´s living on the streets of Lagos. Puzzled by his sophisticated English and good looks, she keeps returning until a tentative friendship develops. The narrative changes its course as Abikẹ´s father is increasingly entangled in the life of several characters. Mr. Johnson´s shady business practises are progressively unmasked and comprise corruption, human trafficking and allegedly the commission of the murder of Runner G´s father. He was a lawyer determined to reveal the business tycoon´s illegal ventures. Gradually, the protagonists´ innocent friendship is contaminated with deceit, mounting insecurities and unspoken accusations. The narrative reaches its climax in a dramatic scene, in which the traumatised hawker attempts a failed assassination of the rich despot. Notwithstanding, in the same

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[13] To give an example, Genette´s homodiegetic narrator is comparable to Stanzel´s concept of the first-person narrator. (Uni Freiburg "Narrators and Narrative Situation")

scene, Mr. Johnson is killed by one of his own neglected sons, who takes revenge on the indifferent patriarch.

Apart from the main plot-line, there are several other strands of narrative. The emotionally abusive father-daughter relationship between Mr. Johnson and Abikẹ is one subplot line, so is the hawker´s family situation and history or the story of Aunty Precious, a victim of human trafficking. The multiple minor plot-lines are carefully intertwined with the main one of the protagonists' friendship, which for the hawker eventually turns into a quest for revenge. It is therefore fair to speak of multiple plots with one foregrounded strand.

The setting helps the reader to navigate within the different plots. In simple terms, the world inhabited by rich Lagosians is determined by deceit, jealousy and envy, whereas certain characters in the poorer parts develop along an adapted noble-savage topos. Neither Aunty Precious (explicitly characterised by her telling name) nor the beggar Mr. T can follow through with actively assisting Mr. Johnson´s murder, although both of them would have comprehensible motives for revenge. The neighbourhood associated with those deprived but noble characters – the area around the hawker´s home address Mile 12 – becomes a symbolic space, because it indicates lower social status. Soon, Mile 12 is synonymous with living in poverty. A range of difficulties facing deprived communities are touched upon throughout the novel (including gang and knife crime, disillusioned teenagers without prospects, armed robbery, domestic violence, inadequate infrastructure and police negligence, to mention but a few aspects). Despite the backdrop of destitution, casual violence and petty crimes, those Mile 12-characters featured most prominently develop into symbols for decency, strong values and principles. In this sense, the minor characters related to Runner G´s Lagos serve as foil-characters. Their function is to heighten the contrast between them and their wealthy, cruel and selfish counterparts in Abikẹ´s circle of friends.

The choice of narrative voice is at the heart of *The Spider King´s Daughter*. The multi-viewpoint novel alternates between the first person narration of a male teenage street hawker and of his wealthy female friend. The two protagonists tell their own, first-hand point of view of their friendship. Visually, the two distinct points of view are also set apart. Abikẹ´s account is printed in italics, the hawker´s narration in normal print. Such a visualisation provides a first indication of the narrators´ distinct environments,

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personalities and approaches towards their fate. Abikẹ´s luxurious everyday life is visually juxtaposed with the hawker´s reduced and plain routines. First person narration provides insights into internal processes of the narrator, but obviously fails to explicate the consciousness of other characters. The fact that the novel is told from two distinct, yet interrelated, points of view adds complexity to the perspectivic structure of the text, not least because the relationships of two narrators to the various other characters are persistently re-negotiated. Concurrently, the friendship of the two autodiegetic narrators themselves is constantly re-evaluated. Each time the perspective is altered, the reader gains a more thorough understanding of the focalisers´ experiences, through synchronising two unreliable accounts. For incidents they have not directly experienced themselves, first person narrators rely heavily on information supplied by other characters. Initially, the hawker chooses not to listen to negative information about his new friend, but insidiously he is sensitive to such obnoxious remarks about Abikẹ, by her friends (121), half-brothers (128) and employees (229). It can be deduced that the narrative situation lays the foundation for the plausibility of mutual misunderstandings and ultimately to the crumbling bond between the narrating protagonists (see chapter 2.4.4 "Climaxing Misunderstandings" for a more thorough analysis of this issue). Moreover, multiperspectivity is an ideal tool to portray inequality in a differentiated, non-generalised way. The two focalisers from the respective extremes of the socio-economic strata point to the wide range of possible realities lying in between (see 2.3).

The lack of omniscience and omnipresence creates additional suspense. Apprehensions might neither be explicitly raised nor realised by the narrators themselves, resulting in contingent, and uneasy premonitions on behalf of the reader. In the readers` special role as confidants of both main characters, they realise that the protagonists are not entirely honest to each other. The reader witnesses how and why their initially innocent friendship is more and more often stained by concealment, mistrust and even deceit. Such themes are reminiscent of contemporary Nigerian film. However, as will be discussed below, thematic similarities are not the only aspect borrowed from the booming Lagosian film industry.

2.2.2 Popular Fiction – Approaching Love, Politics and Nollywood in *The Spider King´s Daughter*

When arguing that *The Spider King´s Daughter* should be considered a piece of popular fiction, a broader definition of the category has to be applied. Defining "popular" "African" fiction is a "profoundly unsettling" (Higginson vii) task. To classify literature as "African" is - for evident reasons of generalisation - a controversial subject. Not least, because referring to its equivalent, "European fiction", is almost unthinkable. The mutable nature of the notion "popular" adds to those difficulties, so do ambiguous scholarly conceptions of the term as well as of its history[14]. Building on Marxist traditions and Gramsci in particular, the Manchester Cultural Studies School acknowledges the counter-hegemonic potential of popular mass culture. During the post-war years, Africa was perceived as pre-industrial by the Manchester School and therefore neglected, but applying their views to the former colonial fringes opens new perspectives. Such a viewpoint adds layers of meaning to "popular fiction" in a postcolonial context, as texts like those subsumed under the label "Third Generation Nigerian Writing" can be interpreted as sites of cultural struggle and challenge to Western hegemony. Unlike Ogede, who promotes a rather narrow interpretation of the category, Glover and McCracken apply a wide view of popular culture and its products. An approach like theirs on the one hand paves the way for comprehending the genre´s hybrid nature and constant flux. On the other hand, it unravels powerful influences, like the continuous impact of film on print and vice versa (Glover and McCracken 7).

Techniques and content originally associated with the Nigerian film industry (in an allusion to Hollywood and Bollywood generally referred to as Nollywood) feature in *The Spider King´s Daughter*. There is, of course, the direct reference to Abike´s mother, who used to be a Nollywood actress, but there are more subtle hints and borrowings from the third biggest film industry in the world. When comparing the story level of the book with typical Nollywood narratives, the similarities are striking. As regards paradigmatic setting and story, Haynes´ description of the films produced by the Lagos-based film industry could be applied almost one-to-one to Onuzo´s debut novel:

> [Nollywood films] present Lagos as turbulent and dangerous landscape, where class divisions are extreme but permeable, and enormous wealth does not buy insulation

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[14] An etymological survey of the word "popular" reveals the vastly varying connotations of the term throughout the last two centuries (cf. Higginson).

from chaos and misery. They show […] forces permeating all social levels, particularly the wealthiest. A shared realism […] creates a considerable coherence in the representation of Lagos, despite the size and variety of the city […]. (131)

It is not just the mood, style and themes that bear resemblance. Techniques employed in the majority of Nollywood productions are translated into the book. One such tool typical for Nollywood storytelling is fast pacing. According to Onuzo the first draft of her novel lacked a straight-forward drive. Her agent´s suggestion to accelerate the narrative´s pace was incorporated through a second narrator (InTouch). Because characters function as agents of action, it does not come as a surprise that two focalisers speed up the narrative considerably. Additionally, the increasingly fast paced narration creates a sense of losing control. Only the reader (potentially) manages to reflect on the approaching disaster. The narrators are entirely caught up in the speed and intricacy of the story they tell/experience. This holds true especially for the hawker. Interestingly enough, Abikę´s voice was added at a later stage in the novel´s creation (Onuzo in Brittle Paper). Unexpectedly, it is the young woman´s energy and desperate yearning for changing her character, liberating herself from her past and intensifying her relationships which drives the plot forward over extended stretches and encourages the reader´s sympathy.

Fast pacing goes hand in hand with rapid switches from one perspective to the other. This is another Nollywood technique appearing in Onuzo´s debut novel. In an interview, the author admits how strongly Nollywood has influenced her when structuring the narrative:

> The way I've structured the scenes borrows quite heavily from Nollywood filming techniques. If you've ever watched a Nollywood movie, the main character will walk in on her husband cheating on her, the camera will zoom to her eyes widening in horror, then the scene will change and we have to wait to find out what happens next. I do this kind of thing quite a few times in *The Spider King's Daughter*. (Brittle Paper n. pag.)

Indeed, *The Spider King´s Daughter* is saturated with cinematic cliff hangers. They occur in the narrations of the hawker and the rich girl alike. One such instance on Abikę´s side is the scene in which she realises that her father has found out about her friendship with a young man clearly unbefitting in terms of socio-economic class. On page 44 her narration is abruptly discontinued by the hawker´s justification to Mr T´s investigations as to how Abikę and Runner G were getting on during their first date:

> *´So, Abikẹ, where have you been? ´*
> *He knew.*
>
> *´That´s all you know about her? After an hour? `*
> *´Mr T, it might seem small to you but it´s quite important. She has a nice laugh*
>   *[…]*

It is not until page 50 - six pages later - that her account continues exactly at the point of interruption:

> *´So, Abikẹ, where have you been? `*
> *My father rarely asks such a direct question without knowing the answer. […]*

Through being socialised within an increasingly visual society and being familiar with filming techniques, the readers are likely to imagine "the camera […] zoom[ing] to her eyes widening in horror" in scenes like the one just excerpted. This obviously holds not only, but especially true for those acquainted with Nollywood filming conventions.

Multilayered interplays between different episodes and characters are other features common for films produced in Lagos. In *The Spider King´s Daughter,* loose ends are tied up through connecting the different strands of narratives as well as making the characters' connections to Mr Johnson explicit. Little by little, the narrative reveals how almost all relevant characters (the hawker´s entire family, Aunty Precious, Mr T, Wale and - in her own right - Abikẹ) are victims of Mr Johnson.

Comparing Onuzo´s novel with films produced in Lagos puts the narrative structure of the text at centre stage, and dealing with how the narrative is structured gives rise to questions of genre. Throughout the literary analysis, such concerns will be readdressed. At first glance, the readers possibly expect a romance. The story-level sets off along the lines of the formulaic "rich kid meets poor kid" and they start a (possibly) romantic relationship. Further, the characters seem to fit into paradigmatic moulds of "hero (in the hawker´s case) rescues princess (Abikẹ in her role as heiress to the throne of the Johnson empire) from the villain (Mr. Johnson)". Critics and Bloggers have fuelled the flames of speculation. Kasumu has described the novel as a "modern-day Romeo and Juliet" (n. pag.) and Mwenge has called it a "story of love" (n. pag.) Meanwhile the author has continuously dismissed such interpretations as mere marketing tricks (i.e. ICSNKwenuTV 5:45-5:55). Indeed, there are twists to the formula. A significant one occurs already at the protagonists' initial meeting, because this time the girl is in the more influential socio-economic position. With her

imperious manner and in the status symbol of an air-conditioned jeep, Abikẹ is powerful enough to force the hawker into running after her. As the narrative progresses, it does not fully comply with stereotypical notions of romantic love. Sexuality is merely lingering, or at least rather innocent. The instances where physical affection is actually displayed are about holding hands (96), kissing (102), accidentally touching (124) or solely imagining to do so (100). Through neglecting sexuality and not entirely catering to the readers´ expectations of romantic love, *The Spider King´s Daughter* does not correspond to the rule of "sex sells", commonly central to popular fiction (Mitchell). It seems that Onuzo wants to depict "more" than a love story and is highly aware of the politics of economic disparities the plot is set against. Other generic options, such as the category of trauma novel or bildungsroman, will be explored at a later stage of this paper (see 2.4.2 and 2.5.1 respectively).

Ultimately, it is in the eye of the beholder whether *The Spider King´s Daughter* should be considered a star-crossed love story, trauma fiction, a coming of age tale, a city novel or a story about revenge[15]. Another justifiable interpretation would be that the text is primarily a multi-viewpoint novel, simply depicting images of contemporary Nigeria. Possibly, an either-or decision neither does justice to the text nor should it be aspired to, as there are arguments in favour of all of the above and other categories could possibly be applied as well.

Simultaneous with emotional aspects of love, identity and relationships, an implicit political focus is detectable. Gaylard (181) suggests that textual representations of politics occur within different realms of a text and that their appearance is not necessarily genre specific. The characters´ behaviours, utterances and political standpoints are one such area of occurrence. Others are implicit statements revealing the author´s opinion, the delicate matter of the text´s reception and the context of the writing. Politics in *The Spider King´s Daughter* most explicitly resides in the descriptions of the social, cultural and economic milieu of the characters and their corresponding behaviour. The vast gap in Nigerian income distribution – an explosive political issue - and how such circumstances shape the central characters and their relationships is the focus of the next chapter.

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[15] As the author suggests in the interview conducted for this paper (see appendix ii).

2.3 Depictions of a Disparate Nigeria – Wealth and Poverty in *The Spider King´s Daughter*

> So this was the real gain. The only real gain. This was the thing for which poor men had fought and shouted. This was what it had come to: not that the whole thing might be overturned and ended, but that a few black men might be pushed closer to their masters, to eat some of the fat into their bellies too. That had been the entire end of it all. (Armah 126)

In line with this quotation, *The Spider King´s Daughter* draws a rather bleak picture of contemporary Nigeria. Upon first glance, there is no happy ending in sight, neither on a national nor on a personal level. As previously discussed, socio-economic inequality is a visible reality and a lingering threat to stability in contemporary Nigeria. To aggravate the matter, this gap is currently widening. But how can a situation as disparate as the Nigerian status quo be narrated in a plausible, sensible and meaningful manner? Onuzo attempts to defuse this delicate issue through the narrative structure of a multi-perspective novel. That the depiction of a disparate Nigeria is convincing owes considerably to the narrative technique employed. Due to the alternating accounts of the two protagonists, the reader gains insight into the two opposing worlds comprising Nigeria´s unequal society. Besides personal misunderstandings, the two distinct narrative voices successfully achieve to foreground disparity, one of the novel´s paramount themes. Against the backdrop of an ill-fated love story, Onuzo exemplifies what kind of people these "few black men who eat some of the fat into their bellies" are and how they "pushed themselves closer to their masters". The narrative suggests the improbability that this post-colonial nightmare might be suddenly "overturned and ended".

Social divisions condense in aesthetic representations. In the text, the visual delineation of such opposing factions through font – italics in the case of the female and standard print for the male protagonist - is amongst the most obvious. So are motifs of acute food shortage/abundance, safety deficiency/precautions, substandard/luxurious housing and inadequate/prestigious schooling. The leitmotif of squalor vs. opulence manifests in these motifs. In addition, the binary opposition of wealth and poverty is encoded more subtly within the narrative situation.

As a first step in analysing the literary depictions of the widening Nigerian gulf as well as the connecting bridges between different socio-economic status groups, the narrative situation is examined. Encouraging sensitivity to narrative transmission and to

how it can influence the construction of meaning is thus central to this section. Concomitant of such evaluations are questions of plausibility and authenticity. Generally speaking, strategies of multiple narration, at times referred to as polyperspectivity, define the "mode of storytelling in which multiple and often discrepant viewpoints are employed for the presentation and evaluation of a story and its storyworld" (Hartner 1). Amongst the functions multiple-viewpoint narration fulfils is to highlight the "perceptually, epistemologically or ideologically restricted nature of individual perspectives and/or draw attention to various kinds of differences and similarities between the points of view presented therein" (Hartner 1). Combined with acknowledging an enhanced engagement of the readers, by forcing them to scrutinise the text and to continuously reflect, compare and contextualise both accounts, Hartner´s definition aptly summarises the effect multiperspectivity has on the reader of *The Spider King´s Daughter*. It also makes apparent how influentially the narrative technique contributes to the overall meaning of the text.

As to the key themes, inequality is the first to be explored in detail. According to the *UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, poverty is "characterised by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights" (2). In accordance with this definition, poverty is understood as a lack of material and cultural capital. The following analysis incorporates physical, psychological and social needs and in doing so attempts to do justice to a scientific, interdisciplinary, up-to-date understanding of poverty. When considering poverty as a human rights issue, as suggested by the same UN document, "the rights to work, […] housing, food, health and education" (1) have to be regarded. These major aspects in approaching the field of poverty will form the basis of analysis in this literary thesis.

2.3.1   Physical Needs

In the hawker´s home food is scarce and the lack of it one of the aspects hardest to adjust to. Every day, the memories of a well-situated childhood painfully come to his mind when confronted with the "Mile 12 pottage" (81) the family eats now. Comments accompanying

meals and their preparation guide the reader´s attention towards the recent changes the family still struggles to adapt to:

> [...] this dish was not the yam pottage of my childhood. It was born of the necessity of Mile 12 [...]. (81)

> I picked up half a tuber of yam and began to peel its skin. The mould that had eaten into it, I extracted, careful not to take off any white flesh. When we first moved here, Jokẹ used to peel yam like we still had money. (80)

Direct contact with plentiful food at Abikẹ´s house exposes the importance of it to Runner G – he forgets everything and everyone around him. Additionally, it once again strengthens the partition between the protagonists' everyday experiences.

> It was only when the maid entered with the food that I got some respite. She came with a tray of jollof rice. The jollof we eat now is always a pale orange colour because tomatoes are expensive, but there in front of me was food from my childhood. [...] I even forgot Abikẹ until only a few forkfuls remained then I remembered I was not in my house. I set my fork aside and let those grains testify to the fact that I was fed at home. (75)

By the use of dramatic irony, the issue of malnutrition and undernourishment is foregrounded. The reader already knows about the difficulties of the hawker to provide for sufficient nutrition. The grains meant to testify that he was fed at home crumble to pieces of deception. The hawker is neither fed by anyone but himself, nor is the food available at home enough.

In Abikẹ´s home, provisions are only consciously thought of when discussing the catering plans for her party. It appears ironic to witness the teenager´s agitation about Chinese restaurants, while knowing that the hawker´s family is struggling to provide local food.

> *It was the fifth restaurant and it seemed no Chinese in Lagos would do. In Jade Pavilion, their stir fry did not have enough water chestnut; in Mr Wong, the sesame seed looked stale; in Madam Chi they had served us duck with plum sauce not hoisin. Plum sauce!* (172)

Whereas this unreasonable excitement is unnoticed by the female narrator, she does reflect on the price of the catering. At this point of the story she incorporates the hawker´s reality and becomes aware of the paradoxical injustices of their contrasting lives.

> *One million, for greasy noodles that didn´t even have water chestnuts?*
> *´ Abikẹ darling, that´s a good price. `*

With that you could by ten years of hawking.
´I can´t go any lower. `
A hundred stalls at Tejuosho.[16]
´Take it. `
Of course Nkem was right. A million was only four thousand pounds, a handbag.
(173)

Onuzo uses food as a means to heighten the difference between the protagonists, stimulate flashbacks and elucidate memories of a more affluent past. Such recollections further amplify the poverty-wealth dichotomy. Food is also relevant to the depiction of trauma, but this aspect will be dealt with at a later stage of this paper (see chapter 2.4.2).

Housing is one of the most basic necessities of every human being. The whole scale of different options when it comes to accommodation is apparent in the comparison of the neighbourhoods Runner G and Abikẹ call their home. The following quote presents how the male narrator perceives the socially troubled district of Mile 12 as well as the spacious Johnson estate:

> As I turned into my street, I was disgusted by the ugliness that even moonlight could not soften. The rubbish heaps that looked like burial mounds; the candlelit house fronts that shed light on scenes made uglier by the flickering jaun-diced glow cast on them: melon-bellied children chasing a lame dog with sticks, a man squatting in the shadows, showing solidarity by shitting pellets into his neighbour´s compound. […] We are luckier than most to have a two-bedroom flat all to ourselves. (54)

Runner G´s neighbourhood is reminiscent of a scene from hell. Starving children, garbage and excrement meet with the gloomy, almost catacomb-like atmosphere created by flickering candlelight, shadows and "rubbish heaps that looked like burial mounds". This setting is in stark contrast to what he sees when visiting his friend:

> As we drove up to her house, I wondered what type of wealth it would take to make such an oasis, green grass watered by sprinklers while half of Lagos had no running water. […] When we reached Abikẹ´s house, I covered a sharp intake of breath with a cough. I had seen big houses before, great colossal brutes that swallowed guests, but this thing was large in a way that did not make sense. (71)

These quotes are accounts of how the hawker experiences his and Abikẹ´s accommodation. Expressions alluding to cemeteries could more broadly be traced to the semantic field of death ("burial mounds", "moonlight", "candlelit", "shadows", etc.). When juxtaposed with a lushly growing, fertile "oasis", the binary opposition of life and death immediately

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[16] Tejuosho is the name of a local market. The hawker dreams of possessing his own stall there.

suggests itself. Such opposing descriptions starkly contrast the characters' lives. In no way can the hawker's "fortunate" position of three family members living in a derelict two-bedroom flat be compared to the luxurious space providing the setting for Abikẹ's everyday life. Nevertheless, first suspicions are anticipated as Runner G wonders "what type of wealth" laid the foundation for the mansion. He and his reader are soon to find out that the wrong type of money played a considerable role.

While water is yet another commodity available in abundance for the female protagonist – sprinkled lawns and an indoor swimming pool included - the hawker lives in the "half of Lagos" without running water. He and his sister have to fetch "water from the communal tap" (79).

Clearly, the neighbourhood determines the social status. In the following example the Sodipos' new address stands for the family's recent fall from grace – Mile 12 becomes a synonym for poverty.

> [T]his dish was […] born of the necessity of Mile 12 just as my culinary skills were born of my new address. In Maryland, I never even knew how to light a stove. I had to learn after we moved here, like I had to learn to chase after cars with ice cream balanced on my head. (81)

It was the economics of hawking which sparked Onuzo's interest in the novel's subject matter during a school project. The girl she interviewed could not see an alternative to selling cheap goods on the streets. (Channels Television 3:52-5:33) Similarly, the fictional character inspired by the interviewee hardly had another choice, but to favour work over school. Yet he is more ambitious and envisions a future as a trader of electronic goods at Tejuosho, a local market. For now, even his full-time job as a street hawker barely provides for his family. This does not stop him from implementing a stringent budget, in order to save money for his future career and close part of the income gap towards his fellow Lagosians. Needless to say, hawking is not what the boy had hoped for. Little is revealed to the reader about how he got involved in his occupation, other than a reference to the inexorable downward spiral which had become his reality.

> I didn't become a hawker straight away. Six months after my father died, we moved to Mile 12 and Uncle Kayode, one of his friends, found me a place at a local school. He could not afford my private school fees nor could he find me a job […]. The place in the government school was a compromise. […] I lasted three months. […] It was

> one of my classmates that steered me to my current profession. He was bragging of a friend who made "good money" from selling sweets on the road. (37)

The indication marks of "good money" denote irony. Certainly, hawking hardly supplies enough money to sustain his family, let alone make the necessary savings to guarantee his sister´s education or the funds required to improve their situation. Once the economics of hawking are illustrated by tangible figures, this becomes a certainty.

> I took home seventy-five naira[17] that day. After chasing ten cars and selling five hundred naira´s worth of sweets, I could not even buy a loaf of bread. (40)

The more extreme the disparity of income is within a group, the more unequal are the respective societies. Within such unequal communities, feelings of stress, frustration, anxiety and competition are frequent, leading to amplified pressure for members of high as well as low income groups. (Whitworth 726) As depicted in the novel, the manifestations of the income gap mediate and determine the public and private division in every aspect, of every day. The influence of occupation on the social standing can be observed between opposing members of the respective socio-economic group and even determines the positioning within the realm of the family.

> I was man of the house at fifteen. [….] One day I found Jokẹ, leaning against the wall, crying. I wanted to join her but I had to be strong. I was the tissue bringer. (109)

At fifteen, the formerly wealthy boy has to dismiss his educational aspiration and is responsible for providing the household income for his entire family. Now, his new environment provides the only incentives for learning, such as how to address customers and gain their attention. As if this were not enough of a burden, he has to substitute his murdered father and assume the expected role of the patriarch.

This is where gender comes in. The hawker soon finds himself typecast as the family´s breadwinner. This inevitably entails the adherence to traditional gender roles. Crying or mourning for a family member is perceived as a nuisance and only acceptable for female members of the family. As the "tissue bringer", he needs to be strong and embody traits that conform to conservative hetero-normative gender distinctions.

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[17] In the year of the novel´s publication, 75 Nigerian Naira were the equivalent of approximately 0,35 Euros (calculated with the exchange rate of 1 January 2012). (Bankenverband)

2.3.2   Language, Psychological and Social Needs

The English language is inevitably charged with Western symbolism. The challenge to deploy the language of "the coloniser" with its imperialist tropes and metaphors in order to manipulate it for one's own needs is one of the major issues in post-colonial writing. Through the socialisation within a specific group and the identification as a member of the respective group we inherit a language "saturated with dominant power" (Cooper 3). Young African writers are highly aware of possible ramifications generated by the use of English. Hence, they attempt to interfere and play with common linguistic norms and standard usages (Cooper).

When dealing with two first-person narrators at once, their respective linguistic idiosyncrasies are an interesting field of investigation. At times, the narration relayed by the respective "narrating I" is suspended for sections of direct speech. In these instances of pseudo-orality the first-person narrators fade into the background and the reader can observe their ("original") oral communication patterns. To use McHale´s terms, the "narrator´s text" gives way to the "character´s text".

Fludernik has dealt extensively with what she describes as "conversational narration" or "oral narrative" and its subdivisions. In *The Spider King´s Daughter,* culturally institutionalised oral narrative[18] is absent, while written narrative strategies reminiscent of conversational speech are employed throughout the text. Such techniques can be subsumed under the term "pseudo-orality" (Fludernik "Conversational Narration") and gain momentum whenever colloquialism or dialects are foregrounded. The heavy use of sociolect as a narrative tool represents the cementation of socio-economic differences. In Onuzo´s novel Nigerian Pidgin (NP) is commonly used by characters associated with the lower strata of Lagosian society. She avoids a consequent use of NP on the part of the hawker with the effect of allowing his educated background to be constantly present. His Standard English (SE) narration distinguishes him from other hawkers, drivers and his

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[18] Instances of traditional oral narrations by appointed story-tellers have prominently featured in the writing of Nigerian´s first and second generation authors. The iconic *Things Fall Apart* is enriched by traditional fables and long-established Igbo proverbs. Performed oral narratives can also be found in recent writing, often through the mediation of a wise elderly family member, such as the grandfather in Abani´s *Song for Night*.

neighbours in Mile 12. Often he judgmentally comments on the "rotten English"[19] they speak (e.g. 27). Nevertheless, he is aware of the necessity of using NP in order to cater to the expectations of his customers and fellow hawkers alike.

> He spoke pidgin to some of his customers but the English he used with me was confident and without traces of the grammar you expect from drivers, hawkers, etcetera. His manners too were those of a host. (31)

The fact that Runner G is as conscious about when and to whom he is expected to speak in NP makes social stereotyping apparent. By implication, "drivers, hawkers, etcetera" are presupposed to speak Standard English unconfidently and with insufficient grammar. At the same time, the figure of the sophisticated hawker undermines social stereotyping, because the reader cannot be deceived and knows of the hawker´s linguistic abilities in any circumstance. In this sense, the usage of NP foregrounds the hawker´s "in-betweenness". Deleuze and Guattari allocate fictional migrants and marginalised individuals – like the hawker - the power to "scramble all the codes" (35). While concluding that he turns prevalent linguistic codes upside down would be too far-fetched, the character does manage to illustrate the importance of NP for his fictional reality. He needs to be fluent in NP in order to belong as well as to stand his ground in these tough surroundings. Even though pidgin is not used by Runner G when he is consciously narrating, NP becomes a marker of the rough life on the streets of Lagos once dialogues are featured, as in the scene when an imposter tries to intimidate the hawker:

> [My mother] never gave me advice on how to handle the touts that came here sometimes asking for ´tax`. I had dealt with one that morning, a slim, feral-looking man.
> ´Trading levy, ` he had said.
> ´I don pay your people already. `
> ´Nah lie. `
> ´I tell you I don pay. No harass me. They know me in this area. `
> ´Who are you? `
> ´You don´t know me? `
> He was clearly a newcomer unattached to the main body of touts or he would have called my bluff. (14)

There is a dichotomy between Nigerian Pidgin as the language of contact as well as every day communication and Standard English, which is seen as the "language of status and

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[19] The protagonist of Ken Saro-Wiwa´s *Sozaboy* (1985) speaks a mixture of Nigerian Pidgin, local dialects and broken English. This idiolect is called "Rotten English" by the author himself and his novel considered as a milestone regarding the stylistic and linguistic implementation of NP in fiction. (Lambert)

advancement" (Lambert 284) of the educated elite. Such connotations resonate once either variety is employed in literary writing. Through the character of the hawker, this dichotomy is foregrounded. Interestingly, the hawker does not lack what Bourdieu terms *symbolic* or *cultural capital.* His life-experiences have made him, quite literally, fluent in both the language of the highest and the lowest social class. Runner G´s upbringing in an educated and well-off family has enabled him to participate in the discussions among Abikẹ´s friends, their puns and other rhetorical intentions. In order to do so, he has to adjust the language used with his hawking friends significantly. Manipulated, or rather adjusted, English*es* – in this case Nigerian Pidgin English – serve the purpose of depicting hybrid identities on the one hand and breaching or respectively bridging the few commonalities between the usually so unequal protagonists on the other.

Although the hawker severely lacks material capital he has access to cultural capital and therefore operates within a grey area. His "intellectual stock in trade" (Bourdieu 1), acquired in an affluent past, enables him to impress Abikẹ. On the premise that his current social standing remains unknown, it allows him to participate in the discussions of Abikẹ´s circle of friends.

For post-colonial literature in general, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin have claimed that pidgin is primarily used as a marker of class difference (75). While this is certainly the most obvious effect of NP in Onuzo´s novel, it is by no means the only one. In addition to the connotations accompanying NP/SE as regards class, pidgin expressions in free direct discourse are used to add "local flavour" to the narrative:

> ´So, Runner G, wetin you go **chop**? `
> Already the owner of the ***buka*** was lumbering towards me, her large feet spreading dust with every step.
> ´**Aunty**, I no want chop today. Thank you. ` (15, emphasis added)

"Chop" is Nigerian pidgin for food/to eat and "buka" is a Yoruba expression for a street food restaurant (Najalingo). A third way through which local colour is transmitted in the quotation is the typical, polite form of address of a female non-family member as "aunty". This short extract exemplifies how creatively pidgin can be incorporated in a literary text without primarily alluding to class and politics, but to mark locality instead. Chapter 2.4.4 will illustrate what could be called an ongoing fight between the protagonists of who inhabits the "real" Lagos. In this argument, fluency in NP plays a significant role. Urbanity

and a strong alliance to the dispossessed Lagosians- by the hawker - is therefore also transmitted through NP.

Apart from marking milieu and locality, the perceived fast pace is another possible ramification of conversational narration. If the relation between story time and discourse time is equal, as is the case in real time events (scenes), readers perceive the narrative as quick (Lethbridge and Mildorf 78). This is particularly the case in dialogic scenes, which are inevitably narrated in real time. In the novel at hand, dialogue is interposed between reports, descriptions and comments by the narrating dyad. Thus, mimetic narrative modes, i.e. the modes of showing, are featured prominently. Direct representations of speech are generally accompanied by a switch of tense. Usually, the narrative past is used, with the occasional gnomic present for general statements. As soon as the tense switches to present, for instance in direct speech, the change in time level is paralleled with an altering perspective. In a scene where the hawker witnesses Aunty Precious´ breakdown, the time change allows for strengthened immediacy as well as a closer identification with the minor character. To similar effect, the introductory clause (She said) is omitted and loose syntax is implemented. It further emphasises the minor male character´s perplexity. Aunty Precious´ plea to leave her has more urgency to it once the narrator vanishes into the background and her request is uttered perceivably by the character herself:

> When I walked into the store […] [a] man was kneeling. Aunty Precious was sitting behind the counter. They turned when I entered. I saw she had been crying.
> ´Emeka, you have to leave.´ Aunty Precious said to the man.
> ´But - `
> ´Please leave me. `
> ´But - ` (143)

Throughout the novel, the narrative´s speed steadily accelerates, dissolving into loose syntax and ever more rapid succession of the two narrators´ accounts. Fast pacing is thus another aspect owing to pseudo-orality as well as other narrative techniques reminiscent of film, as has been exemplified previously. What has been tentatively experimented with in the excerpt above - the gradual disappearance of explicit narrators – is increasingly implemented over the course of the novel. Step by step, standard first person narration recedes into the background, giving way to direct speech-representations. At the text´s climax both narrative voices blur into one commented dialogue. Sometimes, only the visual

distinction, by means of italic and normal print, indicates whose thoughts the reader is currently following:

> ´Emmanuel Toyosi Sodipo, ` Olumide [Mr Johnson] whispers. ´You look just like him.`
>
> *Whatever my father says, the effect is immediate. The hawker´s back arches, his legs struggle […].*
> *´What did you say?`*
> *´I just told him something he needed to hear.`*
> *´What?`*
> *[…] ´What did he say to you?` I say prodding the hawker with my foot.*
>
> I lift my head, struggling to speak but Olumide kicks me down and my teeth bang against the slick, metallic tiles.
>
> *´Abikẹ, I don´t -`*
> *´One of you answer me!`*
>
> ´He killed my father,` I finally manage, my lips pushing against the floor and slurring the words.
>
> *´What? Let him speak.` […]* (274)

To put it into a nutshell, pseudo-orality fulfils various functions in *The Spider King´s Daughter*. First and foremost, Nigerian Pidgin English is indicative of social stereotyping, in its common usage as a marker of class. This is, however, smartly transgressed through creating a protagonist who, at least when it comes to language, comfortably accesses the two extreme spaces of poverty and wealth in Lagos. On the other hand, pidgin is consciously used to rupture delicate ties between the two protagonists situated at the extremes on the material scale and to highlight their partition (more on this in chapter 2.4.4 "Climaxing Misunderstandings"). Secondly, NP creates a link to Lagos and its people. It serves as a tool for assimilation consciously used by the otherwise sometimes detached male protagonist. NP conveys locality and roots the narrative in its setting. Because NP is solely used when the narrative tool of pseudo-orality occurs, it – among other tools - increases the narrative´s pace as a side-effect.

Let us come back to the narrators; who are they and what fictional world are they inhabiting? Essentially, Runner G and Abikẹ Johnson present two sides of the same coin. Both are traumatised teenagers trying to cope within dysfunctional families, both are Lagosian, clever, educated and ambitious. Notwithstanding, there is a widening gulf of extremes between them. The hawker´s ever exacerbating poverty is juxtaposed with the

overbearing wealth of the Johnson´s business empire, with all the consequences this entails, primarily on the options of the protagonists´ immediate future. Education is a theme through which economic disparity is most evidently portrayed. Education-related opportunities influence the protagonists´ present and future life. While Abikẹ is living the orderly life of an affluent pupil at a prestigious private school, Runner G spends his days in suspense. He constantly worries about whether the economics of hawking will suffice to guarantee his family´s survival. The protagonists´ near future and consequently the feasibility of a serious relationship is also influenced by their career choices. Abikẹ is in the process of applying for Yale and the hawker aspires to quitting his current occupation for selling electronics at a local market.

Education or the lack of it has far reaching consequences. Whereas Abikẹ is confident that she will receive a degree and inherit her father´s companies, the hawker has long buried his dream of becoming a lawyer and instead sacrificed his own professional prospects for the education of his younger sister. He suppresses his former aspirations behind a daily routine and the pure necessity to survive and feed his family:

> Every morning I wake up and know exactly what I have to do.
>
> 1 Bathe.
> 2 Make sure Jokẹ does the same.
> 3 Eat breakfast.
> 4 Make sure Jokẹ does the same.
> 5 Ditto my mother.
> 6 Take Jokẹ to school.
> 7 Leave school for work.
> 8 Make sure Jokẹ never does the same. (2)

Point six to eight achieve two things. First of all, the necessity of the hawker´s decision to go to work becomes obvious: he is responsible for his entire family. He did not leave school due to an adolescent mood, but because he rationally weighed up the pros and cons (possibly with the help of lists) and then made an informed decision; despite the fact that he knows it will ruin his future. Simultaneously, he acknowledges the importance of education and schooling as he is determined to protect his sister from having his fate. Dropping out of school means a decline of the capacity for the future. The hawker is aware of the fact that his present situation requires him to sacrifice his academic future.

Therefore, the protagonist pins his hopes on the possibly more prosperous future of his sister, achieved through educational attainment.

> According to our roster, I cook Fridays to Sundays and Jokẹ does the rest. Often I take some of her days during term time. I see it as an investment. It is Jokẹ´s education that will get us out of Mile 12, not my hawking and certainly not Abikẹ´s money. (80)

Opposing standpoints become evident through Abikẹ´s view. Funds do not influence her decision as regards her future academic path. This is shown by the subsequent quote. The narrator´s patronising tone reveals how oblivious she is to the fact that the majority of her colleagues – even at the prestigious private school – are restricted by financial constraints. Not to mention her ignorance about how a considerable number of her fellow citizens do not dare to dream of tertiary education.

> *Wow. So, Abikẹ, how much are Yale´s fees?*
> *It doesn´t matter, Chisom. The cost makes no difference to my dad.* (11)

The influence money has on the academic prospects of wealthy Nigerians cannot be overstated and is one of the issues explicitly addressed by Onuzo´s novel:

> The good thing about applying from Nigeria was that most of the process could be done by someone else. My father had paid a PhD holder to fill out my forms and sit the SATs[20] for me. (11)

If we continue this thought further, affluent students do not only apply from the vantage point of having had first-class primary and secondary education, they also retouch the application process. Furthermore, parents are portrayed as not flinching from utilising their corrupt practices in the context of their progeny`s education, which they in return willingly accept. As they clearly consider the Nigerian application process an advantage, the next generation of Nigerian leaders embrace the established system of fraud. This can be seen as a first indication of the likeliness of further social stagnation the text suggests.

The last aspect discussed in this section on material and cultural capital is safety. In contrast to other topoi, both socio-economic spheres are overly concerned with safety and protection. Just like the common topic of education – albeit in its various forms – a mutual obsession with security is a linking theme. Gated and barbed wired properties are intended to protect Abikẹ and also the hawker does everything in his power to protect his younger

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[20] SAT is the acronym for Scholastic Assessment Test. It is widely used for admission at US colleges.

sister. He incurs a daily detour, because he personally accompanies his sister to school and arranges for a teacher to escort Jokẹ back home.

Although the Sodipos live in a much more (openly) violent environment, ultimately the Johnsons seem to be even more preoccupied with security. A reason for this obsession might be the fact that the Johnsons are indeed extremely affluent and thus an obvious target for robberies. Added to that, there are Olumide Johnson´s concealed criminal activities. Whether such behaviour is necessary caution or indeed carried to excess is hard to judge. In any case, not only Abikẹ´s own driver (42), but also the hawker is intimidated by the security measures sheltering Abikẹ´s family from any unwanted guests. The first time Runner G ever visits his friend he remarks:

> There was barbed wire everywhere, jagged protrusions that would slice the skin of any man who tried to scale the Johnson entrance. And if, somehow, your thickness still stopped you from understanding you were not wanted, there were two armed guards to drive home the point. (70)

This quote neatly brings us full circle. Any reading of *The Spider King´s Daughter* ultimately links back to the main theme of class divisions. In this case, a quote intended to exemplify an obsession with safety simultaneously illustrates that the Johnsons (i.e. the Nigerian elite) do everything in their power to make clear that nobody below their social standing will be initiated into their circle (cf. "you were not wanted").

2.3.3   Which Lagos is the Real Lagos?

Lagos has become a well-explored novelistic city-space. Some of the most internationally renowned examples of Third Generation Nigerian Writing are exclusively or at least partially set in the metropolis. Instances of literary engagement with the city of Lagos include well-known novels like Chris Abani´s *Graceland*, Sefi Atta´s *Everything Good will Come*, Helon Habila´s *Waiting for Angel* and Okey Ndibe´s *Arrows of Rain*. At the core of these works is the evocation of Lagos as a dynamic, multi-cultural metropolitan space that perplexes the senses. When reading those novels set in Africa´s most populous city, one can almost hear, smell, see and feel the bustling streets. Lagos is stylised as the crossing of a lively, vibrant and new urban culture with a dystopian post colony of "deprivation, despair and dislocation" (Nnodim 321). *The Spider King´s Daughter* is no exception to this

paradigm. Inequality, post-colonial disillusionment and the challenges posed by globalisation condense in urban landscapes and identities. So do the life-styles of the newly rich characters. They provocatively display their spending power and what they perceive as the new Lagosian savoir-vivre. Perpetually, the reader observes a reciprocal tug-of-war between the protagonists who insist that "their Lagos" is "the real Lagos".

The first time the main characters meet, one becomes instantly aware of the two contrasting spaces they inhabit. Abikę´s big, air-conditioned car is not only a status symbol. It also serves as a metaphor of shelter and distance. The young woman is not aware of urban poverty in her own city and sees, or rather ignores the landscapes of poverty through the filter of her tinted car windows. She is neither exposed to the weather conditions, nor to her fellow citizens. The car symbolises protection from experiencing "reality", the inside is shielded from the outside. The symbol of the jeep reveals the simultaneous existence of two cities; one hardly recognised by the other. There is, however, a mutual dependency on each other. The impoverished Lagos – represented by the hawker – is dependent on the attention of rich car owners who stop to purchase the goods offered. Notably, it is the wealthy that have agency. They can exercise power over the hawkers, drivers, gardeners, etc. of Lagos. At times they stage their show of force publicly, relishing their abuse of power:

> […] I watched Wednesday, a regular hawker on this route, chase after a black jeep […]. The driver was teasing him. Slowing down and then speeding up, moving towards the highway with Wednesday´s money. […] Slowing down into a jog and then an amble, he continued walking in the direction of the vehicle, unwilling to believe that the owner of such a fancy car would steal. As the jeep sped on to the highway, naira notes, like crisp manna, floated to the ground.
> Bastard. (4)

Despite the fact that the protagonists do not know each other at that stage of the story, the black jeep – as is revealed later – could potentially be Abikę´s car. As such it becomes representative of *the* rich and ruthless of Lagos.

Within the realm of friendship between the narrating protagonists, their contention about who has the keys to access Lagos in its entirety surfaces in the feeling of superiority on behalf of Runner G. Sometimes he explicitly voices his discomfort. "´*Are you sure you live in Lagos?* ´" (97)*,* he asks Abikę. At other times, the hawker vents his displeasure on the

rich girl´s misjudgement of the security situation in "his" Lagos through portraying her as ignorant, naïve and gullible.

> I looked at her face while she was bringing out her wallet. […] She passed me a two hundred naira note with a smile that showed perfect teeth. It would have been so easy to sprint off with her money. I gave her the change before placing the ice-cream on her palm. Someone else would have to show her that the world was not filled with honest hawkers and unicorns. (10)

> For a second, I wish I´d been foolish enough to let her walk round Lagos in a miniskirt. (102)

The miniskirt serves as an interesting symbol. In Abikẹ´s Lagos, it is associated with the new generation of modern, self-confident, independent and fashionable young women. In Runner G´s Lagos, it alludes to prostitution and as such puts Abikẹ at risk. In the hawker´s Lagos "[e]veryone knows you only wear that type of outfit in the privacy of your air-conditioned car, with the windows rolled up and preferably tinted. Everyone except Abikẹ Johnson. Flashing her legs and then wondering why a mob is chasing us." (91) One and the same garment is extremely controversially charged – within a seemingly identical cultural sphere, only divided by the amount of financial power.

The hawker´s initial benevolence with Abikẹ´s insecurities and ignorance gives way to rising abrasiveness on his part. Despite the fact that until recently he himself was lost in this part of the city, he has less and less mercy for Abikẹ´s ignorance. On the contrary, he confidently preaches the lessons of the streets:

> Fire for fire: that is the only way to survive on the road. When I first started I used to mind my manners. Yes please, no thank you, like my mother taught me, but those manners were for a boy who was meant to go to university and work in a law firm. She never told me what to do if a customer sprinted away with my money. She never gave me advice on how to handle the touts that came here sometimes asking for "tax". (13-14)

By implication the insights gained are denied to people of affluent backgrounds, in this case the hawker´s mother. Nevertheless, in a figurative sense such an inability could also be applied to Abikẹ. Direct references to Abikẹ´s perceived naivety underscore this argument and multiply towards the end of the story:

> She didn´t bother to haggle though it was clear he was asking for at least triple the normal price. Is she really so naïve or was she just trying to impress me? I don´t like either answer. (41)

Regardless of what Runner G perceives as his advantageous, insightful viewpoint of the "real" Lagos: as the plot develops, the message is conveyed that it might be the hawker who is yet to outgrow his belief in unicorns (see antepenultimate quotation), i.e. belief in his power to overthrow the elite and revenge their unethical practices.

In addition to this twist to the hawker´s insider knowledge, there is an evident change in Abikę´s character. She seems to absorb Lagos in its newly discovered entirety. What the hawker cannot see is discovered by other lower class Lagosians. In one scene, Abikę has a fight with drivers who accuse her of being spoilt and out of touch with the real world. Very cleverly, she uses her newly acquired expertise to invalidate such accusations. Her weapons are Nigerian Pidgin English and having experienced the local market. Both assets were gained during the course of her friendship with the hawker.

> ´Na this small girl be your madam?´
> ´Yes, I be him madam. Wetin concern you?`
> ´Your pidgin is not bad for an aje-butter[21].´
> ´Your English is OK for a driver.` […]
> ´And you think because of this big car I am an aje-butter? I can take you round Tejuosho Market. You too don´t insult me.´
> I stepped forward, crossing my arms, mimicking the fighting stance of the market women I had seen in the past months. We stared at each other, waiting to see who would blink. Then one of the men called out, ´This one is not an aje-butter o. She is a real child of Lagos.´ (162)

In how far the city of Lagos is a (fictional) space where wealth and poverty clash has been explained in great detail. Postcolonial matters are most present in violence, domination, incessant inequality, exploitation of the poor and abuse of power. The hawker is denied his moment of empowerment. Agency resides in the realm of the rich. Those arguments could simultaneously be brought forward to describe the neo-colonial practises of globalisation. Unbridled consumerism is the seemingly natural expression of the privileged position of those able to participate in the global economy. Obsessing over Western brands (e.g. "Kellogg´s Cornflakes" 39, "Chanel liquid eyeliner" 89, etc.) is, for instance, representative for this excessive materialism.

It is up to the reader to decide which Lagos is the more authentic one, or preferably to combine the protagonists´ accounts to approach a vision of the hybrid, diverse, dynamic

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[21] Definition of "ajebutter": "Someone who was born with a silverspoon in their mouth or who is spoilt and has not experienced the harshness of life" (Naijalingo).

and disparate place that today´s Lagos seems to be. For Onuzo it is the hawker who has a more differentiated reality, while Abikẹ´s life is reduced to school and home (app. ii). In the author´s opinion the rich girl is the more naïve character, which I interpreted more ambiguously.

Although the novel does not provide any solutions to extreme disparity, the author has a personal stance on this matter. She thinks that empathy is the key to overcoming inequality. In a blog entry (Tatty Devine), Onuzo expresses her longing for considerate and empathic leaders who attend to the interest of others, a type of leader largely absent in her debut novel.

Let us briefly survey the topics discussed so far. Undoubtedly, an issue as pressing and universal as poverty will always be of ethical and social relevance. As advocated by Korte, literary studies should focus on the ideological implications in regards to representations of poverty (294). In *The Spider King´s Daughter* multifaceted depictions of poverty are discernible. For one, multiperspectivity manages to emphasise subjectivity, above all when dealing with narrated worlds constituting the extreme ends of a binary opposition. Rather than didactically warning of the dangers of inequality, the hardships of material and social shortcomings are shown. The readers are left to engage with the text and make up their own minds. Social pressures and dysfunctional relationships also affect the affluent minority. Thus, the appeal of Onuzo´s novel is partly due to the unsentimental treatment of inequality, the major theme. Besides all the differences, the narrative looks for similarities and links between the wealthy and the poor. This is what makes the characters universally humane, regardless of their economic standing. With the story of friendship between her two exceptional protagonist-narrators, the young author has managed a delicate balancing act. As a result, poverty is not treated in a generalised way. The fact that the narrative restrains from the familiar "rags-to-riches" motif is an important characteristic. Such a sentimental and romantic notion creates the illusion of poverty being self-made and that it could be escaped through hard work and effort. *The Spider King´s Daughter* transcends such simplistic ideologies and provides a differentiated insight into a slice of contemporary Lagos.

2.4 Care, Neglect, Confusion – Relationships in *The Spider King´s Daughter*

In the preceding chapter, the global problem of inequality was discussed with the help of the local Lagosian example. The following chapter zooms into the themes addressed by the novel and accentuates relationships from different angles. Thereafter, the issue of individual identity construction forms the last aspect of my reading.

The power dynamics inherent in relationships is one of the central themes consciously explored by Onuzo. As stated in an interview, the author is fascinated by the immutable struggle for power and control of her protagonists (Meremikwu). The following section attempts to carve out the relational setup of *The Spider King´s Daughter* as well as how and to which effect it might change over the course of the narrative. Another aim is to determine which events actuate character actions and cause changes in the relational situation. Initially, the only in-depth inter-milieu relationship is analysed by tracing the beginnings and collapse of Abikę´s and Runner G´s friendship. Afterwards, there is a survey of the protagonists´ contrasting father figures. The relationships of the protagonists to their fathers will be looked at in order to understand how they cope with their parental legacy. Comparing the mother-child relationships yield interesting results as to how trauma influences the family-space and consequently the protagonists´ experience of growing up.

One has to bear in mind that this thesis can only offer a selection of aspects. The relational set-up of *The Spider King´s Daughter* is complex and I will solely focus on the protagonists´ most influential relationships. The protagonists are primarily shaped by their parents and each other. Even though siblings feature prominently, the relationships with them are mainly used to describe the protagonists. The relationship with Jokę, for instance, further strengthens the image of the hawker as a caring, self-sacrificing father-substitute. Abikę´s self-absorbed side becomes more plausible once the reader witnesses her indifference towards her brothers. Therefore, sibling-relationships, albeit interesting, are beyond the scope of this thesis; so are peer relations. Since relationships with friends are

depicted as comparatively flat and peripheral[22], they will be neglected in the chapter on relationships.

As a first step, two character relation diagrams are provided. The first one depicts the relevant characters and their relational bonds in the first third of the novel. The second diagram illustrates the wide gulf between the protagonists and the increased complexity of character interrelations at the end of the book. This juxtaposition intends to visualise character constellation and development over the course of the narrative. It will familiarise readers who have not read the book with the characters and how they are interrelated. For readers who are familiar with Onuzo´s novel, the diagram plausibly illustrates the dynamics regarding the relational space in *The Spider King´s Daughter.*
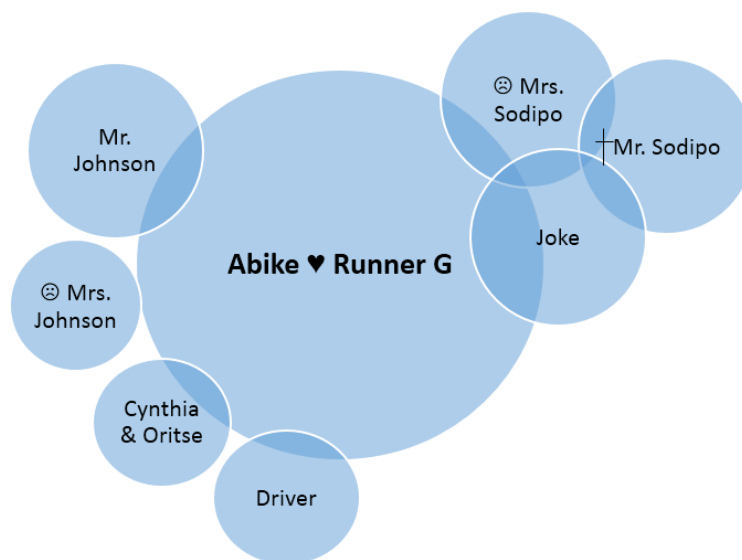
Fig. 2: Character Relations at the Beginning of *The Spider King´s Daughter*

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[22] Only two of Abikę´s friends are explicitly mentioned several times, namely Cynthia and Oritse. Even though, their relationship with Abikę is mutually superficial, they partially prompt the narrative´s twist – i.e. the hawker´s changing attitude towards his lover - and influence the protagonists´ perception of themselves. Runner G´s narrative is even less concerned with peers. He only mentions how he and his former friends grew apart and how he tries to set himself apart of his fellow hawkers. This is why the role of peers will be touched upon in the chapter on identity.
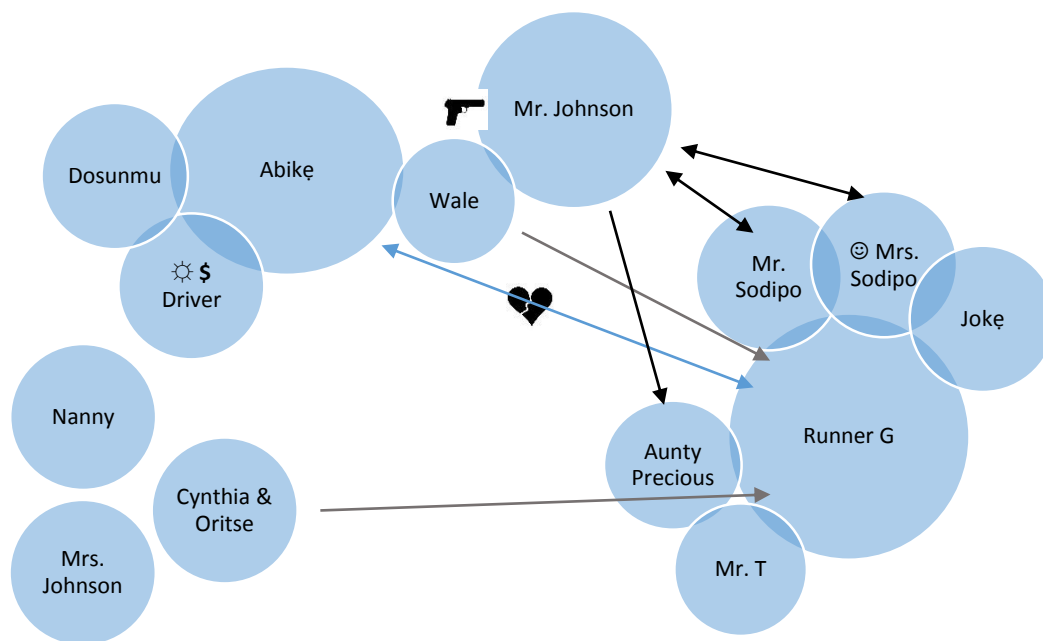
Fig. 3: Character Relations at the End of *The Spider King´s Daughter*

2.4.1 Mounting Misunderstandings – Climaxing Tragedy

This section links back to and builds on the interpretation outlined in chapter *2.3.3* "*Which Lagos is the real Lagos?*". The focus is still on character relations in terms of contrast and correspondence, but this time it shifts from disparity towards the emotional connection of the protagonists in order to generate new insights. Through the lens of relationships one can comprehend how the characters´ vulnerability and pride is crafted. Onuzo relies on the augmenting effect of dramatic irony, through which errors of judgment by the protagonists become evident and their weak and vulnerable side surfaces.

At the beginning, the plot mainly revolves around the young protagonists' tender love. Step by step, their growing appreciation is traced in what reads like a modern-day fairy-tale. Catering to a love-at-first-sight motif, they are both smitten with each other on their first encounter. The hawker earns Abikę´s trust by giving her the exact amount of change and impresses her with his good looks (8). He also remarks on the girl´s physical attraction and is touched by her politeness: "´Thank you,` she said. Words I don´t hear often." (10) These points are not brought forward to disguise the inauspicious starting situation. Reciprocal prejudice interferes right from the start. When Abikę invites Runner G to her home, she is "*worried about inviting him. The papers are always full of armed*

robbers who are hawkers in the daytime." (59) Despite such suspicions, a delicate bond is crafted over the next chapters, which gains considerably from the narrative situation. Repetitions re-tell the same situation once from the male and once from the female perspective. The readers find themselves in the role of the confidant of both protagonists. As such, readers are entrusted the secrets of each protagonist and observe ordinary situations that exhibit their growing love. Readers also witness what they attempt to hide from each other.

It is paradoxical that the more the two teenagers like each other, the more they conceal from each other. Various times both characters pretend to be something else with the aim to impress their loved ones. In addition, the narrators´ past is catching up with them. The bad impression Abikẹ has left on her peers and employees gradually stains the hawker´s conception of his inamorata. The increasing presence of Mr. Johnson is aggravating the insecure situation. The introduction of Johnson´s criminal business practices sets the story off into a different direction. It incorporates the volatile polity of corruption and capitalism in contemporary Lagos. The hawker gets more and more entangled with Mr. Johnson and so do his friends and family. Runner G does not let Abikẹ into his secrets. In doing so the hawker denies his lover the chance to react to these allegations or exert influence on her father. Instead, Runner G associates her more strongly with him.

At the same time, the reader follows Abikẹ´s struggle to disentangle from the web her father has spun. Dating the socially ineligible hawker can be seen as an act of rebellion in itself. Adding to this, playing Frustration becomes a nuisance to her and she tries to break free from the painful habit: "*I didn`t want my hawker getting sucked into a game I was no longer interested in playing.*" (243)

Her attempts peak once she assumes a new name, Abby[23]. By that time, the hawker remarks: "I have finally seen the Abikẹ that her half-brothers and Cynthia see. I wonder how she has kept her hidden for so long. I should be flattered by the effort." (171) Tragically, Abikẹ´s venture to detach from her father´s powerful grip is misinterpreted by

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[23] For a further elaboration on the significance of this additional name, please consult 79.

the person who triggered the change in the first place and from who she derives the energy of continuing her efforts.

Onuzo demolishes the relationship with the same techniques she uses for building it up. The narrative strategy allows for frequent instances of dramatic irony. It neatly depicts the lack of honest conversation and lays the foundation for traceable misunderstandings. The readers, privy to more information than the narrating protagonists, have access to additional meaning. The mounting concealments and misinterpretations leave them in a wary state of anticipation for the tragedy to unravel.

However hard Runner G tries, he does not fully succeed in categorising Abikẹ as the devious, spoilt brat of a criminal despot. After almost suffocating her, he instantly feels sorry and still cares about what she thinks of him (265-267). "Despite [himself, he] feel[s] betrayed when she agrees with Olumide" (267). Ultimately, the novel´s climax is about loyalty. At first glance, it seems to re-enforce the notion of blood being thicker than water. But the reader, let in on Abikẹ´s thoughts, knows that there is more to it. She plays the loyal daughter primarily out of an instinct to survive. "*I don´t know if what he [Johnson] is saying is true but I must play now and think later.*" (267) Due to obvious reasons, her image of the hawker and their relationship is shattered and in the situation it is impossible for Abikẹ to know what is on Runner G´s mind. In spite of the hawker´s assault, she does not solely condemn him and even questions her father´s honesty, which is remarkable, given the explosive situation. Even in the description of the grand dramatic finale - or rather in its illustration, as the section is enriched with speech representations – it is made evident that Abikẹ and Runner G like and care for each other. However, persistent feelings of insecurity and mistrust prevent them from communicating effectively. As a consequence they are denied seeing the situation with the eyes of the respective other and are both left hurt and emotionally withdrawn.

One possible interpretation of the tragic finale - reminiscent of a climaxing Greek tragedy - is concerned with the reconciliation of the generational dispute between Abikẹ and her father. The pertinent turning point for this propitiation is her near strangulation (263-264). "*I should have listened to my father. […] I should have been more like him. […] I should have known,*" (264) are the thoughts crossing her mind. Thereafter, Abikẹ –

previously trying so hard to cut their connection – and Mr. Johnson form a well-rehearsed team. Countless rounds of Frustration have prepared them. "*For the first time my father and I are playing together, trying to distract this boy into revealing what he has in his pocket.*" (266)

There is however, an alternative interpretation to this. One might argue that Abikẹ is not exclusively on her father´s team. A year after the tragic occurrence, she continues to be sceptical about her father´s honesty: "*The more I thought of that night, the more I was unsure who to believe.*" (281) Despite the loss of her father and mentor she calls into question Mr Johnson´s credibility. When considering her upbringing, it cannot be taken for granted that the hawker is let off scot-free. It would have been in her (bribing) power to make him the sole scapegoat. Instead, she actively refuses to act on her consultant´s advice to "*[find] the hawker and at least threaten [...] his family*." (281) Both interpretations are feasible and leave the reader speculating about what could have happened had the hawker let Abikẹ in on her father´s dubious machinations, prior to the escalation.

2.4.2 The Tragic Hero and the Villain as Role Models - Contrasting Father Figures

A cumulative engagement with fathers by the literary scene in post-military, twenty first-century Nigeria can be observed. Father figures have featured prominently in recent Nigerian fiction. The context of the Nigerian imagination strongly suggests the father as a symbol for military governance (Ouma) or the dysfunctional nation state in general (Toivanen). As the novel is set after military rule the first option can be neglected. Toivanen´s contribution should, however, be considered. She promotes readings that focus on "the ways in which [...] father-daughter relations [are employed] as a vehicle for dealing with the failures of the postcolonial nation-state" (102). The character of Mr. Johnson lends himself to such readings, as he can be viewed as the stereotypical family-tyrant.

This is not the only reason why *The Spider King´s Daughter* is an ideal case for the study of father figures. It also exemplifies two templates that could hardly be more contrasting. There is Mr Johnson, the father of fourteen children (140). He essentially abandons all of his other children to favour his youngest daughter, Abikẹ, who gratefully fashions herself as the heiress to the Johnson business empire. Especially in a society which

tends to favour men, this decision is outstanding. The opposing father figure is Mr Sodipo, who has left an arduous inheritance. The son, Runner G, was left with the father's debt and, as is gradually revealed, the liability of an unachievable parental idol. Before dealing with Runner G's burden, this sub-chapter will treat the daughterly disillusionment of the female protagonist.

The novel commences with a recounting of a traumatic event in Abikẹ's childhood, initiated by her despotic father. The narrative is launched *in medias res.* In a flashback, the female protagonist recounts a past event typical of the relationship with her father. When she was ten years old, Mr Johnson commanded his driver to run over his daughter's beloved dog. This provocation was met by Abikẹ's sullen resentment, resulting in her defiant remark to run over the pet properly the next time. The event marks the initiation into a repeated "game called Frustration" (1), with Mr. Johnson in the role of the game master. With her father pulling the strings, not only of the family's economic situation, but also of his daughter's personal trauma, the Frustration game has multiple meanings. The "game" emphasises the all-encompassing exertion of authority by the patriarch, while it also represents Abikẹ's mentally abusive rite of passage. Throughout adolescence she keeps tally of the preliminary result; "*Mr Johnson: 1/ Abikẹ: 1*" (51; as well as 209, 253).

The drama staged within the realm of the family can be seen as a vehicle for the dramatic situation of the post-colonial nation state (see Ouma and Toivanen). Outwardly strong, but undemocratic patriarchs have left their mark on the young nation's recent history. Through a fictional father-child relation, colliding world-view of the old and new generation as well as continuities can be expressed. That is the reason why fictional father-daughter relationships can be viewed as a depiction of wider inter-generational conflict.

The tensions between generations are paralleled by Abikẹ's inner conflict between self-interest and the common good. The young woman does not hesitate to exploit corruption to her own advantage. Paying a PhD holder to sit her university entrance exams is the behaviour one would expect from Mr. Johnson's daughter. But in opposition to her father, she desperately tries to break the cycle of psychological abuse, transmitted from one generation to the other. She dreams of a: "*Life without Frustration. Someone should have told my father it was possible.*" (142)

67

Abikẹ exhibits an exceptionally mature and reflected stance on the relationship with her father. Early on, the character makes her derogatory stance towards Frustration clear. For instance, by the means of alliteration the protagonist reflects on and accentuates her own "*perverse pleasure*" (2) in the father-daughter struggle for power. Evidently, she is not solely a victim, but takes an active part in the game. Abikẹ sees it as a challenge to beat her father at his own game. Those instances multiply towards the end of the novel, when the daughter can position herself as a serious opposing player.

The narrative illustrates that the continuous psychological maltreatment has left scars yet to heal. Despite Abikẹ´s efforts to leave Frustration behind, her well-rehearsed behavioural patterns resurface once her emotions catch her off guard. Ultimately, relapse into Frustration causes the first major dispute with the hawker. "*For a second on my hawker´s doorstep, the argument had seemed like just another round of Frustration. I could not stop myself. By reflex, I was playing.*" (174)

Abikẹ´s authoritative upbringing has stigmatised her enough to momentarily disable her conscious efforts to leave the traumatic past behind. Behavioural patterns repeated over and over again have become part of her nature, a "reflex". Once she is ready to evolve from such destructive behaviour, she feels independent and empowered. Even if it just strengthens her enough to become the Spider Queen at the end of the novel, the young female protagonist is the only character who manages to temporarily escape from the webs of possessive power spun by her father. The empowering effect of her sporadic detachment from the Spider King condenses in excerpts such as the following:

> *I think I believed Frustration was an induction into the ´real world`. Now this seems so foolish. My father´s world has only business partners and enemies. No parents or children or friends. I am sick of this half-life. After the party, I´m stopping the Wednesday sessions. If he wants to see me, he can come to my living room. If not, we will go our separate ways.*
> *Coming to this decision has freed me. I can now play these last few rounds with all the energy I was saving for the coming years. For the first time, it is me directing the conversation.* (180)

To consciously renounce Frustration marks Abikẹ´s transition into adulthood. The fatherly idol has been unmasked, his deficiencies as a suitable role model are revealed. Instead of continuing to idealise him, the daughter discovers her own strength and enhanced self-

confidence. As such, the conscious attempt of leaving Frustration in the past also denotes the transfer of authority from one generation to another.

Turning back to Olumide Johnson, it is astonishing that such a central character is solely fashioned as the transgressor who breaks any moral or actual law. Decidedly, Mr Johnson is the story´s villain and as such a rather flat character. His character does not noticeably evolve during the narrative and remains rather static throughout. However, his consistent unethical behaviour does prompt other characters to mature, above all Abikẹ. There is a grain of truth to the criticism that Onuzo´s debut is too well crafted. In my opinion, the fact that the suffering of almost every character in the novel links back to Mr. Johnson could be considered the main source of artificiality.

The other father figure featured, albeit dead, is much more complex and dynamic: Emanuel Sodipo. The readers only get to know this character through the memories of the male narrator as well as Aunty Precious´ accounts of her revered former lawyer (152). As the text proceeds, Runner G´s father develops into the undisputed hero. In fact, his character is among the most differentiated and dynamic. To a certain degree this is due to the (narrating) son who is coming to terms with the loss of the father. Feelings of frustration, anger and disappointment accompany early stages of grief and are all reflected in Runner G´s narration. Later, his memories are progressively dominated by emotions such as respect and admiration. The turning point in the father-son relationship is the revelation that Mr Sodipo had fought against a man as powerful as Mr Johnson. Suddenly, the conception of the hawker´s father alters from a non-suitable role model (e.g. 170), to an unachievable hero (e.g. 194). The discovery of his father´s epistolary confession (187-190) is the major turning point in their relational set-up. After reading it, the hawker concludes: "In his own understated way, my father was a braver man than I will ever be." (194)

Mr Sodipo symbolically manifests the contradictions immanent in the young nation. There is, for instance, a clash between modern and traditional ideologies within Nigerian society. Sodipo is described as an urban, open-minded, young, well-educated, middle-class Nigerian – in other words he represents the self-confident, modern day nation; or at least the vision of it. Adding to this, he (as a member of the Yoruba ethnic group) falls in love with an Igbo woman and through marrying her, personally transcends any ethical divides

parting the country. On the other hand, however, he is trapped by traditional family concepts and entailing expectations of distant relatives. His good nature is presumed upon by greedy members of his extended family. In stark contrast to his ambitions as a fair and ethical lawyer are his careless dealings with his life insurance - the last instalment was not paid. But then again, such remarks could simply point to a corrupt system instead of a negligent father. The character of Sodipo also evinces the increasing strain on Nigeria´s middle class and the widening gap as regards income distribution. Despite Mr Sodipo´s excellent academic credits and promising career he fails to sustain an upper-middle class quality of life for himself and his closest family members. His family´s monetary needs are beyond their means. At the time of the sole provider´s death, the family is financially ruined.

The financial troubles of the Sodipo family force the oldest son into assuming multiple roles. The beginning of the hawker´s narrative is comparable to Abikę´s. In her case, starting the novel literally "in the middle of things" sets the scene for traumatic experiences induced by a despotic patriarch. The hawker´s beginning makes his dysfunctional family setup similarly clear. His role as the sole breadwinner is addressed within a few paragraphs, so is the responsibility he is forced to take on for his sister´s upbringing and his mother´s depression (2-3). The hawker´s coming of age is over-shadowed by losing the father. Not least because of Runner G´s desperate attempts to substitute Mr Sodipo, the boy´s adolescence is characterised by his conflicting gender identity. He is forced to fulfil both gender roles. Circumstances cast him in the role of the absent father, provider and husband, but also of the cook, mother and carer. Undeniably, this is partly due to an under-developed, or rather non-existent welfare system. It obliges the teenager to compensate for the responsibilities of the state. Once again, reading the parent-child relationship as state-criticism opens one´s eyes to seeing that the hawker´s actions continuously highlight the nation´s deficiencies. Nigeria fails to provide, in this example literally, for her children.

Not all is bleak in the protagonists' search for an alternative to patriarchal authority. The text´s ending gives way to the possibility of daughterly intervention. While the main male character withdraws and is left incompetent, silenced and disillusioned, the female protagonist introduces the possibility of fictional hope for the future, even if only a slight

one. Abikẹ neither succeeds in overcoming the system nor does she aspire to do so. Nevertheless, she actively promotes modifications to unethical business practices. Through using the established methods of corruption to her own advantage, she manages to subvert the violent system. Fiction has the power and ability to articulate hopes for imagined futures (Toivanen 102), and the implicit aspirations voiced in *The Spider King´s Daughter* allude to a future shaped by strong female leaders. Like Abikẹ, such women might be born into affluence and have the material and cultural capital to access global markets. Whereas revolutionary changes might not be her style of leadership and she fails to clearly break with her father´s legacy, Abikẹ exhibits some sort of moral integrity, or at least possesses more of it than her father. There is reason for the suspicion that she has actively ceased any involvement of the Johnson companies in human trafficking. The passage nurturing such interpretations reads as follows:

> *Yet, despite this posthumous esteem, I am not my father. There are industries formerly affiliated to Johnson Corporations that I have severed all contact with. […] they tarnish my brand.* (282)

Tentative as it may be, Abikẹ´s narrative leaves its readers with a glimmer of hope concerning the future.

2.4.3   Traumatised Mothers - Relationships Turned Upside-Down

Now she is like a tree in the dry season. Every day a piece of her old self falls off. (3)

By the means of this beautiful simile, the male narrator describes the depression his mother is suffering from. Borrowings from the lexical field of nature are rare in the text. In this example, however, Onuzo implements imagery frequently associated with first and second generation African writing. In an allusion to mother earth, the hawker´s mother is objectified as an infertile, (temporarily) dying tree. For Runner G, the mother´s illness is tantamount to her death. Her son feels like having lost both parents in his father´s accident/murder. The following excerpt makes the loss he perceives evident:

> [Mrs Sodipo explains why she did not leak the reasons for her husband´s death to the press:] ´I didn´t want you to become orphans.`
> This last was ironic. I have not had a parent since we moved to Mile 12. (194)

The story leaves no doubt that Mrs Sodipo suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder triggered by her husband´s death. Their children are left "surprised by how easily she crumbled after he died" (194). The clinical picture presented is typical of traumatisation (cf. Visser). It includes hyper-arousal symptoms such as sleeping disorders and sudden outburst of crying as well as avoidance symptoms like social isolation, feeling strong guilt and even depression. In regard to Mrs Sodipo´s depression, the son´s insecurities of how to conceive her mental instability exhibit an inner struggle. His stance on the matter is contradictory and varies from helpful, understanding and caring to accusing and being unsympathetic. Several times he mentions the desire to cure her. Once he discloses his regrets about not being able to afford anti-depressants for his mother (103). In other situations, Runner G does not acknowledge depression as a disease. This is exemplified by the urge to confront the depressed mother with thoughts like "[w]idowhood is not a disease" (82).

Runner G – while evidently traumatised too – experiences different symptoms than his mother. Nightmares, flashbacks and re-living the trauma, in his case finding out about his father´s death and identifying his body, are symptoms of re-experiencing. Such traumatic symptoms are mirrored by the structure of his narrative. The organisation of the sequences is loosely chronological, but by no means linear. Anachronological features do occur and flashbacks (analepsis) feature prominently. Sometimes his narration is randomly interrupted by thoughts about his father or expressions of regret (e.g. 20, 64). Simultaneous to coming to terms with his own trauma, the hawker has the responsibility for his sister and his mother. Due to her mental disease, Mrs Sodipo is neither able to care for her family and assume the parental role, nor does she manage to look after herself. Normative mother-child as well as gender roles are turned upside-down when her teenage son has to dress and feed her (e.g. 56, 156).

Therapeutic tools to surmount trauma are strongly oriented towards overcoming the "unspeakability" (Visser 274) of it. Thus, verbally accessing the roots of trauma, finding a voice to "speak of the unspeakable" (Herman 179) aids healing. Retelling one´s story harbours the possibility of recovery through narration (Mengel 143). This process is exemplified by the text. Mrs Sodipo seems to recuperate, albeit slowly, once the silence of her trauma is broken and she shares her feelings of guilt and despair with her family. She retrieves parts of her former strong self in everyday life as well as professionally. A tragic

twist to her recovery stems from the fact that it is assisted by the belief in her son´s revenge for the murder. Be that as it may, a teaching job (286) restores her agency as she thus contributes to the family´s income. The development of Runner G´s depressed mother can therefore be regarded as another sub-plot strand hinting at a partial happy ending.

A relationship with hardly any development is the one between Abikẹ and her mother. The former Nollywood actress has sacrificed her career for an unhappy marriage to Olumide Johnson. Depressed by her husband´s obliviousness, she feels forced into passivity. Unable to give her own existence sense whilst being ignored by her husband, Mrs Johnson retreats into her past. Henceforth, she licks her wounds and is hiding the pain behind egomaniac behaviour, like worshipping her former celebrity through constantly re-watching the films she used to star in (e.g. 78) or building a "shrine to her dead career" (78). One could say that she is mourning the death of her identity as an actress and as such as an independent woman. "Pieces of her old self" seem to have fallen off, too. Mrs Johnson´s behaviour suggests that she suffers from a condition that might be termed "therapeutic insanity" (a term I first came across in Young´s eponymous essay). Withdrawing herself completely from the present reality enables her to find comfort in stylising her own version of a glorified past. Adding to the assumptions that Mrs Johnson might overestimate her past success are remarks of other characters who have not heard her name nor know of any films she acted in (98). The fact that Runner G has never come across her name points to an idealised notion of self by Mrs Johnson that she desperately tries to transmit to her daughter. Self-loving madness is her escape from male oppression and neglect.

In a misogynist society a woman´s worth is determined by how well she manages traditional female tasks like the role of the "good wife and mother". In order to be a better wife, Abikẹ´s mother gave up her acting career. *"Recognition, stringless promiscuity, they all flew out of the window to make room for her new part of loving confidante. [Her husband] did not take to the script*." (78) Mr Johnson´s behaviour leaves her hurt and disillusioned. The society they are part of permits him to defy moral rules of conduct, but does not endow her with any feasible rights to react to her husband´s breach of matrimonial vows. Denied the love and attention she is craving for, she languishes in her golden cage thenceforth. Mrs Johnson compensates the perceived failure as a wife by

refusing to assume the role of a mother. The indifference Olumide Johnson shows towards his wife is then passed on from the mother to the daughter. Mrs Johnson fails, for instance, to remember the name of her only daughter´s school (163). The few instances when she participates in Abikę´s upbringing are connected to superficial events like parties or outfit planning. However, even her expertise in fashion is debunked once Abikę listens to her advice of wearing a mini-skirt to the hawker´s part of town which attracts unpleasant male attention (83). Overall, Mrs Johnson´s self-centredness hinders any meaningful connection to her daughter. The mother-daughter relation never extends beyond scratching the surface. Several times, Abikę even expresses the desire to avoid her mother for good: "*And next time my mother will be left in the Den. She´s been in my room for the past hour. […] I am tired of that woman.*" (238)

The two women seem to be trapped in a cycle of mutual disappointment. Even though, Abikę is highly critical of her mother´s self-abandonment and dependence on her husband, the daughter strives for Mr Johnson´s approbation, too. This further complicates the mother-daughter relationship. The perceived unsuitability of her mother as a role model influences the entire family dynamics. The more Abikę withdraws from her mother, the closer she is pushed to the mentally abusive patriarch.

To sum up, both protagonists exhibit a difficult relationship to their mothers. Even though they choose to deal with it in very different ways, they are both exhausted by their mothers´ unstable mental states. In first-person narratives, the parent-child relations and how they are expressed also serve as a characterisation of the protagonists. In this sense, an overwrought but caring hawker is juxtaposed to an apathetic, but equally hurt rich girl.

It has further been shown that within the fictional micro-cosmos of the family, power relations of a misogynist society come into play. The injustice a patriarchal society foists on individuals allocates little scope of action to females. Therefore, such women have to come up with deviant ways of coping. In *The Spider King´s Daughter* the women deprived of a supportive husband seek (transitional) refuge in either depression or excessive self-love.

In sum, this chapter has explored the dynamics of selected family relationships depicted in *The Spider King´s Daughter*. It has dealt with the complex power struggles

within the most influential relationships, from the protagonists' point of view. Such an approach has included the protagonists´ relation to their parents, as well as to each other. Onuzo carefully traces the steps that lead to the narrators´ tentative friendship and deconstructs their bond just as skilfully at a spectacular pace. In the relational set-up, various incompatible desires mingle. Miscommunication stemming from an urge to impress meets the need to communicate out of a desire to emotionally expose oneself. Those inherent contradictions will be approached from a different angle in the next chapter, when – in a last step - the novel will be analysed through the lens of identity.

2.5 Identity Struggles Revisited – Adolescence in *The Spider King´s Daughter*

According to Bamberg, "[i]dentity designates the attempt to differentiate and integrate a sense of self along different social and personal dimensions such as gender, age, race, occupation, gangs, social-economic status, ethnicity, class, nation states or regional territory" (1). This definition makes it evident that the notion of identity has already been present throughout the literary analysis. With the exception of gangs, all categories mentioned have previously been addressed. Its underlying presence makes a special focus on identity all the more relevant, especially when dealing with two juvenile narrators. Adolescence marks a period in life when identity construction is in constant flux. Growing up is strongly associated with the emergence of identity. It therefore makes sense to tie up loose ends in the following chapter, where an engagement with dynamic identities is combined with representations of adolescence in Nigerian fiction. In the second sub-chapter migration as a stimulus for an identity crisis is explored. The argument is based on my assumption that the physical move to another part of town and the sociological dislocation down the social ladder causes a discontinuity of self within the character of the hawker.

First, the narrative structure of *The Spider King´s Daughter* is reviewed in relation to up-to-date concepts of identity formation. The two first-person narrations reflect the way in which identity is now thought to emerge. Bamberg advocates a dynamic understanding of identity. In his opinion, identity is constructed through reflection of self as well as interaction with others. For him "narrating enables speakers/writers to disassociate the speaking/writing self from the act of speaking, to take a reflective position vis-à-vis self as character" (1). Even though he underpins his argument with examples from the field of autobiographical writing, there is insight to be gained from his explanations for the narrative at hand. This holds especially true once the second space of identity construction is introduced. A mere character analysis could never satisfyingly accentuate issues regarding identity, because it "leaves out the communicative space within which identities are negotiated in interaction with others." (Bamberg 2) When merging these two definitions with the narrative situation present in Onuzo´s novel, it is strikingly obvious that it caters for both ways of identity construction. There are frequent reflections on their own

behaviour and respective notion of identity by the narrating protagonists. In addition, there are various encounters with the respective other main character. Each one serves as navigational tool in the formation of the self as well as a characterisation of both protagonists (the one that is narrating at that time and the one that is acting or described). Additionally, the narrative style of pseudo-orality mimics every-day interaction, which is considered paramount to action-orientated approaches towards identity as promoted by Bamberg.

Bamberg´s remarks on identity and narration form a suitable starting point for discussion. In the introduction to his essay he states:

> Any claim of identity faces three dilemmas: (a) sameness of a sense of self over time in the face of constant change; (b) uniqueness of the individual vis-à-vis others faced with being the same as everyone else; and (c) the construction of agency as constituted by self (with a self-to-world direction of fit) and world (with a world-to-self direction of fit). Claims to identity begin with the continuity/change dilemma and from there venture into issues of uniqueness and agency […]. (1)

My analysis will build on Bamberg´s three identity dilemmas.

2.5.1 Coming of Age - *The Spider King´s Daughter* as a Bildungsroman

Recent Nigerian novels employing young protagonists include acclaimed works like Abani´s *Graceland*, Adichie´s *Purple Hibiscus*, Atta´s *Everything Good Will Come*, Iweala´s *Beast of No Nation*, Oyeyemi´s *The Icarus Girl*, and others. The trope of a child and even more so an adolescent protagonist can thus be considered a feature typical for the new Nigerian novel. With adaptations, it is utilised by Onuzo. Rather than the usual cosseted rich girl, Onuzo creates a strong and dynamic female protagonist and deconstructs the initially adroit and in his way sophisticated hawker into a vengeful and eventually passive victim. Such an approach enlarges the notion of the innocent child or adolescent protagonist frequently featured in contemporary Nigerian fiction.

Hron has allocated two main functions to Third-Generation texts featuring a child or youth protagonist. First, they tackle the complex themes of a globalised world in a more accessible manner than certain adult characters (27). Secondly, juvenile protagonists exploit their potential to engage "culturally uninformed Western readers" (Hron 27). Those

readers, oblivious to current issues in Africa or unfamiliar with the distinct Nigerian situation, resemble, so to speak, the naïve gaze of a child focaliser or narrator. Through the young narrator´s explanations and observations, the readers can make sense of and re-negotiate their – potentially stereotypical – notion of Nigeria and its fiction. *The Spider King´s Daughter* can be related to Hron´s descriptions. The reader follows the hawker on his journey into his father´s past. Readers discover the harsh realities of corruption and extortion alongside the increasingly aware and disillusioned narrator.

In a bildungsroman tradition the onset of the story is in the protagonists' youth and follows them on a path of moral and psychological growth. Narrating individual passages from childhood into adulthood offer possibilities of social critique. Such narratives allow a - potentially critical - representation of the past and present as well as envisioning future alternatives (Amoko 197). It is a given truth that youth is a temporarily finite period in life and texts featuring young protagonists are inclined to seek meaning in the future. They accentuate the instability and dynamism of modernity (Moretti 556). An interpretation in line with such assumptions condenses a bildungsroman´s main function. According to such conceptions, the genre of the bildungsroman has the ability to highlight the peculiarities inherent in fictional depictions of the process of growing up. What this concretely means in relation to *The Spider King´s Daughter* will be exemplified in the next paragraphs.

In the case of Runner G, coming-of-age is characterised by the loss of the father. As has been mentioned, the lawyer´s son is irrevocably forced into filling the gaps Mr Sodipo´s death has left. His new roles are being the provider, husband and father of an adolescent daughter. As soon as Mrs Sodipo suffers from depression, he additionally has to substitute his sister´s mother and is portrayed as Jokę´s only parent. At first, it seems like his responsibilities have accelerated the process of growing up. His motivational drive roots in the firm belief that he is stronger, braver and more diligent than his late father ever was. Once this conviction is overturned, i.e. he learns of his father´s courageous fight against personified injustice – Mr Johnson – (187-190), his mature values and his quest to meet his own high moral expectations are nullified. Balance of mind, rationality, precautions and assiduously saving money are supplanted by impulsiveness and high expenses. Instead of saving for a stall at the local market, which could grant a sustainable financial situation for his family, he invests in a weapon (220) and is consumed by the desire to avenge his father´s

death. In this regard, the text is also concerned with appropriate forms of masculinity. In an environment of oppression, lack of perspective and without a suitable male role model present, Runner G is searching for a tenable male identity. When he learns of his father´s murder, he belatedly experiences violence and domination, which are generally considered to denote emasculation. With immediate effect, he attempts to substitute the loss of masculinity he underwent and resorts to conservatively "male" demeanour. This process can be interpreted as one of two major moral dilemmata Runner G encounters.

Eventually, Runner G does not really find grand answers to life. His initiation into adulthood is characterised by resentment and the abandonment of high moral standards. Contrarily to a positive maturation hinting at an optimistic outlook to the future – common for the bildungsroman – he is trapped in yet another moral dilemma. He is either to speak out and do what is morally right or to protect his family. Runner G suppresses his urge for justice and sacrifices the life of Abikẹ´s driver in order to shelter himself and his family. From then on, he has to live with the liability of being guilty of complicity in concealing Mr Johnson´s real murderer. Tragic irony emerges in the relationship to his mother. The conviction that her son has avenged his father´s death is a source of strength for her. She recovers from her depression. The hawker´s unfortunate entanglements in covering up Wale´s role as the actual assassin are further accentuated to the readers by letting them into Abikẹ´s gambit. Her driver, Hassan, was suggested as Mr Johnson´s murderer with his consent and the outlook to a promising deal. Corruption made it easy for Abikẹ to avoid a scandal, incapacitate all remaining claims to her father´s inheritance as well as pleasing her (admittedly dubious) ethical standards. The night before Hassan´s death by firing squad he was sneaked out of prison and received what seems like a visa for Dubai and a generous, life-long grant. It is essential to this endeavour that the hawker remains silent. It speaks for the female protagonist´s insight into human nature that she is so certain of the fact that Runner G "*would remain silent and lose his integrity*" (282) in order to shield his family from possible consequences. However, this behaviour also delivers the final blow to their relationship. Abikẹ destroys the integrity she has admired in Runner G. In this sense, the sheltered Abikẹ is simultaneously portrayed as more sabotaging and cruel, but also as more mature than the gullible hawker, who does not realise he is being hoaxed. He remains broken and disillusioned with the dysfunctional legal system of a corrupt nation.

One could conclude that the hawker undergoes a transformation of the self; or rather several transformations of selves as the narrative progresses. Periods of hope, revenge and disillusionment mark the different stages in his growing-up. He finds himself typecast in the role of a victim, an avenger and a looser respectively. Besides all the features reminiscent of a coming-of-age novel, Onuzo is writing against the grain of the bildungsroman tradition; at least in the hawker´s narrative, where stagnation, or even regression, prevails. His unattainable dreams and aspirations become emblematic for an extremely rigid system when it comes to social mobility. His personal pain ignites an active suspension of morals. After the bond with Abikẹ starts to crumble, he provokes the fights (174) he formerly tried to conciliate. This is where agency comes into play. Agency is seen as a crucial part in craving an identity of one´s own (Bamberg). Runner G´s agency is subverted once it comes to a negative differentiation of the self from others, initiated by the feeling of insufficiency when compared to the fatherly ideal:

> I have always thought I am the opposite of him. It has encouraged me to think he would never have survived as a hawker. (170) […] In his own understated way, my father was a braver man than I will ever be. (194)

The hawker recognises that he will not be able to meet the ethical standards his father adhered to. Over the course of the novel, Mr Sodipo posthumously turns into a morally upright role model. This unsettles Runner G´s sense of self, because he fears to not be able to become the man he wants to be. The narrator´s quest for a meaningful identity collapses thereafter. To put it differently, once his father develops into a model that seems out of reach to him and he feels deceived by Abikẹ, his sole confidant, Runner G develops into the very person he formerly despised. Weak and passively aggressive he surrenders his agency to Abikẹ, who is now acting on behalf of the Johnson empire. He completely withdraws into the private family space and is denied agency in bringing Mr Johnson´s murderer to justice. Evidently, Runner G´s helplessness is poeticized in the motif of the failed assassination as well as by his prolonged silence in regard to Hassan´s conviction. As such, the still nameless street hawker becomes the symbol of the voiceless, powerless and deprived.

It is a striking feature that throughout the narrative the hawker´s real name is not revealed. Readers only know his "street name": Runner G. His surname is revealed indirectly, when the full name of his father is mentioned (274). The absence of a name leads

to two main effects. For one, the male protagonist´s individuality partially fades into the background. Nameless, his fate stands for the life of *anyone* who is socio-economically disadvantaged and has to face the rough realities on the streets of Lagos. The second effect is that Runner G´s socio-economic standing is constantly brought to consciousness because his friend and almost-lover persistently refers to him as her hawker. His occupation is used to identify him. Inevitably, his "name" constitutes his identity and reduces it to foreground his low-prestige job. Once Runner G even speculates about the hierarchy of their relationship: "I am just another servant. Maybe I am even ´my hawker` like Hassan is ´my driver`." (170) Having access to Abikẹ´s narration, the reader already knows that his concerns are justified.

It adds tragic irony that Runner G is referred to as "the/my hawker" throughout Abikẹ´s narration. Partly, this can be attributed to the male narrating protagonist himself, because he never reveals more than his street name. Abikẹ stands in binary opposition to the nameless male narrator. The fact that the female protagonist has two names (Abikẹ/Abby) and figuratively two identities at her disposal further highlights the protagonists' division.

Two names for one character instantly imply a multi-dimensional approach towards identity. This effect is reinforced through both narrators´ explicit reflections on Abikẹ´s/Abby´s two names. For Abikẹ, the new name is a way to proactively influence her personality and ultimately her behaviour towards Runner G. To her, Abby is "*[a] name just for him, so that whenever he called me, I would remember that we didn´t play the game.*" (209) Assuming the new Abby-identity functions as a clear break from the traumatic upbringing she encountered. It distances her from the previous habit of maltreating her siblings, employees and friends. In the female character´s self-perception, Abby is extremely positively connoted. The new name stands for her hope to leave the past behind and strong urge to become a better person. Her desire is strong enough to sacrifice her given name - certainly the most widely used everyday means to distinguish individuals - in order to start her identity construction actively, autonomously and afresh.

The perception of the hawker is fundamentally different. Yet, he is also highly aware of Abikẹ´s substitute identity. He goes as far as to apprehend Abikẹ/Abby as two separate

entities. Instead of acknowledging her efforts to untangle herself from her father´s emotional grip, Runner G connects her more strongly with the despot:

> It´s Abby now, no longer Abikẹ. She insists and will not answer when I forget and call her by the ´old name`. Abikẹ is still there but more and more, this Abby character creeps up. Now she has named her, I watch out for her and am wary of her comings and goings. Perhaps this Abby is the one destined to become her father one day. By then, Abikẹ will be long gone from my life. It makes the thought easier when I remember there are two. (228)

One could go as far as to designate the difference in perception by the self and the other as a main tool to advance the tragic ending. The different connotations associated with Abby accentuate the protagonists' increasing alienation and pave the way for the tragedy about to climax.

Alternatively, the protagonists' failing friendship can be attributed to their varying speed of maturation. The hawker´s initial maturity is superimposed by depictions of irrational and impulsive behaviour. Abikẹ´s split personality, which is almost perceived as schizophrenia by the hawker, could in fact be regarded as a significant step towards liberating herself from her despotic father. As such it represents a truncated route to adulthood. Indeed, the text suggests an apparently successful formation of the female protagonist. Contrary to what readers are likely to expect in the beginning, Abikẹ is not completely encumbered by her childhood traumata, but emerges independent and empowered. She performs the delicate balancing act of staying loyal to her father, without idealising him. A quote from the last pages makes my point clearer. Abikẹ remarks: "*[…] I am not my father, though the more I understand the webs my father wove, the more I respect the man.*" (282) In other instances, she is more critical about the patriarch and his abilities as a role model:

> *I think I believed Frustration was an induction into the ´real world`. Now this seems so foolish. My father´s world has only business partners and enemies. No parents or children or friends. I am sick of this half-life.* (180)

This excerpt shows the process in which Abikẹ recognises the responsibility and loneliness that being in charge of her father´s business can bring. It prompts the young woman to take charge of her own life and live it according to her own (more humane and slightly more ethical) rules. One significant step in her maturation is the active rejection of Mr Johnson´s

values as well as his style as a parent and leader. In that sense, she outgrows her father´s authority.

The narrative structure in chapter 46 (265-279) prompts an alternative interpretation to the one just exemplified. During the novel´s climax the voice of the female narrator includes her father´s speech. In direct opposition, the hawker reports on his own thoughts as well as on what Mr Johnson´s murderer says. Merging the account of Abikẹ with her father on the one hand and including Wale in the hawker´s narration on the other hand is tremendously significant. Sometimes this technique is carried to such extremes that the readers only discover who was speaking once they read on. This narrative strategy sets the narrators further apart. At the same time, it aligns Abikẹ more closely to her father than ever before. It is almost as if their identities coalesce into one. Abikẹ´s regret, voiced immediately prior to the dramatic climax, "*I should have been more like [my father]*" (264) gives additional merit to this argument, while her doubts about her father´s integrity – voiced in the epilogue (281) – subvert it again. There are points in favour and against both readings, but there is no doubt about the hybrid, non-linear and dynamic picture of identity which forms the basis of both interpretations.

Identity is also said to be influenced by social relations. Despite the profoundly different experiences the main characters face during their maturity, they have one main thing in common: not being able to rely on a functional network of support. In the formative years youth assumes in identity construction, this is shown to have extensive effects. Both narrators´ character formation is strongly influenced by insecurities. They prompt over-compensations in the form of mistrust in each other. However, the lack of familial support is not only relevant for character development. Hron´s eponymous essay title "ora na-azu nwa" is Igbo and translates into "it takes a whole village to raise a child" (27). In the book at hand, there is not even an intact nuclear family available to support the growing up of the protagonists and their siblings. In this sense, *The Spider King´s Daughter* breaks with the traditional concept of the extended family. In numerous other contemporary Nigerian novels this concept is still fictionally present (albeit often through a dysfunctional depiction). *Graceland* by Abani or *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Adichie are just two of the most prominent examples. Onuzo´s characters are presented as highly solitary. Neither Abikẹnor

Runner G can resort to a supportive network of relatives. Effectively, they cannot even fall back on an intact nuclear family.

An identity-conscious interpretation of the novel has shown certain features reminiscent of a novel of formation. The bildungsroman puts youth at centre stage, so does *The Spider King´s Daughter*. The underlying concept of identity is multi-layered and dynamic. Adolescence becomes synonymous with hope and the potential for change. Against the Nigerian backdrop of a demographically extremely young population and a political history marked by constant states of turmoil, such associations are particularly relevant and, of course, highly political. The political agenda associated with the bildungsroman might be a possible explanation for the rise of the genre in African fiction. For the specific case examined here, it can be concluded that the novel puts a strong focus on the formation of young characters in an urban, globalised, uncertain world. The implicit notion of and attached meaning to youth as a society´s future is a main feature of the bildungsroman. It applies to Onuzo´s text, above all because both fathers are dead and the young protagonists are forced to take on responsibility for their predecessors' legacy. They are portrayed at the brink of being in charge, of constituting the new generation of potential leaders. The generational transition highlights the possibility for change. However, it seems to be an uncertain transition of authority and not necessarily triumphant. According to the novel, change is likely to take place neither immediately nor radically, but will gradually happen nevertheless. The reasons for these assumptions are exemplified by Abikẹ´s uncompromising clinging to power, while clearly following a mitigated, more humane code of conduct. Onuzo evidently breaks certain genre-specific traditions. Most prominently, *Bildung* is largely absent in the sense that the narrator-protagonists have not apparently profited from what they have learned and experienced from their mutual relationship. In retrospect, the ending of the novel makes it clear that they are both left hurt and that the division between the wealthy and the poor was not sustainably transcended by their friendship. This claim is reinforced by the passage where Runner G chokes Abikẹ. Her first thought (after "Why?") is: "*This is what happens when you trust a hawker."* (263) It seems unlikely that they will expose themselves to meaningful relationships with individuals from the opposite social strata in the future.

2.5.3 Exiled in One´s Own City - Migration and Identity

Identity is strongly influenced by the need to belong. For the hawker, this need remains largely unsatisfied. Throughout the narrative, feelings of displacement and alienation prevail. Within the context of social relationships and identity construction, migration comes into play. Whereas the common notion of diaspora initiated by transnational migration is not dealt with in *The Spider King´s Daughter*, exile and the unhomely (see Okoye) certainly are. Physically, Runner G´s family only moves within their home city. Still, the loss of their former home is experienced as catastrophic. The effect of the relocation to Mile 12 can be better understood within a broader framework of migration. As Strehle remarks, diaspora is at once blessing and curse (650). The benefits associated with migration to industrialised countries generally entail the hope for greater personal freedom, safety and enhanced economic opportunities. Tragically, those advantages do not apply to a socio-economic dislocation in one´s own city. The Sodipos are left struggling with the downsides of migration and the threatening prospect of never feeling truly at home again.

In the relational space of the hawker, this feeling of exile manifests itself in his lack of a peer group. His efforts to set himself apart overstep the social norms in his new environment and prevent him from making local friends. To put it into his own words: "None of my classmates liked me. I was curt, I sneered at their grammar, I faked an American twang, anything to show I was different." (38) His old friends, although physically not far away, were repelled by the harsh realities of Mile 12 and soon drifted away (115-116). Despite Runner G´s later efforts to assimilate, for instance by learning pidgin, his demeanour unmistakeably marks him as an outsider. Similarly, he is denied access to his former home among the wealthy. His experiences of moving opened his eyes to the variety of existences in Lagos and part of his mind is unavoidably detained in Mile 12. He cannot simply return to his former state of ignorance about poverty. Although he seeks to reconnect with his family´s affluent past, he does not really fit in with Abikẹ´s sheltered and therefore isolated friends. To give a contrasting example, Abikẹ´s friend Oritse is of the opinion that "´Begging should be banned in Lagos´" (74), whereas Runner G is close friends with the beggar Mr T. Through such opposing views, it becomes obvious that the hawker is likely to always inhabit two locations, but none of them unrestrainedly. Neither the affluent Lagos of his childhood, nor the one constituting his present reality presents a home. Runner

G mourns the loss of his roots and synchronously criticises those who are still members of this social space. The hawker becomes exiled in his own city. Theoretically having the tools to access a past and present location at the same time leads to "double-consciousness" (Strehle 650) within the exiled subject. This internal division defines the hawker and it adds to his multidimensional identity-topography.

Besides the hawker´s personal discontinuity of self ignited by intra-national migration, the novel depicts more general insecurities sparked by the local-global nexus of post-colonial Nigeria. There is, for instance, a strong underlying hierarchy to commodities available to Nigerians and consequently to those who own them. The products associated with "the West", and the US in particular, are considered most prestigious, with local produce at the bottom of the rank. The resulting instability of meaning and identity is present in the text. In a description of the hierarchy amongst hawkers such conceptions are made blatantly obvious:

> The recharge card men are the undisputed leaders of our group. Their branded jerseys set them apart: yellow for MTN, lime green for GLO, red for VMOBILE. Next come those who sell the unusual: framed photographs of past presidents, pots, bed sheets, crockery. Then the food sellers of which there is a hierarchy: ice-cream sellers with bicycles, ice-cream sellers with sacks, foreign sweets, foreign fruits and right at the bottom of the list, anything local: boiled peanuts, scraped oranges, plantain chips. These local things were mostly for women, though sometimes a man who had fallen on hard times could find himself with a tray of groundnuts balanced on his head. (15)

The underlying prestige of foreign products surfaces even within the social hierarchy among the hawkers. Those who sell foreign goods have a higher social standing than those who trade local produce. At the very bottom of the hierarchy are local commodities and the women who sell them. This connection between products and people sheds light on the influence of a global market economy on the individual, on the one hand. On the other hand, it illustrates the standing of women and their restricted opportunities in a misogynist society.

Among the rich, Western product and lifestyle trends seem to be ubiquitous, too. The commodities acquired are mainly branded goods [Kellogg´s Cornflakes (39), Toblerone chocolate (111), Chanel eye liner (89), Barbie dolls and Game Boys (114)], but even Yale degrees (11) or American visas (57) are presented as purchasable. Such products symbolise

a global culture of consumerism, which poor Nigerians are denied access to. Within the hawker´s narration, reference to these goods, services or intellectual commodities further heighten the loss of his former self. His pre-Mile 12 experiences seem like an invented story, even to himself. Phrases reminiscent of fairy-tales emphasise the male narrator´s nostalgia for a life with full access to a globalised world:

> Now it seems a lie that, once upon a time, my father´s bank account was full enough for the American embassy to grant us visas. But it is true. I have been to America. There are stamps in my expired passport to prove it. I have seen snow. For this there is no proof except the memories in my head. They are enough to remind me that once I knew more than Mile 12 and hawking and fetching water on Friday evenings. (57)

In the quote, the expired passport serves as a symbol to explicate Runner G´s restrictions as regards participation in globalisation. His current situation traps him in Nigeria and his memories confine him to the past. In his eyes, the ability to remember a better past makes his current experiences even more painful. Almost to numb the pain, he desperately tries to prove that he is more than just his new identity; name and profession in one ("the hawker"). In a sense, he gives the impression of being confused to know of a life outside Mile 12 and provides evidence to the reader and himself. In other passages, feelings of pride about his fortunate upbringing prevail and locate the male narrator in opposition to his fellow hawkers.

The Spider King´s Daughter deals extensively with the paradoxes inherent in the exiled subject. The desire to assimilate is juxtaposed with an urge to distinguish oneself from the host community and its members. Both a sense of pride in one´s different heritage as well as the pain and struggle to belong to a new group are described. Notions of self and individuality are therefore in constant flux. To complicate matters even further, individuals and their varying selves are exposed to strong forces stemming from the local vs. global power imbalance.

Returning to Hron´s argument, I would like to anchor the hybrid space of adolescence and identity in *The Spider King´s Daughter* within general trends in contemporary Nigerian writing. Hron detects three common tendencies in the field of recent Nigerian literature featuring young protagonists; namely, the paradigms resolve around neo-colonial criticism, a discerning engagement with transnationalism and raising

awareness to human rights violations in a globalised world. The first and last points are most obviously addressed by the novel. Despotic family systems are effectively challenged by estranged and increasingly independent teenagers. As discussed before, the patriarchal micro-cosmic family unit could be seen as a parallel to tyrannical nation states. In line with this argumentation, adolescent protest becomes synonymous with political resistance to neo-colonial systems of exploitation and their imbalance of power. Whereas transnationalism is not an explicit subject matter, issues associated with it, like hybrid identities, a missing sense of belonging, alienation, etc. are dealt with nonetheless. Through the economic and subsequent physical dislocation, Runner G feels the challenging consequences otherwise associated with transnational migration. Multifarious levels of social and cultural disorientation and its influences on the young man´s identity formation are of constant relevance in the text. Lastly, human rights violations in what is portrayed as a globalised, capitalist and corrupt Nigeria are discovered bit by bit and exhibit the protagonists´ gradual maturation from infantile innocence to grown-up sagacity.

This brings us to the end of the contextualised reading, which the main part of this thesis has been dedicated to. The next chapter will tie up loose ends. It focuses on educational theory as well as the institutional framework for teaching Anglophone African literature in Austrian ELT classrooms. It will clarify why a less traditional approach guided the literary analysis. As opposed to more conventional approaches, which separately deal with narrative technique, plot and structure, style, etc., this paper´s approach was primarily oriented towards themes and their literary representation. Such a line of practice is intended to mirror guided readings in class. As chapter 3 will outline, literary themes in contemporary texts can be used as a tool to make global issues more accessible. Through focusing on relevant themes, learners are more likely to be engaged and practise skills they need in other subjects and, most importantly, in life.

3. *The Spider King´s Daughter* and the Austrian EFL Classroom

English teachers in Austria are facing increasing pressure. There are standardised educational goals (*Bildungsstandards*) to achieve, given topics and set writing tasks for the centralised A-levels (*Zentralisierte Reifeprüfung*) to be covered and pre-academic papers (*Vorwissenschaftliche* Arbeit) to be supervised and corrected. Philosophers (e.g. Liessmann) and educators (e.g. Hallet, Surkamp and Krämer) lament that literature is doomed to fall to the wayside. This paper argues in favour of literary texts and extensive reading[24] in upper secondary foreign language classrooms. To this end, *The Spider King´s Daughter* serves as an example to illustrate my theory. The following chapter seeks to re-establish the inclusion of novels in Austrian English Language Teaching (ELT) and advocates a more diverse canon. More specifically, it will analyse how learners could benefit from engaging with post-colonial Anglophone African fiction. Selected excerpts from national education policy will affirm the necessity of incorporating global contemporary literature in ELT. In fact, the Austrian National Curriculum (*Lehrplan*)[25] expects teachers to encourage worldviews beyond the Euro-centric. It is an aim more likely to be achieved when accompanied by a diversification of the UK/US-centric literary canon. This part of the thesis is intended to serve as an explanation of best practices in teaching Anglophone African novels and justification of their implementation. It addresses educators who are interested in up-dating their literary syllabus and who seek to broaden their own and their students` horizons.

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[24] Unfortunately, the term "extensive reading" is used ambiguously in academic discourse. The meaning in this paper leans toward Hedge´s definition. She describes extensive reading as a continuous habit of reading large quantities of longer texts independently. Ideally, the material is self-selected and read for pleasure, information or curiosity (202).

[25] The Austrian National Curriculum consists of a general part - binding for all subjects – and a subject specific part. The latter outlines, in our case, the statutory provisions for modern foreign language teaching. This document will serve as the basis of investigation as it condenses the educational goals and teaching responsibilities of English teachers in Austria. It also exemplifies broad topics that have to be covered and competences that need to be trained. The majority of students attending upper secondary education to attain their A-levels chose *AHS*-schools. In the school year 2013/14, 203,278 students attended an *AHS*, compared to 135,524 who went to a *BHS* (Statistik Austria "Schulbesuch"). This is why the curriculum for this school type was chosen. No matter the type of school, there is a lot to be criticised about the Austrian curriculum. Some teachers are displeased with how generally the curriculum is phrased. Others welcome the fact that each teacher is given the leeway to interpret the curriculum and deduce more concrete educational goals individually. Leaving aside such variances of opinion, the wording of the curriculum can be seen as the legislature's instructions to its teachers. As such, it cannot be neglected when discussing what to read at school and to what desired effect.

My thesis refrains intentionally from including methodology, such as concrete activities or elaborated lesson plans. When one assumes that classroom readings should be implemented with the needs and interests of the respective students in mind, lesson plans reminiscent of a recipe seem problematic. What this thesis does try to provide is a sound foundation and overview of the current scholarly debate. Educators will hopefully find substantial intellectual stimulation, helping them to prepare lessons that are based on the academic status quo, varied and adequate for their specific group of learners.

3.1   Why Literature in ELT?

Before analysing the potentials and limitations of Onuzo´s debut novel for teenage English learners, the role literature can and should play in 21st century ELT must be clarified. At first glance, one of the most obvious reasons is the prominent role of "reading" as part of the four skills outlined in handbooks such as Hedge (187-224) or the national curriculum (BGBl. II Nr. 277/2004 22, 27). Language model approaches emphasize the linguistic potential of analysing authentic language. During the early days of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), literature was neglected, because the underlying teaching ideology put spoken interaction at central stage. This has, however, changed and up-to-date approaches to CLT advocate reading as a starting point for genuine interaction. In modern CLT, reading literature has the double function of confronting the student with "real" language as well as guaranteeing genuine discussions. Sharing views and ideas on the text, analysing its characters or simply voicing preferences or dislikes enable situations where language can be produced naturally.

The Austrian curriculum makes it very clear that mastering a language does not only require linguistic proficiency. The curriculum mentions reading as one of the four skills, but in comparison to mainstream ELT literature, it largely neglects the concrete strategies. Instead, the curriculum features a humanistic approach. It exhibits a philosophy, or even ideology, of education. The instructions given urge teachers to focus on "social competences in multicultural settings" (BGBl. II Nr. 277/2004 22). Educators are expected to encourage "sensitivity for the linguistic diversity in Europe and the world" through the selection of intercultural topics and tasks (22-23). Being able to react in a socially and culturally appropriate manner in any given situation (22) is crucial to the process of constructing meaning in a foreign language. Cultural products – such as literature – comprise, reflect, discuss and play with societal values, ideals and norms. An exposure to as many diverse Anglophone contexts as possible- by means of literature, new media or otherwise -seems crucial for enabling students to cope with the diverse conditions of a globalised world. The beneficial effects of extensive reading on the level of command in an L2 are substantial. Nevertheless, a sole focus on linguistic and pragmatic competence does not present a balanced picture. The approach presented here incorporates motivational, attitudinal and emotional aspects, all of which have significant impact on teenagers and should therefore not be underestimated in their influence on foreign language acquisition.

In order to provide a well-rounded discussion, general attitudes towards reading and the humanities need to be taken into account.

There is, of course, the ongoing struggle of humanities in a society that increasingly allocates greater value to sectors such as business and technology, which are seen as more productive. The resulting imbalance has left its mark on the teaching of literature (Chamber and Gregory) as has the intensified pressure to standardise students´ performance. Reading a novel, which is "untidy, discursive" in nature (Bennett 22), does not conform to the zeitgeist´s appetite for comparability, transparency and standardisation. This paper attempts to underline potential contributions of the humanities to solve universal human problems in times of crisis. The process of asking questions, exchanging thoughts, and analysing complex issues is at the heart of the humanities. Like the humanities in general, literary analysis in particular does not promise straight-forward answers. But is it not the untidiness of discourse that resembles global, modern-day realities more adequately?

Following this thought further, fiction could be comprehended as a tool to individualise otherwise abstract, general, and complicated matters. In other words, novels have the ability to break complex categories, e.g. migration, down to an individual fate, i.e. the experiences of Runner G as a displaced and alienated adolescent. When political parties across Europe leverage their constituents' fears of the future and implement abstract categories charged with negative connotations in public discourse, the individual perspective of those subsumed under these categories (may it be refugees, asylum seekers, unemployed persons, welfare recipients, etc.) could function as essential reality checks. In this regard, narrative empathy serves as an auxiliary concept. It defines "the sharing of feeling and perspective-taking induced by reading, viewing, hearing, or imagining narratives of another's situation and condition" (Keen n. pag.). Narrative empathy has been studied in relation to *experientiality*, a term coined by Fludernik. Experientiality is defined as an emotional fusion between the reader and certain aspects of a text. Cognitive narratologists research the nexus between the representations of human experience and how readers connect to such accounts. In other words, they are concerned with how readers re-experience fictional stories. It is presupposed that narratives activate cognitive parameters that enable readers to connect to the narrated experiences (Caracciolo). To date, the effects – particularly on the minds of young readers – remain largely unknown. However, it is unquestioned that narrative empathy harbours the unique potential of

immersing oneself in an unknown fictional world – this is unquestioned. In this sense, narrative empathy plays a crucial role in fostering social competence, i.e. the ability to argue your opinions while respecting those of others. Instances of narrative empathy are even assumed to foster moral development (Hofmann, Nussbaum) and emotional intelligence (Ghosn). Becoming a better person, as idealistic as it may sound, has always been the essence of education.

Comprehending literature as a medium which "provides us not with knowledge ready-made but the opportunity to make knowledge" (Probst 28) is particularly essential in a classroom oriented towards competences. While the majority of teachers would possibly agree that they are aiming at training competences, what many actually do is practising reading strategies. Widening the narrow comprehension of literary competence would be a game-changing notion in numerous Austrian ELT classrooms. Others have raised similar concerns about a continuously narrowing notion of literary competence (cf. Hallet; Bredella and others). Indeed, methodological handbooks re-inforce such claims. They tend to place emphasis on methods for acquiring different reading strategies (e.g. scanning, skimming, predicting content, guessing the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary, etc.).[26] Developing expertise in critical reading skills goes beyond such mechanical approaches towards reading. Critical literacy enables students to detect "how elements of language can be manipulated by writers" (Hedge 199). Students can then start to make inferences on why this might be the case and to what effect. In addition, stimulating critical thinking about plot, themes and characters conforms to student-centred and interactive approaches to language teaching (Van). Langer insistently believes in the formative power of literature. She goes as far as claiming that literary texts can prompt changes in attitudes by the learners themselves due to thorough critical reflections on their lives, language and learning.

Last but certainly not least, reading is fun. Conceiving reading as a pleasurable activity allows learners to connect to the characters, content and target language on an

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[26] To a large degree this applies to Hedge´s handbook, which is a compulsory read in several teacher training courses at the English department of the University of Vienna. Even though the benefits of extensive reading are listed, they are distorted to focus exclusively on developing language competence. Reading literature is associated, for instance, with an increase in lexical knowledge, awareness of text organisation and textual environments as well as an effective training of reading strategies (see 202-203). Activating metacognitive strategies - such as using dictionaries - is also recommended; although current publications vehemently advise against any interruption of the reading process (cf. Day and Bamford; Prowse).

emotional level. Intrinsically motivated students harbour the potential of developing a habit of continuous reading in the foreign language. Protacio puts forward a strong case for including motivation and engagement in any considerations of how to improve literacy. The studies she quotes link reading motivation to improving reading achievement and comprehension skills as well as increasing time spent reading. The latter is a convenient side effect, because it leads to further opportunities to train reading and critical thinking skills. Reading pace accelerates as a consequence. Voracious readers enter "the cycle of growth" (Nutall 127).

3.2   Why Anglophone African Literature in ELT?

The "overuse of what is called the *traditional canon*" (Van 2) has been criticised fiercely. More than two decades ago, Applebee, Burroughs, and Stevens (qtd. in Hayn and Burns) documented the preponderance of texts by male, white authors in L1 English literature classrooms. Although they examined the U.S.-American high school context, one can make inferences for the implementation of literature in ELT, especially, because scholars within the field of ELT have affirmed such claims for their specific research settings (e.g. Van). Despite the literary merit of such canonised texts, they tend to be too difficult for L2 speakers of English. The sophisticated lexis, complex syntax and the deeper meaning of such texts are sometimes hard to grasp, especially for young learners (Van). Just like any other text discussed in class, books comprising the traditional canon should be scrutinised carefully. Their value for a given group of learners and their members´ individual circumstances cannot simply be taken for granted and has to be re-evaluated. It is crucial to provide students with texts they can access and relate to. There are complex relations at work, which might explain why the traditional canon is so persistent. The reading selection at school is said to be predominantly influenced by university reading requirements of future teachers (Hayn and Burns 135). The compulsory reading at European universities is aligned with (mainly) North American and British tertiary educational institutions. Merely teaching what has been taught years ago during the educator´s own schooling or at university level will not suffice.

After such consideration it does come as little a surprise that Anglophone African literature, which has only started to spark academic interest, is slow to trickle down to Austrian classrooms. This difficulty aside, there are other challenges to consider. So far, Africa is most commonly neglected or discussed in relation to poverty and development aid. Whereas such issues are relevant and should by all means be addressed, African realities are more complex. In order to make this point clearer, a BIFIE[27] sample task for the centralised A-level speaking exam is provided.

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[27] BIFIE is the acronym for "Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation & Entwicklung des österreichischen Schulwesens". As such the organisation is responsible for development and innovation within the Austrian school system. Most recently, they develop, design and conduct the newly implemented centralised A-levels (since 2014/15 mandatory for all AHS-schools).

Fig.4: BIFIE Sample Task

This sample task illustrates common notions about Africa. The picture of the girl against a rural background alludes to physical work, child labour, poverty, and a lack of infrastructure. The blond, white child on the right is associated with technology and advanced infrastructure. He is depicted in what looks like a school setting, which further highlights the contrast between the two children. Austrian pupils working on this task are positioned in a binary opposition to "*the* African Other". The encompassing questions do little to mitigate the prejudices evoked by the visual stimuli. Suggestive questions guide pupils towards a one-sided view and reinforce the power imbalance between the children. Only "growing up in a developing country" is to be discussed as challenging and Austrian teenagers are allocated the superior expert role of "recommend[ing] some ways [to…] help". There is more to be said and criticised about this task, but this short explanation suffices for our purposes. The disturbing BIFIE example encapsulates the distorted vision of Africa among many Austrians and indicates that mainstream treatment of Africa at Austrian schools is highly problematic. The lack of African voices, prevailing simplifications, and one-sidedness are among the most pressing reasons why contemporary African fiction should be included in modern ELT curriculum design.

The reception of art and culture yield relevant insights into the cultural background of a given language (Lazar 16). That said, I strongly believe that ELT teachers should be particularly wary when choosing texts. The narratives selected for the Austrian classroom should reflect the wide usage of English*es*. The curriculum states that listening comprehensions must consider national varieties and include "regional, social, occupation-specific and non-native variants" (3) of the language. It is difficult to understand why linguistic varieties are solely affiliated with listening skills. I would advise an expansion of that notion to all four skills. Solely providing British and American texts neither represents the global spread of English nor depicts the vast variety of environments in which English is used and adapted today. A diverse selection of literature assists teachers in offering a global perspective (Eville).

The significance of this argument is further highlighted once the prevailing teaching situation in Austria is taken into consideration. Like other economically strong countries, Austria currently attracts considerable numbers of migrants. Those future pupils - or at least their parents – come from a wide range of international backgrounds and have personal experiences of migration. They will predominantly be taught by white, middle-class Austrians. Providing students with tools to explore the global perspective is the key in allocating a place for the students´ own realities in class. In doing so, teachers might attain the goal to reduce ethnocentrism, ignite curiosity and encourage tolerance. The insights gained by accessing different belief and value systems offer significant benefits to all students regardless of their parentage. As Thaler writes, the learners´ "intercultural openness" (23) is stimulated. Intercultural learning (*Interkulturelles Lernen*) is one of currently twelve trans-disciplinary teaching principles (*Unterrichtsprinzipien*). They are intended as a supplement to the national curriculum. Therefore, all teachers in Austrian schools are legally obliged to incorporate, address and foster this principle in their lessons. Chapter 3.3.1 deals more extensively with the extent to which *The Spider King´s Daughter* could be used to instigate a sustainable learning process in line with these teaching principles.

This paper has already briefly touched upon the need to reflect cultural realities in class. For Austrian ELT, this aspect is likely to gain significance. Currently, 12.5 per cent of people living in Austria are said to be non-Austrian nationals. The number of Africans among them is comparably low but rising. In 2014, approximately 700 Nigerians sought

asylum in Austria. Statistically, this positions Nigerians as the seventh biggest national group of asylum seekers in Austria in the same period. Other African nationalities mentioned in the same statistics are Algerian and Moroccan, with roughly 950 and 500 asylum seekers originating from these countries. (Statistik Austria 8-9) This compact excursus is intended to further discredit ethnically, culturally and racially unbalanced curriculum material. Mainly U.S.-based scholars have long pointed out this issue. As early as 1965 Larrick published her article "The All-White World of Children´s Books". Since then the available material has diversified, but the problem of course material relying mainly, or solely, on "white experience" persists "as well as the continuing problem of white teachers who respond to black students as if those students ´spoke for,` or represented, their entire race." (Tyson 370) Educators could counteract such prevailing trends not only, but also through choosing – or rather offering – multicultural literature. Guiding learners towards African books harbours opportunities to encourage tolerance, because "when teachers make the decision to use books that expose children to other cultures, they tell students that it is important to know about others." (Napoli and Yenika-Agbaw 266)

An enhanced reflection about "others" is not the only aspect possibly stimulated by reading contemporary African novels. As with many other fictional texts, there is an engagement of one´s own humanity and the self. African fiction frequently features adolescent narrators, who lend themselves towards such concerns as they are depicted during a period of personal instability and growth.

3.3 Is *The Spider King´s Daughter* Suitable for (Austrian) Young Adult Readers? – Potentials and Limitations

Identifying suitable literature for the EFL classroom can be a daunting task. Apart from linguistic adequacy there is much more to consider. The national curriculum stresses that "adequate content will promote cosmopolitan attitudes (Weltoffenheit) and deepen understanding for societal correlations" (23). This statement adds pressure to the selection process, but does not propose any criteria on how to choose "adequate content". Hanvey´s five interdisciplinary principles for meaningful global education present a helpful starting point for teaching multicultural adolescent literature[28]. The five interdisciplinary principles are especially applicable if supplemented with corresponding guidance questions developed by Eville (85). She provides educators with the following question rubric for the selection of effective international reading material for the (in her case L1 US-American) classroom:

- · Perspective consciousness: Does the story provide insights into the lives of the characters?
- · State of the planet awareness: Does the story accurately portray historical and/or current events?
- · Cross-cultural differences: Does the story give the reader insights into how people from another culture respond to the basic human needs for belonging, love, safety, and so on?
- · Systemic awareness: Does the story portray the characters operating within a rich contextual setting?
- · Options for participation: Is the story multi-dimensional? For example, is there a tension between characters who may have opposing views or ways of addressing important issues? (85)

The previous literary analysis of *The Spider King´s Daughter* suggests affirmative answers to these selection questions. It extensively focuses on all of the aspects relevant for effective global education. There is clearly substantial support for introducing Onuzo´s novel into the field of global education in general and ELT in particular. The next logical step is to scrutinise the specific Austrian setting for any further merits of expanding the ELT literary canon to include books such as – or similar to - the one at hand.

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[28] Educators looking for a guideline with a more general appeal might consult Weisshaar´s checklist for text selection (98). A selection of the guidance questions he suggests can be found in the appendix (v-vi).

3.3.1 Teaching Principles (Unterrichtsprinzipien)

Teaching principles are intended as guidelines for teachers of all subjects and types of schools. They should underlie any didactic, thematic and methodological considerations. Hence, they should exert influence on the annual programme of each teacher. At present, the Austrian ministry for education and women outlines twelve such principles (*Unterrichtsprinzipien*)[29]. Onuzo´s novel is specifically conducive to the integration of principles like *Interkulturelles Lernen* (intercultural learning) and *Entwicklungspolitische Bildungsarbeit* (policies of development)/ *Politische Bildung* (political education). Intercultural learning and its adaptation, transculturalism, are the subject of many considerations in this didactic chapter. That is why *policies of development* serves as an example on how Austrian educators can establish connections between the teaching principles and Onuzo´s debut novel.

The essence of *policies of development* as a teaching principle[30] could be understood as an awareness of Europe´s relation to and position in the world (BMUKK "Entwicklungspolitische Bildungsarbeit"). Admittedly, there are novels which focus more explicitly on the relation of Africans with Europe and vice versa. The expanding body of work regarding diaspora literature is one field that offers an abundance of perspectives on the issue. Even though references to Europe are not prevalent in *The Spider King´s Daughter*, they are observable and include pressing issues like human trafficking and obsessive consumerism (of Western brands). Most importantly, Europe is depicted through

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[29] The *Unterrichtsprinzipien* are *Interkulturelles Lernen, Entwicklungspolitische Bildungsarbeit, Erziehung zur Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern, Europapolitische Bildungsarbeit, Gesundheitserziehung, Leseerziehung, Medienbildung, Politische Bildung, Sexualerziehung, Umweltbildung, Verkehrserziehung* and *Wirtschaftserziehung und Verbraucher/innenbildung*. (BMBF "Unterrichtsprinzipien")

[30] This footnote contains an excursus into the problematic situation of teaching principles in Austria and offers possible reasons for their neglect. It is problematic that there are repetitions in the declarations on teaching principles, because overlaps exacerbate attempts to define clear aims and outcomes for the principles. This unnecessarily expands the number of principles, which adds to the lack of clarity immanent in the Austrian national curriculum. Repetition and redundancy are likely to impede the active implementation of the principles in actual lessons. To illustrate, the *policies of development* principle is based on the general ordinance of *political education*. To complicate matters, the latter is a teaching principle in its own right. The question of why there are two teaching principles stating analogous messages is therefore certainly justified. In fact, the review of the relevant BMBF texts for this paper has shown that there are at least three principles that could be subsumed under one category. The general ordinance of *political education* encourages an "education towards cosmopolitanism that roots in an understanding of humanity´s existential problems" (Grundsatzerlass 1). In this definition the strong connection to the principle of *intercultural learning* is blatantly obvious. The three principles exhibit a considerable number of intersections. This adds to the confusion caused by the vaguely formulated curriculum. A revision and possibly consolidation of the twelve principles seems necessary.

the narrations of Africans, which offers students a new perspective. This is valuable, because in a normal school setting such views are otherwise often hard to include. Further, it is significant that Europe is not centrally positioned, as this opens up non-Eurocentric perspectives.

Literature is commonly perceived as supplying a reflection of a society or community (Iser 13). One of the main didactic advantages of *The Spider King´s Daughter* is the novel´s portrayal of both extremes of the rich-poor divide in Lagos. It consequently refrains from a sentimental, imbalanced depiction of the deprived, while introducing a potentially lesser-known side of Lagos, namely unlimited wealth. Thus, up-to-date fictional accounts of African realities that transcend stereotypical images, or at least complement them, allocate space for differentiation and invite reflection.

Educational work engaged with *policies of development* is characterised by an explicit dedication to the UN millennium development goals. These goals might seem rather abstract for learners, but can be personalised by comparing their significance to the characters in Onuzo´s novel. "Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger" suddenly becomes more accessible when connected to the hawker´s situation. It is a powerful (reading) experience to realise that removing as little peel as possible can have an impact on a person´s nutrition. In fact, for Runner G and his family it is what holds the balance between having just enough to eat and still being hungry. Likewise the importance of "improving maternal health" is made obvious once students are confronted with the consequences of Mrs Sodipo´s depression. Her disease prevents her from contributing to the household income, which shifts the entire responsibility onto her son. Hence, he is forced to quit school and take on full-time employment. This is not to say that fiction can substitute for a factual engagement with such issues. Fiction does, however, give a face, voice, and emotion to complex and interrelated issues. Personalisation is the key to these arguments. It means that "*the* poor, hungry African child of a mentally ill mother" becomes Runner G. Such personalisation processes illustrate global interrelations and discourage generalisations.

Although the present situation with regard to teaching principles is by no means ideal, the principles do provide food for thought and possible inspiration for teachers. This brief exploration of how students and teachers benefit from an active implementation of a teaching principle in class has shown that an engagement with *policies of development* may nourish students´ awareness of the importance of perspective. It assists them in

synthesizing categories (they will need to grasp for their exams; see below) and facts (from their general world knowledge) with a story told from a perspective different from their own.

3.3.2   Centralised A-Levels (Zentralisierte Reifeprüfung)

Considerable reforms have led to the implementation of the new centralised A-levels at all general upper secondary schools (*AHS*[31]) in 2014/15. In the school year 2015/16 the remaining vocational upper secondary schools (*BHS*[32]) will follow. Whereas the written exam papers are provided by the BIFIE[33] and all participants receive the same tasks, the oral prompts are autonomously compiled by a subject-specific group of expert teachers at every school. Regardless of the type of school, at least one exam needs to be taken in a modern foreign language. For the vast majority of Austrian students this is English, as it remains the only modern foreign language taught at every school.

There is a compilation of suggested topics (*Themenpool*) to be covered in Austrian upper-secondary modern foreign language classrooms. It is not binding, but intended as a set of guidelines for the design of oral exam material. The subject-specific teachers at each school are to select their categories (i.e. broad topic areas, to which several units of study can be allocated to). They must be based on the national curriculum and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The categories have to be communicated to the students in due time. The corresponding tasks are skill-based and seek to test spoken production (monologue) as well as spoken interaction (dialogue). During the final oral exam, the student may choose one of two randomly selected topic areas from the pool of topics. At a CEFR B2 language level, a broad range of topics is available.

The majority of the categories suggested can effortlessly be related to *The Spider King´s Daughter*. The most productive categories in my view will be outlined shortly. One can, for instance, draw obvious connections to *relationships and social networks*[34]. A whole chapter has been dedicated to how the characters´ relationships are portrayed in Onuzo´s debut novel. In order to avoid repetition, only the most relevant aspects for the context of

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[31] Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule
[32] Berufsbildende Höhere Schule
[33] Bundesinstitut für Bildungsforschung, Innovation & Entwicklung des österreichischen Schulwesens
[34] Beziehungen und soziale Netzwerke

ELT in Austria will be pointed out once again. The narrative presents stimuli for questions of social coherence and mobility. It deals with socio-economic status and to what effect it determines everyday life. In the Lagos shown by Onuzo, peer groups are arranged according to parental income. Members of different income levels live extremely separated lives. This might prompt students to reflect on their own milieu and peer group. The influence of same-age friendships on adolescent character development is hard to over-estimate and extremely emotionally charged. An engagement with peer groups through the distanced lens of a novel might therefore be beneficial. The relational aspects of love, friendship and family are also likely to come into play. Crafton has exposed the necessity of reconsidering common notions of family in literature classes. She entreats educators to allocate space for "families of all sorts" (191) through a well-balanced reading curriculum. The common norm of the nuclear family does not represent the reality for many students. This needs to be acknowledged. A "message about tolerance, love, and inclusion" (Crafton 191) outside such family structures could be sent by thinking about the hawker´s care for his family. Alternatively, the consequences of the deficient support system of the Sodipos could be discussed. In their case, the traditional extended family support network does not function effectively. Abikẹ´s admittedly dysfunctional extended family does not conform to a nuclear family concept either. Overall, "young adult fiction is a powerful tool to use in helping students to answer their own questions about family, belonging, and identity" (Crafton 193). *The Spider King´s Daughter* provides manifold occasions to do so in a non-essentialist, non-stereotypical way.

Growing up and identity formation[35] is one of the key themes. Both narrators are in puberty and faced with the challenges of growing up. Despite the moral dilemma and substantial crisis they are confronted with, they are primarily portrayed as "normal" teenagers. Family loyalty and personal insecurities ultimately lead to the crumbling of their bond. As they are confronting similar issues in their own lives, adolescent readers are likely to connect to the protagonists on a very personal level. Moreover, there is a male and a female narrator, which increases the book´s appeal to both boys and girls. Personal identification with one or more of the characters is crucial in detecting the universally

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[35] Erwachsenwerden und Identitätsfindung (inkl. Rollen und Vorbilder, nationale Identität)

human in the text. Differently put, relating to a fictional person from a different cultural background fosters cross-cultural understanding.

The novel offers the possibility to approach *intercultural aspects*[36] from different angles. There is the aforementioned personal identification with the characters. At the same time, the book contains numerous instances in which the protagonists' lives differ from the students´ cultural background. Exposing the readers to a world unknown allows them to envision a life different from their own. Interrupting habitual thoughts ignites critical thinking and reflection processes about "the other" and "the self". With the help of solid character identification, the engagement with the self and the other is likely to be appreciative. Ideally, students learn as much about others as they learn about themselves.

The topic *school and education*[37] is constantly present in the narrative. The elitist high-quality private schools and their spoilt pupils (13) are juxtaposed with run-down state-funded institutions lacking infrastructure and staff (37). They attract students from the lower strata of society who seem to struggle with English as a medium of instruction. Discussions about private and government-run schools appear, as well as connected issues like school fees, university application processes, teacher-student ratios, safety on the way to school, English as a medium of instruction, reasons for and consequences of school-drop outs, etc. Runner G´s yearning for education is in stark contrast to Abikẹ's attitude. She takes her first-class education for granted, which probably mirrors the reader's own privileged situation. As opposed to other post-colonial texts, the readers are not the only ones in a more fortunate position than the male protagonist. In my opinion, this is an absolutely crucial fact for avoiding the simplified binary opposition of the privileged Europeans versus the deprived Africans, an artificial dichotomy usually re-enforced by Austrian school settings (cf. BIFIE task). Nevertheless, there is the danger of solidifying notions of widespread corruption and weak states in Africa. Teachers dealing with *The Spider King´s Daughter* need to be aware of such notions and challenge them in class.

Topics from the *Themenpool* such as *regional studies*[38] suggest an engagement with content knowledge about, in this case, Nigeria and the metropolis of Lagos. Novels assist the acquisition of world knowledge and enhance reflective competencies. Research

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[36] Interkulturelle Aspekte
[37] Schule und Bildung
[38] Landeskundliche Aspekte

proves that information drawn from fiction is remembered more easily and for a longer time (Marsh, Meade and Roediger). In this regard, reading fiction becomes highly relevant to a sustainable preparation for the A-levels. Reading about "facts" in fiction and connecting them to individual stories assists in the continuing acquisition of content knowledge. In this sense, a contextualised reading of *The Spider King´s Daughter* has the capability to deepen the student´s engagement with a contemporary, *globalised world*[39]. As previously emphasized, the great potential of literary texts lies in the personal illustration of abstract topic categories. Much more so than non-fictional texts, literature breaks down as well as combines such categories. By implication, learners will be enabled to remember and present differentiated and consolidated arguments, for instance at the final oral exam. Novels could thus be seen as a didactic tool to encourage learners to think outside the box(es) of the topic pool. Indeed, they stimulate students to make connections that are meaningful to themselves. Such claims are supported by research in the field of narrative empathy, which supposes an emotional attachment of the readers to a text (Keen).

There are other topics worth discussing as part of a treatment of *The Spider King´s Daughter* in the ELT classroom. Readers of this paper will have found inspiration in the literary analysis to address the relevant remaining categories *living and environment*[40], *world of employment* including transnational and global aspects[41], *art and culture*[42], *social groups and minorities*[43] as well as *rules and regulations* (including youth crime, personal freedom…)[44]. To a lesser extent the following topics are touched upon: *nutrition, health and social security*[45], *consumer society*[46], *tradition and change*[47] as well as *communication*.[48]

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[39] Die Globalisierte Welt
[40] Wohnen und Umgebung
[41] Arbeitswelt inkl. übernationale und globale Aspekte
[42] Kunst und Kultur
[43] Gesellschaftliche Gruppierung; Minderheiten, Randgruppen…
[44] Regeln, Vorschriften, Gesetze; Jugendkriminalität, persönliche Freiheit…
[45] Ernährung, Gesundheit und soziale Absicherung
[46] Konsumgesellschaft
[47] Tradition und Wandel
[48] Kommunikation

3.4 Discussion and Findings - In Favour of Teaching *The Spider King´s Daughter*

Neither a general statement on the importance of literature nor a survey of the particular Austrian setting would do justice to the depth of *The Spider King's Daughter*. Certain features specific to Onuzo´s novel indicate its suitability within a broader context of ELT.

A modern view on gender equality is among such features. Equality of socially constructed gender (23) is also a major concern of the national curriculum. As elaborated on in the literary survey, Abikẹ is an exceptionally strong and powerful female character. Even in a very patriarchal society, she planned to inherit the Johnson corporation all along. She confidently contrives and fights for this to happen and does not shy away from the responsibility once her father is murdered. Runner G is on par with his female co-narrator and subverts traditional gender roles. This makes identification with both protagonists possible, regardless of the reader´s gender.

The novel´s narrative technique caters to the taste of teenagers who are potentially more familiar with film than with literature. Descriptive passages in the beginning assist learners to ease into the narrative. Shortly thereafter the pace picks up steadily. This creates a sense of permanent action. The fast pace and frequent cliff-hangers may even intrigue those readers with shorter attention spans. The "entertaining" quality of the narrative is reinforced by humour. Despite the tragic circumstances and dramatic climax, *The Spider King´s Daughter* is not depressing to read. Its tone is surprisingly humorous. It implements irony and sarcasm as well as slap-stick humour, all of which facilitates access to the text.

Another point in favour of reading *The Spider King´s Daughter* might sound rather banal, but is in fact the opposite and far from being uncontested. As regards language, Onuzo´s debut novel is easy to read. Empirical research into extensive reading has proven that comprehension largely determines the readers´ personal interaction with a text. In other words, simpler texts enhance learners´ reading pleasure (cf. Nation). The text discussed here often exhibits fragments and depictions of spoken interaction. Narrative techniques modelled after an oral conversation feature less complex syntax and a smaller range of (mainly colloquial) vocabulary. When reading easy fictional texts, the purpose of reading is likely to shift towards pleasure rather than comprehension or gaining knowledge. Enjoyment of reading as a prime goal puts learners on an equal footing with first-language

speakers (cf. Day and Bamford 138). This experience is further amplified by the occasional use of Nigerian Pidgin. Language learners will probably have to rely on their guessing skills when it comes to such expressions, just as English L1-speakers unfamiliar with NP will. Valuable guessing skills assist in focusing on the general meaning and thereby in capturing the core meaning of a text. Ultimately, accepting a certain ambiguity – within the individual linguistic comfort zone –promotes reading fluency (Day and Bamford 139). Generally speaking, a shift towards pleasure as the major reading purpose, as advocated by extensive reading approaches, is fostered by easily comprehensible language. The purpose of reading significantly impacts the reader´s interaction with the narrative (Day and Bamford 138). During a joyful reading experience, a genuine learning environment is created. It closely resembles the authentic situations of L1 readers, an often aspired-to goal that is otherwise almost impossible to create within the limits of modern foreign language instruction.

In addition, the use of Nigerian Pidgin puts language at centre stage. Unknown NP words might spark an interest in different types and varieties of English. The evident changes in register and variety could stimulate enhanced reflections on the learners´ own language use. This goal is also stated in the national curriculum. Educators are advised to encourage learners to "reflect on language and its use" (24). This curricular aim is likely to be achieved once learners are confronted with the hawker´s linguistic situation. His cultural capital is almost solely conveyed by his proficiency in Standard English. At the same time, he is dependent on his fluency in NP to relate to his neighbours and meet the expectations of his customers. Reading fiction that incorporates deviating forms of the standard language could foster an understanding of register and highlight the importance of appropriate language in different circumstances. Especially at a B2 language level, "learners should build an awareness for adequate register" (BGBl. II Nr. 277/2004 25). Moreover, the novel makes clear that "conventions of politeness" (BGBl. II Nr. 277/2004 25) are culturally dependent and vary considerably throughout the English-speaking world. Inspiring an appreciation for and reflection on the versatility of language is an important step towards the development of sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge.

After all the potentials Anglophone African fiction comprises, something must be said about the difficulties one may encounter. Foremost, there is the looming danger of exoticism in the teaching of post-colonial literature. Jensen warns that the appeal of post-colonial texts may lie "not so much in the different perspectives and challenges it poses,

but in […its] statues as odd (quaint) and exotic (colourful)" (149). Teachers could follow three lines of action in order to avoid exoticism. Firstly, they could choose books that largely refrain from tapping into the exotic trap.[49] *The Spider King´s Daughter*, for instance, uses the realist mode instead of the "exotic" magic realism. Plus, it is equally concerned with issues like consumerism and wealth (aspects students are likely to be familiar with, which offer analogies to their own cultural space) as it is with poverty. Another feature counteracting exoticism is the novel´s urban setting. As opposed to the BIFIE task, Africans are not presented as living in huts and having to gather their own firewood, but as inhabiting a dynamic metropolis. A second strategy is to openly address problems of exoticism. Talking about stereotypes is crucial if a teacher decides to expose learners to New English literature. Even when choosing a book that has the potential to reduce exoticism, the students' prior experiences have to be taken into account. They bring their own prejudices to their reading of a text. Their misconceptions might even hinder their access to the narrative. Without an engagement with the text, transcending certain stereotypes by teaching it is impossible. In simple terms, a student who was never before exposed to extreme wealth in Africa might initially not be able to conceive Abikẹ´s account as reliable, and consequently remain unable to comprehend it as one slice of African reality. Thirdly, it is the educators´ responsibility to reveal the difference between a European and a Euro-centric point of view. Peterson pointed out that Western readers of post-colonial literature sometimes find themselves typecast in the role of the coloniser, i.e. the enemy. This could lead the Western reader to withdraw from such texts. While the role of a former coloniser might not be as relevant to the Austrian setting (at least not in the African and Asian context), it holds particularly true for British, French, Belgian, Dutch etc. students. Nevertheless, all learners from a highly industrialised background might be repelled by their involvement in neo-colonialism. In the worst case, students might feel denied the right to an opinion. The teacher's facilitation is central to success and should deter from an "accusatory black/white debate" (Gunner vii). Instead, African perspectives are to be

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[49] Teachers interested in recommendations of meaningful multicultural literature may consult Hayn and Burns. Their essay includes brief summaries of the narratives judged suitable for classroom reading by the authors. Incorporating such texts into the reading curriculum will guarantee a sound basis for an up-to-date, balanced, multi-layered and truly global EFL classroom.

introduced in a respectful manner and their points of view seen as valuable contributions to an open and inclusive debate.

This brings us to some concluding remarks. With regard to teaching reading to foreign language learners one claim stands almost uncontested. The teachers´ participation is the key (Prowse 143). Only a teacher who is a curious, passionate and voracious reader will be able to engage in fruitful discussions with the students. "[T]eaching by example" (Day and Bamford 140) involves a commitment to read what pupils read (Henry 52). I would go further and claim that it entails providing texts that young readers do not even know they want to read. Doing so requires teachers to stay open to new trends in the diverse and dynamic field of Anglophone literature. Ultimately, it depends on the teacher to help the learners discover how meaningful, versatile and fascinating contemporary Anglophone fiction can be.

I am not the first to bring forward a strong claim in favour of exposing learners of English to international literature. It has long been argued that global Anglophone literature:

> "provide[s] a cultural bridge to the internal and external worlds of people far away. [Good stories from other cultures] can help create understanding about the commonality of the human experience. Compelling stories provide cultural knowledge that goes far beyond the narrow coverage of textbooks […]. Finally, international literature reflects the cultural and language diversity found in our own classrooms and helps teachers and students to understand each other." (Eville 87)

Eville´s words neatly summarise what has been attempted in this last chapter. Rooting the request for an expansion of curricula and consequently the teachers´ and learners´ horizons within the Austrian institutional setting did yield interesting results. It plausibly illustrated that there is the space, if not the need, to incorporate contemporary fiction from the "fringes" in order to activate, increase and differentiate our world knowledge.

There is little to add to Williams' belief that in a reading classroom "in the absence of interesting texts, very little is possible" (42). Taking his principle further, one could claim that with a relevant and interesting text - such as *The Spider King´s Daughter* – anything, or at least a lot of things, are possible.

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Appendix

Interview with Chibundu Onuzo

The following interview was conducted in two sessions via e-mail. The answers were received on 13 January 2014 and 15 June 2015.

Nigerian Literature
Which authors and which of their works have inspired and influenced you most? Which contemporary Nigerian writers do you consider inspirational?
Thanks to my parents, I read a lot of nineteenth century literature as a child, Dickens, Bronte, Austen, Dumas, Mark Twain. I came to the African greats a little later, even though these novels were always round the house. I read 'Things Fall Apart,' as a teenager and from then, I read all Achebe's novels before moving on to Soyinka's plays and memoirs. I try to read Ake at least once a year. Then I discovered the African Writers series. Bessie Head's 'When Rain Clouds Gather,' was so powerful. I completely defaced that book with all my highlighted passages.

I won't do a list of contemporary Nigerian writers. They're too many to list. I will just mention two. Sefi Atta and her novel, 'Everything Good Will Come,' which I believe, is one of the finest novels about Lagos. And my friend and peer Emmanuel Iduma, who has published a novel 'Farad' but has also published an extensive collection of articles and essays online. He is doing a lot of interesting stuff with language and I'm excited to see what he produces in the next few years.

Do you conceptualise yourself as a member of a new and vibrant Nigerian literary scene and if so, what are the main characteristics distinguishing the new generation of writers for you?
I have a lot of friends who are Nigerian writers. Lola Shoneyin, Chika Unigwe, Tony Kan, Victor Ehikhamenor, Rotimi Babalola, Emmanuel Iduma, Dami Ajayi, Yewande Omotoso, and on and on it goes. I don't know if anything distinguishes our literary style, but I know that whenever we meet up, what distinguishes us is that we love to party.

Wealth and Poverty
Do you think that the two extremes of the wealthy-poor scale of Nigerian society are equally depicted? If so, why? If not, why not? (One of my professor argues that the reader gains more insight into the wealthy side of Lagos – do you agree?) Why is the economic divide the only one depicted (no reference to ethnic division, etc.)?
That's an interesting comment from your professor. I live a fairly middle class existence in Lagos, quite removed from Abike's Johnson's world but even then, I'm closer to her lifestyle than I am to the hawker's. Not because I'm so rich but because the hawker is so poor. I often tell people I don't truly understand what the Naira can buy because there are people who live on ten dollars for five days. Whereas I could buy a meal in a fast-food chain in Lagos for ten dollars. I also went to private school in Nigeria, so the school scenes in the novel borrow from that.

I think the hawker's life is more diverse than Abike's life. So he has his home, his work on the road, his friendships with the other hawkers, his business partnership with Aunty Precious, his

friendship with Mr. T. Whereas, Abike really only has school and her house. The hawker feels his poverty most when he's at home and that's when it's depicted in most detail. On the other hand, wealth pervades the two spheres that Abike moves between. So perhaps her wealth is shown more than the hawker's poverty.

There are ethnic divisions in Nigeria but not every problem in a country is relevant to every citizen of that country. Abike has not been socialized to think of herself as belonging to any particular ethnic group. More important is her affiliation to a particular class: the rich and powerful. All the other characters have their own issues as well but tribalism isn't one of them.

In how far are these two worlds accessible to you, as an educated Nigerian living abroad?
I go back to Nigeria often enough for me not to feel alienated from the country. Increasingly, a lifestyle not far removed from Abike's life is the one we want to portray to ourselves and to outsiders. So a lot of TV shows and magazines are now concerned with showing the 'fabulous life' of people living in Lagos and Abuja. We're tired of seeing Nigerians spoken of as poor, hungry, or internet scammers. I understand why it's important for the middle class audience these programs are aimed at to see Nigerians living lavishly.

The hawker's world, many middle class Nigerians are not so interested in seeing portrayed, especially by international news agencies. You have to make an effort to see 'the other side' or you can go through life like Abike, completely trapped in your rich bubble. I interviewed a hawker, not in direct relation to the book but it helped when I was writing the novel. I also go to a church whose congregation is made up of a broad range of socio-economic groups so I've been into neighborhoods very much like the hawkers.

Which protagonists is more naïve, in your eyes?
Abike. I don't think she fully understands how radical forming this friendship with the hawker is. She wants a hawker as a friend and so she gets a hawker as a friend. Whereas the hawker I think is more aware of the implications. He has seen more of the world and I think he knows that even if the swimming pool scene hadn't happened, he and Abike would probably not have a long-term future.

Is the hawker´s failure to stand up for justice intended as a self-fulfilling prophecy (once poor, always poor)?
Well he wasn't always poor. He started off rich and slid into poverty. If anything, I think the more apt slogan for Nigeria is, 'once poor, suddenly rich.' There are quite a few verifiable stories of quite rapid transformations of people's financial statuses. Sometimes through illegal means, such as advance fee fraud ('419') or through legal routes. There are trading empires that started off as market stalls. There are trucking businesses. There are water packaging businesses that began as very small scale endeavors. These successes create a very real Nigerian dream. Fierce aspiration runs through all levels of Nigerian society.

It's not because the hawker is poor that he doesn't stand up for justice. He's scared, he doesn't want to leave his family at risk, he's stood up to a Johnson once and failed: all these factors I think are more important.

Is the novel intended to be political in any way? What is its message?
Not intentionally. I was more interested in revenge as a theme. So the hawker's decision to justify taking revenge on Mr. Johnson and Aunty Precious in the end deciding to forgive, for her

own self-preservation. Forgiveness is as important for the forgiver as for the person being forgiven.

In your opinion, what would have to happen to make modern Nigeria a place where social mobility as a downward movement was not as hard to escape?

In my novel, the social mobility shown is downward but this doesn't mean that there's no movement in the opposite direction. 'The Spider King's Daughter' is only a slice of Lagos and an even smaller slice of Nigeria. But indeed, more can be done to increase upward social mobility. There are a lot of people with little education and no skills, like the boys who sit outside the hawker's apartment block and to a certain extent, the hawker himself. It's the government's role I believe to facilitate a transfer of skills to young men and women in Nigeria so they can be employable. Again, it's a matter of self-preservation as one popular governor has pointed out. A young, uneducated population, is a very dangerous one.

Relationships

In the literary analysis of father figures, they are frequently considered symbols for despotic nation states. In how far could the family-space in The Spider King´s Daughter be seen as a mirror image of modern Nigeria?

Any parallels between Abike's home and modern Nigeria were not intentional. Every reader, including myself, brings their own set of assumptions to the text. I don't think of Nigeria as a despotic nation state. The lived experience of Nigeria is much more varied than the limited slice that is portrayed in the Western European and North American media.

How do you see the character of Abike? Is she the same as, or different from her father? Did you intend to suggest a tentative change for the better, once the next generation of (female) leaders are in charge? In other words, could Abike (in her role as the heiress of the Johnson business empire) be seen as one of the strong future leaders of Nigeria? Or is her character simply clinging on to the status quo, preventing any change through merely holding on to her own wealth?

Again these are interesting tangents that differ from my reading of the book. I don't have much to say, except to note that some readers have interpreted Abike's taking over the Johnson corporation as a blow for 'girl power' and I've always wondered why. She was Mr Johnson's only legitimate child and it was clear that he had been grooming her. Had Abike been a boy, would it have been 'boy power' or just things following the natural line of succession?

Is the hawker, on the other hand, an alternative model for masculinity (he is responsible, feeds his mother, etc.)? The hero´s fall, however, seems to be determined by traditional conceptions and associations of masculinity (revenge, violence, weapons and the like). Does the narrative suggest that those ("male") values along with exaggerated pride are actually outdated? In *The Spider King´s Daughter* traditional gender roles are frequently questioned, subverted and partly re-affirmed. Were you interested in exploring the (fictional) space allocated to masculinity against the realistic background of a highly patriarchal society?

Not really.

That's interesting that you describe caring for his family as an 'alternative' model for masculinity. I would have thought that was quite traditional. The narrative suggests what the reader wants it to.

Identity

Why does the hawker not have a name while Abike/Abby has two? Was this feature a conscious decision from the start of writing the novel?

No it wasn't conscious. I just couldn't find a name for him and by the time I reached the end of the novel, he hadn't been named. However, I think my sub conscious was trying to make the point that the poor in Nigeria are often nameless, more group statistic than individuals. So if you go on the website of any global development organisation, you can find out a lot of statistics about Nigeria: percentage under the poverty line, access to clean water, access to healthcare, maternal mortality.

Which are the main dividing forces preventing the protagonists´ relationship? It seems that the narrative suggests that honest, meaningful friendship is impossible across barriers of socio-economic status. Is this the reality you experience and observe in Lagos?

It's not impossible but it's difficult. I think personality is the main divider between Abike and the hawker actually. He's idealistic and she's pragmatic and even if they had been from the same socio-economic group, things would still have fallen apart at some point. It may not have happened as fast as it did in the novel but I do think at some point, they would have had to go their separate ways.

What role do you ascribe to adolescence in your text, why did you choose teenage narrators?

Because I was a teenager when I started writing the novel. Seventeen to be exact and it came naturally to write in a first person voice of characters close to my age. And I think what's interesting about adolescence is, it's that point before you get set in your ways. It becomes more difficult to drastically change your views the older you get.

Would you call your debut novel a bildungsroman?

Do they come of age? I don't know. Both end up with a fairly cynical view of the world, which to me isn't coming of age. Somebody will have to write a sequel.

Teaching

What opportunities, challenges and difficulties could you envision if the book was dealt with in European secondary schools?

Books connect where they will. Interestingly enough, 'The Spider King's Daughter' is a set text in a school in South Korea. I had a skype interview with the class studying my work and it was a pleasant surprise to see how much they'd enjoyed it.

A) *Kriterien für die Textauswahl*

This checklist was originally published in Harald Weisshaar´s essay "Kriterien der Textauswahl"[50]. The points presented below do not comprise the entire catalogue of questions. Instead, I singled out the points that were addressed in this thesis and most relevant for choosing *The Spider King´s Daughter* as a suitable text in class.

Fokus Schülerinnen und Schüler

o　　Was lesen meine Schüler/-innen? Interessiert meine Schüler/-innen das Thema?

o　　Spricht der Roman Jungen oder Mädchen stärker/gleichermaßen/gar nicht an?

o　　Wie aktuell ist der Roman (*new/topical*)?

o　　Gibt es für meine Klasse Möglichkeiten zur Identifikation mit dem/der/den Protagonisten/-in/-innen?

o　　Gibt es Bezüge zur Lebenswelt meiner Schüler/-innen?

o　　Wie lang/komplex/schwer ist der Roman?

o　　Beinhaltet die Handlung sowohl *action* als auch *descriptive passages*? […]

o　　Wie ist die Grundstimmung: *funny, depressing*?

o　　Would I personally like to read the book in class – as a teacher/student?

Fokus Lehrkraft

o　　[….] Stellt der Roman für mich eine interessante/lustvolle/… Herausforderung dar?

o　　Traue ich mir zu, die angesprochenen Themen zu unterrichten?

o　　Wird der Kanon durchbrochen?

Medienangebot

o　　[…] Gibt es Paralleltexte? (z.B. *short stories*, *easy readers*, Gedichte etc.)

o　　Sind andere Werke des/der Autors/-in verfügbar?

Fokus Textqualität und Autor/-in

o　　Sind literarische Bezüge möglich/nötig?

o　　Wie bekannt ist der Autor/-in?

o　　Welchen literarischen Stellenwert besitzt der Roman?

o　　Deckt der Text ein bestimmtes Genre ab?

o　　Wie ist das Verhältnis zwischen Unterhaltung und intellektuellem Anspruch?

o　　[…] Wie sind die Charaktere ausgestaltet? […]

Sprache

o　　Ist das Sprachniveau dem Niveau der Klasse angemessen (das heißt leicht über dem Niveau)?

o　　Lohnt es sich, den Schülern/-innen die Sprachformen des Textes zu vermitteln? (*colloquial language*, *swear words*, *taboo language*, antiquitiert etc.)

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[50] Source: Weisshaar, Harald. "Kriterien der Textauswahl." *Literaturkompetenzen Englisch: Modellierung – Curriculum – Unterrichtsbeispiele.* Eds. Wolfgang Hallet, Carola Surkamp, and Ulrich Krämer. Seelze: Kallmayer, 2015. 91-99.

o   Kann anhand des Romans Spracharbeit betrieben werden (Wortfelder, *phrasal verbs*, *register*, *use of English* etc.)?

o   […] Gibt es ausreichend dichte Passagen?

o   Wie ist das Verhältnis von Dialog und Beschreibung?

Didaktische Erwägungen

o   Bietet der Text ausreichend Sprechanlässe?

o   Ist eine Erarbeitung im Sinne der Kompetenzorientierung möglich?

o   Kann interkulturelle Kompetenz angebahnt werden?

o   […] Sind schülerzentrierte/kreative Arbeitsformen möglich?

o   […] Ist Lernen mit Kopf, Herz und Hand möglich?

Abstract

This paper strives to supply a sound academic background to teachers interested in incorporating Chibundu Onuzo´s debut novel *The Spider King´s Daughter* (2012), or comparable Nigerian novels, into their syllabus. It seeks an insightful interplay between a theory heavily drawing on the idea of a national literary tradition, while doing justice to the trans-national reality of a *third generation Nigerian* author and the global influences on her text.

Since colonial times, fiction has been at the forefront of documenting crises in Nigeria. To date, a new and vibrant literary scene seeks to portray and transcend issues of a troubled nation state as well as those of a fast-paced, interconnected world. *Third generation Nigerian writers* are rooting universally human themes in a local Nigerian setting; they do so in a manner which "rapidly make[s] everyone else look stale" (*The Times* in Nwaubani). This paper explores the continuities and differences between this new literary movement and previous writing by Nigerians.

Initially, an overview of recent socio-political trends is provided. In a further step, the historical survey is linked to the evolution of the Nigerian literary tradition. A critical reading of *The Spider King´s Daughter* examines its major themes, namely socio-economic inequality, dysfunctional relationships and adolescent identity formation. The last section looks at the novel´s appeal for ELT. It draws support from educational theory as well as the Austrian juridical status-quo. An approach that might be called humanistic-pragmatic is applied; in order to emphasise the connection between the interpretation of a contemporary novel and the constraints and opportunities of modern day foreign language teaching in Austria.

This entire thesis was crafted with the needs of teachers who are interested in implementing the novel in their EFL classrooms in mind. With this paper as a foundation, educators should be suitably equipped to offer multiple points of connection to the learners' lives as well as guiding them towards making aesthetic judgements and interpretations of the novel. Overall, this thesis builds a firm rationale for the introduction of Anglophone African texts to ELT.

Zusammenfassung

Ob man Kompetenzen und Literatur im Unterricht zusammen denken kann, ist eine in der Pädagogik derzeit brisant diskutierte Frage. Diese Arbeit sieht eine Notwendigkeit darin. Ihr Ziel ist es, die Möglichkeiten aufzuzeigen, die Auseinandersetzung mit Literatur im Unterricht birgt. Es wird dabei ein sehr breit gefasster Kompetenzbegriff zugrunde gelegt. Es geht in dieser Arbeit also um ein Sich-Öffnen der Lehrenden und Lernenden, sowohl sich selbst als auch der individuellen Lernerfahrung gegenüber. Weiters setzt sich diese Arbeit zum Ziel, ein Interesse für internationale anglophone Literatur und die darin dargestellten Lebenswirklichkeiten zu wecken. Werte wie Toleranz, Einfühlungsvermögen und lebenslanges Lernen tragen zu transkulturellem Verständnis bei. Sie schaffen somit die Basis, um als mündige, offene, eigenverantwortliche Menschen ein globales System zu erfassen sowie aktiv und selbstbestimmt daran teilzunehmen.

Konkret versucht die vorliegende Arbeit Englisch-Lehrerinnen und Lehrer mit dem nötigen Werkzeug auszustatten, das es ihnen ermöglicht ihr Repertoire um zeitgenössische afrikanische Literatur zu erweitern. Exemplarisch regt Chibundu Onuzo´s Erstlingswerk *The Spider King´s Daughter* (2012) eine Auseinandersetzung mit dem postkolonialen historisch-politischen Kontext Nigerias an. Der Roman und seine Autorin werden in aktuellen Tendenzen und Paradigmen des dynamischen Felds der „Third Generation Nigerian Literature" eingebettet. Dies wird mit relevantem Hintergrundwissen zur nigerianischen Literaturgeschichte ergänzt. Eine danach folgende Literaturanalyse behandelt ausgewählte Teilaspekte, die für jugendliche Leserinnen und Leser besonders interessant sind.

Zuerst steht die sich intensivierende Kluft zwischen Arm und Reich im Mittelpunkt. Einerseits gelingt die Annäherung an dieses komplexe Thema und den damit einhergehenden gesellschaftspolitischen Fragen durch die persönliche Erfahrung der jugendlichen Protagonisten. Auch werden die literarischen Darstellungen des jeweiligen sozio-ökonomischen Milieus gegenüber gestellt und seine Auswirkungen auf das Beziehungsmuster der Charaktere analysiert. Als Nächstes folgt eine Auseinandersetzung mit den im Roman beschriebenen Beziehungen, wobei besonderes Augenmerk auf jene gelegt wird, die mit großer Wahrscheinlichkeit auch für jugendliche Englischlernende relevant sind (Liebesbeziehung der Protagonisten sowie Vater- bzw. Mutter-Kindbeziehung). Dem Erwachsenwerden und den damit verbundenen

Identitätsfindungsprozessen kommt in Onuzo´s Roman große Bedeutung zu. Dieser Themenbereich bildet den Abschluss der Literaturanalyse. Nach einem fundierten Überblick über den nigerianischen Literaturbetrieb und die neuere Geschichte des Landes, sowie einer Interpretation der für Schülerinnen und Schüler besonders ergiebigen Thematiken liefert der letzte Abschnitt bildungstheoretische Grundlagen. Das abschließende Kapitel skizziert die motivational-attitudinalen Vorteile, die literarische Texte im Englischunterricht – abseits des nachgewiesenen Spracherwerbs – bergen. Dieser letzte Teil soll es Lehrpersonen außerdem erleichtern sich vor verschiedenen Stakeholdern des Schulbetriebs zu rechtfertigen und ihnen (neben zahlreichen hier nicht genannten Gründen) mögliche Argumente für einen erweiterten, globalen und zeitgenössischen Kanon im Fremdsprachenunterricht anbieten.

Im Idealfall dient die Lektüre dieser Diplomarbeit Pädagoginnen und Pädagogen als Grundlage zur Erstellung interessanter, methoden-vielfältiger und sachlich fundierter Unterrichtseinheiten. Jenen, die sich bislang mit zeitgenössischer, anglophoner afrikanischer Literatur wenig befasst haben, soll diese Arbeit Stütze sein und einen Einblick bieten. Jenen, die sich bereits gut auskennen, bietet sie neue Anregungen, Gedanken oder Interpretationsansätze.

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Curriculum Vitae

Marina Burger

Personal Information

Place of Birth:	Schruns
Nationality:	Austrian

Education

2009 – 2015:	University of Vienna (Teaching Degree in English and History)
2012 – 2013:	Manchester Metropolitan University (Erasmus Exchange Programme)
2003 – 2008:	Höhere Lehranstalt für Wirtschaftliche Berufe, Rankweil (Matura)

Professional Experience

2013 – 2014:	Group Facilitator, *Internationaler Fachkräfteaustausch*, Malta and Pistoia
08/2014:	English Teacher, *Volkshochschule*, Bludenz
09/2013 – 08/2014:	Head of Academics, *Actilinga Academy* Summer School, Vienna
2012 – 2013:	German Tutor, *Xaverian College* and *Metropolitan University*, Manchester
06-08/2011:	Deputy Manager, *EF Education First* Falmer Campus, Brighton
2009 – 2012:	Course Leader, English Teacher and Mentor, *EF Language Travel*; Brighton, Torquay, Eastbourne, Folsom (UK and USA)
2008 – 2009:	European Voluntary Service, *Southwell House Youth Project*, London

Trainings

05/2014:	"School Inclusion Study Visit", *Youth in Action*, Birmingham
05/2012:	"To Live is to Learn – Self-Directed Learning Approaches", *Youth in Action*, Reykjavik
02-05/2009:	"Spielpädagogik", "Wienwochen-Guide", "Mittelalterpädagogik", *Freiraum GesmbH*, Wien

Languages

German:	Mother Tongue
English:	C2
Spanish:	B1
French:	B1