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Childhood in contemporary Nigerian fiction.

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the representation of childhood in contemporary diasporic Nigerian fiction. In examining childhood, the study foregrounds figures, images and memories of childhood as grounds for the construction of contemporary postcolonial diasporic identities. The study examines childhood as an emerging set of ideas, a discourse that works through constructing alternative times and histories through its definitive experience of everyday life. The childhood world in this fiction, constructed through the prism of everyday living, presents alternative ways of experiencing time and history and therefore ways of reading history through the narrative genre(s) of childhood. Childhood is seen as constructing an alternative archive through its peculiar positioning and way of experiencing adultist regimes of time, history and record-keeping processes. The study also examines the notions of space, place and time as chronotopes that connect the diasporic consciousness to specific places, spaces and times as zones of meaning in the narrative of childhood. But these spaces, places and times are influenced by people, specifically fathers, as this study foregrounds. The study therefore examines childhood dimensions of sonhood and daughterhood as alternative tropes for problematising how familial genealogies are constructed. These sonhoods and daughterhoods problematise the notion of paternal genealogies in the context of a postcolonial environment, influenced by the diasporic consciousness of the authors. In this way therefore, the study examines childhood as a set of ideas that breaks, familial, ethnic, national and continental zones of experience and ways of identification, influenced by not only the diasporic consciousness of the authors of the fiction, but also by an embodiment of diaspora by some of the authors. The study therefore examines childhood as representing postmodern attitudes of identification, standing at the centre of a postcolonial experience and postmodern ways of negotiating new spaces between families, ethnicities, nations, nation-states and continents. The study concludes that the return to the narrative of childhood in contemporary diasporic Nigerian fiction points to childhood as an emerging set of ideas, perhaps even an emerging category of discoursing identity formation and charting new ways of identification as represented in contemporary Nigerian fiction.