

REMEMBERING BEYOND AFRICANITY: NARRATING AND DISPLAYING POSTCOLONIAL IDENTITIES IN “AFRICAN” AND “EUROPEAN” CHILDHOOD ACCOUNTS

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Abstract : The aim of this comparative analysis is to refrain from ethnographic readings that turn a blind eye to global influences when they present the African origins of some authors as ferment of their writing. Unlike this approach and drawing on globally influenced or shaped and sharpened perspectives of writers, it shows that the increasing dynamism of culture through the worldwide communication is more determinant in the shaping of writings of the self than any Africanity or biological origin of the authors. For that, postcolonial features in African and European childhood accounts are investigated in light of their narrative techniques. The aim is to stress the close links between autobiography and postcolonial writing. These are orality, multi-perspectivity or focalization and the representative function of the narrating self. The starting point is the idea that beyond its memory, migrant accounts of childhood display postcolonial identities.

Keywords: africanity - childhood account – focalization – orality – postcoloniality

Résumé : L’objectif de cette analyse comparative est de prendre du recul par rapport aux analyses ethnographiques qui ferment les yeux sur les influences de la mondialisation en présentant les origines africaines de certains auteurs comme le ferment de leur production littéraire. Contrairement à cette approche et en prenant appui sur des écrivains influencés, façonnées et affinées au niveau international, l’analyse qui suit montre que le dynamisme croissant de la culture par le biais de la communication à l’échelle planétaire est plus déterminant dans le modelage des écritures migrantes de soi que toute africanité ou origine biologique des auteurs. Pour cela, les caractéristiques postcoloniales des récits d’enfance africains et européens sont examinées en vue de ressortir les liens étroits entre l’autobiographie et les écritures postcoloniales. Pour y parvenir, les techniques narratives du corpus sont examinées. Il s’agit de l’oralité, de la multiperspectivité ou de la focalisation et de la fonction représentative du narrateur. Le point de départ est qu’au-delà de la mémoire de la littérature, la condition migrante déploie des identités postcoloniales.

Mots clés : africanité – récit d’enfance – focalisation – oralité – postcolonialité

Introduction

Based on four works, this paper shows how memory-related practices in childhood accounts display postcolonial identities¹. The literary narrative techniques analyzed are considered postcolonial due to their cross-cultural value and status as migrant literature. The emphasis starts from the debate on the cultural characteristics of African and European works. The discussion is on the emergence of autobiographical writing in Europe where it developed until its later transfer into literary traditions of other continents. It is therefore a question of assessing this assumption in the light of the selected works and of proving that the narrative and writing techniques used are by no means to be regarded as exclusivities of literary texts by authors of African origin. Because of their cross-border and cross-linguistic dimension, *L'Enfant noir* (1953), *La Marseillaise de mon enfance* (2004), *Die gerettete Zunge* (1977) and *Steppenrutenpflanze* (2000)² can be associated with postcolonial identity constructions. The narrative methods analysed are those perceived as common motifs or themes in postcolonial writings. These are orality, multi-perspectivity or focalization as well as the representative function of the narrator. They are “postcolonial” due to their frequent occurrence in works from different languages, epochs and settings. In this sense, they are regarded as the “cutting surface” between languages and cultures (Thiong'o 1986:17). The postcolonial components examined are also dialogue-oriented and interchange-linked. Dialogue and exchange forms of all kinds are considered prerequisites of postcolonial literature. Postcolonial thinking is compatible with dialogue of cultures even if the question of the “*conditions et des modalités de ces dialogues interculturels*” [“conditions and modalities of these intercultural dialogues”]³ (Pageaux 2004:278) should be raised at the same time. The simultaneous or alternating occurrence of different “voices” within a text excludes the possibility of a hierarchical organization center.

¹ This paper builds on arguments that were presented in a previous work (Nyada 2010: 121-158).

² The selected works are abbreviated as follows: Laye Camara (2006 [1953]). *L'Enfant noir*. Paris: Plon, (*L'Enfant*) ; Jean-Martin Tchaptchet (2004): *La Marseillaise de mon enfance*, Paris: L'Harmattan, (*La Marseillaise*); Elias Canetti (2005 [1977]). *Die gerettete Zunge. Geschichte einer Jugend*, Frankfurt/M.: Fischer, (*Zunge*) und Yusuf Yeşilöz (2000). *Steppenrutenpflanze. Eine kurdische Kindheit*, Zürich: Rotpunkt, (*Steppenrutenpflanze*).

³ My translation.

1. Orality in the works

In addition to the generic relationships, the cultural encounters and contact mechanisms, orally oriented presentation methods are regarded as postcolonial characteristics (Lüsebrink 2004:9). This is emphasized in the relationship between “writing cultures” and “oral cultures”. The reading of the works sometimes gives the feeling of an oral transmission of childhood episodes, to the extent that every oral narrative situation presupposes interactive communication between narrators and listeners. The oral communication in childhood texts is considered a postcolonial trait because the narrating self does not consider cultural elements of his community to be obvious to the implicit listener. He always provides some childhood episodes with additional explanations, so that they can also be seen by readers from other cultures and epochs. Words from languages spoken by the experienced self and his relatives or acquaintances are provided with translations or explanations in the flow of memories. By doing this, the authors challenge the authority of dominant languages (Fanon 1952:49). Regarding the first feature of storytelling, the selected works represent the activity of memory with explicit terms in the construction and production process of the narrative. This creates a latent interactive communication between narrators and readers because the latter feel drawn into the memorizing. Together with written pretexts, these oral procedures reveal the process of remembrance.

The reader often comes across the verbs “*sich erinnern*” or “*se souvenir*” [“remember”] (Tchaptchet 2004:41; Canetti 1979:28; Yeşilöz 2000:53) which are semantically equivalent. Moreover, these verbs are addressee-related, regardless of their reflexivity. The sentences they are contained in provide duplicate information. First, such sentences inform the reader of the past and present of the narrator; second, they describe the memorial action that the self is performing by recalling childhood. Referring to the water supply in his former district, the narrator explains in *La Marseillaise*: “*Il me souvient que le quartier administratif comptait alors quatre sources d’approvisionnement*” [“I remember that the administrative district had four sources of supply”] (ibid. 41). Because of the first part of the sentence, the reader has to deal with

a metanarrative. Its structure and characteristics are also present in the other works. Referring to Lent in his homeland, the self in *Steppenrutenpflanze* says: „Ich erinnere mich noch gut an einen bestimmten Ramadanmonat“ [“I remember well one particular month of Ramadan”] (ibid. 53). In this quotation, the reader succeeds in grasping both the memory flow and the content of the movement. In *L'Enfant*, the reader does not necessarily come across the verb “se souvenir”, but rather a different way of approaching the memory activity. Thus, in the first chapter, the narrator says that he cannot remember the exact age at which he played with a snake. His linguistic expression is an indication of the limitations of his own memory. This also controls the reading of the following reminders. Also, in *Zunge*, the introductory sentence is a pictorial expression, expressing an indirect comparison with the unrealistic nature of the protagonist's implied earliest memory.

In the works, the narrator also admits that he is not the absolute author of the remembered childhood episodes. Instead, he points to a few oral sources his memory is based upon. In some of his childhood fragments, the narrator confesses that these projections are his own desires. He complements this *lapsus memoriae* based on the narrative present. However, the authorship acquired on such memorabilia is more limited than admitted. Actually, fellow human beings and surrounding cultures underlie his memory by unconsciously filling his memory gaps. One case in which the narrating self becomes the author of his mementos can be found in *La Marseillaise* where no other source is mentioned when it is reminiscent of historical events that are said to have taken place before the narrator's own birth. In *Steppenrutenpflanze* the self describes his first day of school in detail. If sources of memory are concealed, it could be understood that the narrator owes only to himself the memories that have been created. Personal memory could then appear as an experienced memory-generating instance. An example of such an unmistakable memory would be his grandmother who is presented as a depository of the family history because of her narratives.

There are other features of exchange-bound oral communication such as some sentences and many motifs which allude to initial movements of oral culture-specific genres such as legends or fairy tales. The self and the narrating self seem to be far apart

here because childhood is reminded with a clear time interval. The narrative gives the reader the feeling that it is a mythical period. The recall of fairy tales, myths, legends and inland narratives is a striking feature of oral narrative situations.

The reader also finds traditional narrators of oral traditions such as the grandmother in *Steppenrutenpflanze*, the grandfather in *Zunge* or the Griot in *L'Enfant*. The figure of the grandmother comes to the fore as an intradiegetic narrator to intermittently tell the prenatal story of the narrator. Through this narrative strategy, mediation and reception procedures of a knowledge that has been regarded as traditional in narrative cultures become visible. The storytelling also takes place in other areas. The use of oral tradition acts as an internal narrative in the frame narrative of the extradiegetic narrator. The Griot can be regarded in *L'Enfant* as a mediator between the goldsmith and his clients. His hymns of praise to the narrator's father represent the genealogy and the family history. This instills heroism in the father who is working as a goldsmith. In *Zunge*, the grandfather takes on the role of the narrator insofar as he is the only character who tells the story of Judaism.

Oral narrative methods include recourse to popular music. In *La Marseillaise*, it is about the repetition of folk songs. The reader learns that narrated memories will be disclosed. Many rhetorical questions are asked. Although such questions are addressed, they fulfil a phatic function, provided that the reader's attention is regained as a result. Thus, the reader has the impression that he or she is talking to the narrating self.

2. Perspectivity and Focalization

To be able to perceive the multi-perspective storytelling, one must associate this narrative process with poststructuralist deconstruction. This postulates the absence of a structure, a center or a single way of meaning (Derrida 1967: 409f). The auctorial narrative process being a process that betrays the hierarchical thinking of the author, the first-person form in autobiographical texts points to the limited point of view of the narrator. Because of these limitations, this perspective is supplemented by others.

The exclusion of hierarchical ways of thinking in human relationships or within textual components is closely related to cross-cultural communication situations.

A prerequisite for multi-perspectivity is the willingness to take the place of others and to develop empathy towards them. Hence, the diversity of perspectives may be another postcolonial feature, especially if the narrator wants to identify with some childhood scenes and to distinguish himself from others. However, a practice-oriented definition can only be partially applied to literary texts. Therefore, it is supplemented by a text-related definition. The multi-perspective storytelling is combined with Bakhtin's concepts of dialogue and polyphony (Bakhtin 1979).

The feature of multi-perspectivity seems from the outset more suitable for childhood self-narratives insofar as one is dealing with a first-person narrative situation. However, if one considers that the narrator has a fragmented identity, or that he stages other characters in his narrative flow by letting them speak directly, childhood sequences and related events can also be described alternately from several perspectives. In the selected works, the narrating self becomes aware of the cultural, context- and memory-dependent limitations of his own perspective of the reworked childhood. Therefore, other points of view and perceptions are included in the memory process, even if these are usually ironized or questioned. After all, ironic and questioned perspectives give the process of remembrance a non-exclusive view of the narrator's childhood. Their presence in the narrative flow excludes the possibility of a typically personal narrative situation. By reproducing the points of view of other figures, the narrator moves away from purely individual and monocultural statements and he approaches other people and cultures. Still, this process remains subject to the memory of the narrator and his places of memory because these partially determine or orient his thinking, action and behavior as well as his recording of past facts.

As a constant in the works, the diversity of perspectives includes in the first place the extra-perspective change of narrative voices. This takes place between the extradiegetic narrator who masters the frame-child narrative, and the various characters who are remembered and who appear as intradiegetic narrators. The intradiegetic narratives can be closely linked to the childhood narrative. Examples are

the long engagement story of the protagonist's father in *Steppenrutenpflanze* and the story about the first encounter with the family totem in *L'Enfant*. The two stories are told respectively by the grandmother and the father. The intradiegetic narratives can only have indirect parallels with the childhood recalled. An illustration would be the stories about wolves and wild animals told by maids in *Zunge*. With *Tchaptchet*, internal narratives are introduced through unspecified pronouns. The following passage serves as an example of this procedure: "*On disait que les musiciens de cet ensemble [de la fanfare] auraient eu l'audace d'introduire quelques paroles satiriques et même grivoises dans certaines de leurs chansons [...].*" ["It was said that the musicians of this ensemble [of the band] had the audacity to introduce some satirical and even saucy words in some of their songs"] (ibid. 51)

The internal narrative therefore consists of public opinion. In the works, the external perspective is to be distinguished from the inner perspective. The inner perspective concerns the different characters that are staged. These, too, sometimes clearly limit their perception of reality from other people's point of view. The limitation of the facts from the childhood of the narrator by a horizon given with the point of view refers to the personality split of the protagonist. In this case, the reader is presented with either the perception of the child at that time, or that of the looking back adult who evaluates his childhood.

The change of voice and perception that takes place between the narrator and his staged characters, or between the experiencing and the narrating self, opens up the narrative or the process of remembrance of a diversity of opinion and thus the exchange between the perspective of childhood and that of the adult. This communicative diversity of opinion and voice is manifested in the light of direct and indirect speech and through direct dialogues.

For the authors, such reproductions have a distancing function. The singularity of the staged character is thus emphasized. The flow of remembrance is interrupted by dialogical formulations in direct speech because the work receives the accent of a dramatic text through the seamless reproduction of the speech. Based on this, the

narrating self retreats behind the characters whose statements are reproduced while the reader is being drawn into the action. Passages where the narrator reproduces his own thoughts or the words of other characters in direct speech have a visual and time-covering effect. However, the perspective of the staged characters in Tchaptchet's work comes more in indirect speech.

The narrator sympathizes with the character whose thoughts he reflects. His analytically reception-oriented memory process is also an attempt to evoke emotion. There is no real dialogue in *La Marseillaise* even if most of the utterances are credited to their authors or sources, and even if this reveals a narratively perspective-centric change of position. There is an internal focalization (Genette 1972:256). A sharp internal perspective demarcation of the character's view from the point of view of other figures is sometimes difficult to read because of there is no dialogue and no direct speech. The sudden juxtaposition of different perspectives of other characters in indirect speech opens a relatively large scope for reception because the reader's ability to synthesize is not blunted by this. Regarding the different changes of perception in the narrator himself, the first chapter of each work opens with the perspective of the adult drawing on his memory locations to briefly describe the time before his birth or early childhood. This is the perspective of the looking back adult and that of the child. Although the perceptual perspective of the staged characters occasionally disturbs this process, the perspectives of the experiencing and narrating self remain intertwined during the narrative. Also, the narrator often offers the perspective of fellow humans. *La Marseillaise* provides an example:

Pour [certains] parents [...], en allant à l'école, les enfants échappaient désormais à la sécurité du village, aux rituels d'initiation, à l'éducation et à la formation tant familiales que tribales. Leurs absences fréquentes et parfois prolongées de l'école étaient, sans nul doute, des épisodes de l'affrontement entre la culture coloniale et la culture bangangté. (ibid. 35)

For [some] parents...by going to school, children were now escaping the security of the village, initiation rituals, family and tribal education and training. Their frequent and sometimes prolonged absences from school were undoubtedly episodes in the clash between colonial and Bangante culture.

The difference-rejecting attitude of some parents from the country towards the French school institution shows the perspective of an external observer who describes

a counterpoint to the attitude of colonial officials. The excerpt is illustrative for the alternating narrative strategy in the work. Foreign positions are confronted with the position of the narrator. The quotation sheds light on the diversity of opinions on how to deal with colonial culture. The different stories are told simultaneously; each time, one is interrupted in favor of another. Tchaptchet has thus developed an observation and judgment perspective due to his familiarity with the culture discussed and his long stay abroad.

In *Steppenrutenpflanze*, the processes described are clearer; the narrative contains many clearly defined internal narratives. In addition to the stories from the stranger, by the protagonist's grandmother and father, one also encounters a shepherd who tells of his past in the village and the social descent of all shepherds. The upheaval of social relations which the implied passage is alluded to is thus reported from different perspectives. Of relevance is the built-in character of the souvenir in the passage. The narrator remembers the memory of a shepherd. The author uses the technique known as "embedding" (Todorov 1978:37), a narrative strategy which consists in telling other stories within a story.

For Laye, differences and differences of opinion can be explained by the opinion on colonial culture. In a post-initiation scene in which the newly initiated receive gifts, the experienced self receives a pen and a booklet. He equates the gifts with symbols of colonialism. The differences of opinion revealing the diversity of perspectives concern the behaviour and actions, the activities, the architecture, the children's games as well as fashion. The reader must deal with culture-specific perspectives or with different cultural systems. In terms of behaviors, the narrator glorifies the rural way of life: "[...] *les formes de la civilité y [au village] sont plus respectées qu'à la ville; on y observe un ton cérémonieux et des manières que, plus expéditive, la ville ne connaît pas.*" (ibid. 65) ["[...] the forms of civility are more respected there [in the village] than in the city; one observes a ceremonious tone and manners that, more expeditious, the city does not know"]

The narrator enters into the perceptions of the child to explain his *lapsus memoriae*. The reader is thus reminded of the difficulties that underlie the reconstruction of the past. Hence the regular application of the present. Each of the opposing living milieus embodies a culture whose contours are clearly definable. While every action precedes a preliminary consideration in the countryside, only the factor of time in the city where decency is supplanted by the hustle and bustle of the life of the inhabitants is accepted. The appreciation of the village or the devaluation of the city gives the impression that the latter has been degenerated by the inclusion of foreign cultural values.

Moreover, the narrator alludes to the dangers associated with city life, such as the low interpersonal willingness and consideration, anonymity, or the development of social misconduct. Obviously, the extreme discipline and dignity referred to are exaggerated and decorated. As in other passages, the reader has to do with a different narrative perspective in the quoted passage. The city is not perceived by the toddler, but from the perspective of the writing author. In this sense, the exodus is less a reminder of the hometown than a confrontation with the immediate surroundings. The change of perspective is a recurring text element in *L'Enfant*. The primary perspective is that of the child and adolescent boy, but it is constantly being modified and qualified by the perspective of the author reflecting on his childhood and Camara, the detached observer, attempting to view the traditional life of Guinea from the position of the outsider (Anyinefa 2005:244).

Since the perception and presentation of a literary object is determined by the location and interests of the author, Camara's interests are as diverse as the narrative perspectives of his work. In addition to aesthetic pleasure, the author wants to demonstrate the essence of a supposedly African culture, as was fashionable in the *Négritude* movement at the time; furthermore, he tries to prove the apology and enriching nature of his encounter with the colonial school. Without being their *conditio sine qua non*, the different, sometimes opposite positions in this diversity of perspectives play a representative role.

3. On the representative function of the narrating self

The multiculturalism of the fields of socialization illustrates the representative function that is attributed to the narrator. Apparently individual forms of memory in autobiographical texts are also multicultural. These memories are inconceivable without the earlier socialization fields of the rememberer; these were characterized by an intensive cultural exchange. Starting from the former multiculturalism, it is assumed that the common orientation of self-centered texts is at the same time a postcolonial feature.

According to some works (Olney 1979; Mouralis 2007; Alabi 2005), autobiography in the African context is characterized by its political character, so is it by its “culture-specific” orientation towards the community of the narrating self. It is believed that in an autobiographical text from Africa, the self tells more about his own society and relatives than about himself. Autobiographical writings by European authors, on the other hand, would be purely individual. Many other research pieces wrongly combine the origin of the authors or their birth (place) in Africa with their autobiographical productions, as shown by critics (Appiah 1992:68).

The community orientation and political dimension of autobiographical writings by authors of African origin also identifies purely individual texts within these productions. According to them, writings of the community-oriented tendency raise the question of the identity and representativity of the self reporting on himself. In addition, four other aspects would also be typical for “African autobiography”, namely headings of generalizing meaning such as “L’Enfant noir”, remarks of a universal nature about life in Africa, footnotes in texts and finally, the trend to go beyond the place of birth in favour of a general view of Africa. Regardless of the origin and original cultures of their authors and in addition to their individuality proven by the self-form, the selected childhood accounts all have these characteristics.

The selected works illustrate the first years of life of the experiencing self, and it allows an insight into his community. Furthermore, the works reveal the relationships of the same child to the various communities addressed. In their

narrative form, the attempt to let both the individual and the community have their say at the same time shines through. In addition, through the spiritual revival of his childhood, the narrator tries to symbolically rehabilitate his socializing instances which consist of multicultural groups of people. Thus, childhood texts unfold postcolonial identities through a recourse to some popular ways of thinking and attitudes of the epochs and communities that are remembered.

By its title, the introductory chapter in *La Marseillaise* exemplifies this representative function: "*Elèves du quartier colonial et du village*" ["Students from the colonial district and the village"]. The narrator is concerned with taking the floor on behalf of those former classmates who have not been able to write about their school days. The reader learns that „[mon récit] est un hommage à celles et à ceux, combattants et combattantes anticolonialistes camerounais africains [sic] [...]“ ["[my story] is a tribute to those African Cameroonian anti-colonial fighters"] (ibid. 11). The narrator even mentions the names of those schoolmates. In this sense, the cultural diversity that constitutes the past or the experience is revealing in the memory- or reconstruction-specific time lapse, and in the integration of collectively present and foreign cultural elements into the process of remembrance. The two aspects also show the common orientation of the works. With Yeşilöz, the reader also has to deal with a narrator whose memories simultaneously identify and delimit several hybrid (Bhabha 1990:210) groups and cultural areas, e.g. Kurds, Turks or Americans. The focus changes in that communities, the experiencing self, his family and relatives and finally social groups are at the centre of the memory flow. On a textual level, the reader has a story marked by cultural encounters because it also includes the childhood of the narrator, the story of his family or his original community, and a variety of social groups. Referring to the narrative culture of his home village, the narrating self explains: "*Die ereignisreichen und lebendigen Abende in und vor den Häusern verschwanden mit einem Schlag. Weder ließen wir uns fortan noch Geschichten erzählen, noch spielten wir Verstecken [...]*" ["The eventful and lively evenings in and in front of the houses disappeared at a stroke. From then on, we neither told each other stories, nor played hide-and-seek with each other."] (ibid. 120).

The narrator is pleading against cultural dominance. His statement is a negative consideration of the masterminds of the macro-culture which is conveyed by television. The representativity of the narrator for the Kurdish community comes to light for it shows the consequences of a foreign television on the inhabitants of his village. One can see his deputy role even more clearly when he recalls the political persecution of two Kurdish citizens by Turkish authorities. However, the narrator represents both Kurdish and Turkish culture, insofar as he not only belongs to the two, but also speaks for both. Also, in *Zunge*, *L'Enfant* and *La Marseillaise* these characteristics are present.

Several works have claimed that "*L'enfant noir* is autophylography –but it is a variation on the pure African type" (Olney, *ibid.* 59). Characteristic of these investigations is that they equate the supposedly representative function of the narrator in *L'Enfant* with the author's intention. Such an equal point is made when Camara is said to have equated the function of the writer in African society with that of a traditional historian who mediates the collective memory of the community (Gikandi 1980:2).

In *Zunge*, the coupling of the childhood report with groups already comes to light through chapter headings. The reader encounters the "*Familienstolz*" in the second chapter. The narrator points to the prosperity of his money-grubbing relatives, but without directly relating this feeling to his childhood. The lack of a direct reference of the remembered childhood scenes to co-themed people is also pronounced in other headings: "*Geburt des Bruders*", "*Das Haus des Türken. Die beiden Großväter*", "*Krankheit der Mutter. Der Herr Dozent*", "*Die guten Jungfern der Villa 'Yalta'. Dr. Wedekind*" ["Birth of the brother", "The house of the Turk. The two grandfathers", "The mother's illness. The Lecturer", "The Good Maidens of the Villa 'Yalta'. Dr. Wedekind"]. As in the other works, Canetti's childhood memories cannot be separated from the socializing instances of the experiencing self. These also play a decisive role here insofar as the life of the child only acquires meaning within these frameworks. The childhood of the self

is thus interwoven with side stories. It is cogent to therefore grant the narrator a representative function.

Tchaptchet’s and Yeşilöz’s childhood texts have titles that allude to an individual childhood from the outset, but this impression goes out as soon as one is confronted with the depicted scenes of the past. In *Steppenrutenpflanze*, the reader is confronted with the culture of the Kurdish people; it was rich in facets at the time. As for the systematic formulation of statements of a universal nature about life in Africa, *La Marseillaise* does not seem to take this aspect into account. The explanations of the narrator about local customs are clearly limited to either the city of Bangangté or to former Cameroonian classmates. The footnotes on some pages also contain information that does not go beyond the author’s country of origin. Statements of this kind are embedded in *Zunge*, especially when the narrator describes some facets of the Spanish way of life. On the other hand, the work contains a glossary in which any non-German words used are provided with explanations. This glossary has the same function as footnotes. So, the characteristics often presented as “purely African” are also available in non-African works. In this sense, they are both cross-border and cross-linguistic and thus postcolonial characteristics.

Because the authors sometimes prefer the childhood perspective in the narrative process, they show a tendency towards mimesis of truly childish speech. They sometimes succeed in an almost complete imitation of the psychological and verbal world of the child. However, it is of course an imitation insofar as the intended addressee or reader is the adult. In addition, each author constructs more the childhood illusion than the past childhood itself. Due to the illusion-promoting effect of the childhood literature, their aesthetic dimension comes more clearly to the fore.

The narrator refrains from telling an authorial story and therefore occasionally withdraws behind the child’s figure. However, this movement is also carried out in the opposite direction. The accounts simultaneously represent the fragmentation of the experiencing and narrating self or the child and the adult. This makes visible how the rediscovery of childhood affects the adult. Thus, the reader has a time and identity gap. The fact that the focus is on the two narrative levels demonstrates the attempt to

fill or illustrate this gap. Such processes also make an attempt to find out the self through the other and the other through the self (Clarke 1995:53). The ontological search for identity is expanded because the child seeks the individual self in this and by means of the collective self. Hence the confusion of perspectives.

Conclusion

The analyzed narrative techniques form an insightful interface due to their application in works by authors of different backgrounds. The discussed changes from sections of reality to the representation of childhood have a reference to dialogical, communication-promoting and exchange-related processes. Parallels to postcolonialism can be drawn from such procedures.

In view of intersections between the quest for identity and cultural interactions, the narrative techniques analyzed, the selected works show considerable overlap with postcolonial writings. Thus, it would be inconsistent to regard oral narrative techniques as the peculiarity of literary texts by authors of African origin. The orality of works appears more as cross-linguistic, cross-border and cross-cultural. Orality as a generation-by-generation transmission of information is even more pronounced among the two German-speaking accounts. Insofar as communities are included in the process of remembering, the textual significance of the community can rather be regarded as the corollary of postcolonial literature.

From the investigation of expressly declared assumptions of already existing statements and writings into the memory or narrative flow, it follows that oral pretexts occupy a considerable position. Insofar as the expressions of the socializing instances are multicultural, their reproduction or reconstruction can be regarded as another postcolonial feature. Moreover, the processes described represent an identity construction resulting from cultural (ex)changes. Due to their inherent capacity for change, cultures are to be considered both spatially and temporally because the cultures in which the experiencing selves are represented differ from those from which

the childhood is remembered. The fact that the space in between is the exciting place of negotiation of childhood or identity construction therefore seems self-evident.

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