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"Safari ya Prospa": a novel for children[1]

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"We can only be impressed by the way that some novelists have transcended whatever expectations we might have ..." (Kurtz 1998:14)

Elieshi Lema's youth novels are books for people from about age ten onwards. They are youth literature in the sense that the author adopts the perspective of teenagers and touches on subjects important to them. The lively style makes the books attractive to readers of all ages, offering insights into the young protagonists' aspirations, fears and motives. The text skilfully takes both younger and older readers back to the age where so many questions are open and unanswered.

Being a remarkable Tanzanian author and publisher, Elieshi Lema has written children's and educational books, contributions in literary criticism, as well as the novel "Parched Earth" (2001) in English which is written for adult readers. The youth novel "Safari ya Prospa" (Prospa's journey, 1995) is at the focus of this paper. As a publisher, Lema has been committed to children's and educational books, with the declared objective of "bringing a more gender-balanced view of social development into literature and publishing" (E & D 2000).

This paper offers an analysis of the novel within the Tanzanian literary context. The focus of analysis is on stylistic aspects, especially those concerning the choice of verbs in the text.

Critical Discourse Analysis as an approach to literary texts

Depending on the respective epistemological interest of critics, there are numerous possible approaches to any literary text. Critical discourse analysis is an analytical method that developed from comparative literature studies and literary text analysis (cf. Dijk 1993). Its approach links the

[1] Diesen Text hat Irmi Maral-Hanak als fast fertiges Manuskript hinterlassen. Walter Schicho, Ingeborg Grau, Martina Kopf und Birgit Englert haben den Text für die Veröffentlichung in die jetzige Form gebracht. Einige Seitenzahlen von verwendeter Literatur konnten nicht recherchiert werden.

analysis of stylistic qualities to the social context of text production and reception, thus touching the following issues: How do story lines get constructed, how are hegemonic as well as dissident views on society created? What are the stylistic means used to construct meaning? What are the contexts of textual production: Under which conditions do writers create their texts, in which way are those texts available to readers? Or, to ask from a different angle, which chances does an audience have to effectively escape seemingly all-pervading hegemonic messages and their ideological implications? As an approach that links the various issues mentioned, critical discourse analysis offers a range of perspectives on and possible interpretations of texts.

Subjectivity is an important concern in this context: How do the authors textually construct their protagonists' subjectivity, and how does focus in a text influence the readers' perceptions of protagonists? How do authors make their readers identify with the protagonists of their texts, with whose eyes does an author make readers look at her or his world?
Feminist literary theory has pointed out how the mainstream of literary texts tends to describe the world through a male view and how male perspectives dominate interpretations by critics (Osinski 1998:15). This has moved the debate from content analysis to more complex aspects of the construction of meaning in a text. To give an example: text analysis reveals that female and male protagonists are introduced into narratives in significantly different ways. As Richard Mabala demonstrates by means of examples from Swahili literature, women protagonists are often characterized by appearance and looks; the "male gaze" often makes great efforts to convey details about various body parts, resulting in "the man <being> in control while the woman becomes an object" (Mabala 1996:198). Fragmentation of female personalities by referring to different body parts is a common phenomenon in mainstream literature, emphasizing the object status of the person referred to.

Thus the issue of who is at the centre of a plot is determined by several factors: such as the (superficial) content of the narrative, the perspective the narrator consciously adopts (e.g. by telling the story of a particular character in the first or third person) and the numerous stylistic means that are created and shaped to express this in written form which might not always

be employed deliberately, e.g. the fact that passive forms have more often been used developing female characters (c.f. Mills 1995). These three aspects cannot be separated from each other, as form is always part of the content, and no content can be presented without form.

Every text carries individual perspectives and subjectivity, and hegemonic sexist, and racist or simply "adult male" concerns pervade seemingly "objective" and "impersonal" writings (cf. Hourihan 1997:39). Many of the hegemonic patterns are not so easily done away with; they are commonly reproduced even by authors who would see themselves as progressive, feminist or anti-racist. Narrating in first person from the perspective of a child does not per se make a difference: the account may still be dominated by male or adult preoccupations. Therefore the challenge for any writer intending to break with this tradition is: How can a text be made to adequately carry subjectivity of those who often disappear behind the patriarchal mainstream in writing, i.e., how can readers be invited to see the world from the point of view of female characters, youth and children?
In the tradition of social realism of Tanzanian literature children prominently feature as protagonists. Children's hardship in life as well as their difficult social environment is a recurring topic. In many cases, though, the children portrayed are not central characters to the story. In some cases, a child character may only appear briefly or in a flashback of a main adult character’s personal development. Children as individuals in their own right are rarely at the centre of the story, and they are more often portrayed as passive beings, or as victims, than in active, creative roles. As an example, consider the passage in "Miradi bubu ya wazalendo" (Invisible Enterprises of the Patriots) by Gabriel Ruhumbika where a toddler is beaten to death by his adolescent mother for secretly having taken sugar from her cupboard (Ruhumbika 1992:79-85); an event that is used to dramatize and illustrate the severity of the Tanzanian economic crisis in the eighties and its impact on interpersonal relations. Ruhumbika’s narrative is impressively challenging the readers’ perception of society, but he does not intend to make his readers look at the world from a child's perspective.
Just as women in postcolonial literature frequently appear as allegories for the oppressed country and the suffering people (cf. Khorana 1998:10), children's fate serves as symbol for an uncertain future and destroyed hopes of troubled societies. While allegoric use of language and construction of

meanings at various levels is a common phenomenon in literature, it is the dominance, foregrounding and repetitiveness of such perspectives that are at stake here. Thus, when children appear in literary prose, this does not necessarily mean that the focus of the narrative changes to describe events from their perspective.[2] Even in a text that impressively denounces society's injustices towards children, the narrative can at the same time confirm the hegemonic message of the male adult perspective as the relevant or even "objective, impartial" one. Many of these books which are at least partly about children are not considered children's literature and are hardly considered interesting by children themselves. This is an issue of perspective: Children cannot be expected to favour narratives they do not empathise with.

Tanzanian society in recent years has seen the foundation of several organisations advocating children's rights (cf. Rajani 2001). Studies on the social situation of children and adolescent girls and boys have pointed to the predicaments they face and to the changes in household and family patterns (e.g. Omari/Mbilinyi 2000; Koda 2000; Tumbo-Masabo/Liljeström 1994). These developments in social work and social science have influenced public discourse as well as literary production.

Post-colonial Tanzanian children's literature

"The first thing the children's writer can do in the African society is to stress the importance of a child as an individual. Our work must recognize and treat the child as a person with a mind of his own, with feelings and ideas to express and the driving desire to succeed." (Asare 1983:17-18) In postcolonial Tanzania authors, critics and readers, when concentrating on the child in literature, are faced with a context of foreign domination in

[2] Occasionally, writers deny them a children's perspective altogether. Ben Mtobwa has been criticized for his misogynist depiction of rape scenes where it is insinuated that the raped women enjoy infliction of pain (cf. Mabala 1996:199). This represents a misogynist pattern found in populist texts world-wide. In "Dar-es-Salaam usiku" (Dar es Salaam by Night) Ben Mtobwa (1990) suggests in his narrative that a 12-year-old girl enjoys being raped by two adult men. Misogynist gender stereotypes and respective narrative patterns in this case conceal the variety of aspects that could be important in depicting such an experience from the point of view of the child. Instead, the text is construed to effectively turning children into gendered sex objects without readers necessarily being aware or questioning this objectivisation.

literature and education, which becomes most obvious with regard to language. In substance the dire economic situation led to dependence on few and unreliable publishing houses.
Tanzanian authors have been caught up with the challenge of language choice in a multilingual situation. Authors of children's books have faced additional expectations and pressure to act as saviours of allegedly endangered cultural traditions and idioms. Part of this pressure is due to the importance ascribed to mother tongue education in primary schooling; part of it is due to the importance of storytelling in children's upbringing; part of it is due to the internalisation of a world view in which African languages are considered irrelevant except in local and family contexts. Thus some authors would argue that the relevance of children's books is rather local or at best national, "children's authors mostly publish through small indigenous presses“(Khorana 1998:3). However, this might not correspond to the authors' views but be rather forced upon them by circumstances. There is no objective reason why children's books should less likely be "world literature" than any other literature.
One of the major problems authors still face in many African countries is the lack of a unifying language, as the Kenyan writer and publisher Asenath Bole Odaga (1998:17) confirms. For the Tanzanian case, the pre-eminence of Swahili has facilitated the development of a flourishing children's literature in the 1990s, when numerous titles were published with the support of a children's book project (Madumulla 2001) Nevertheless, publication and especially distribution of children's books still leave a lot to be desired.

In her overview of African children's literature Meena Khorana argues that most of Africa's postcolonial children's fiction is caught up in binary oppositions and dichotomies. "An examination of the dominant themes in children's and young adult literature indicates that there is a binary tension between modernity and tradition; Westernization vs. Africanization, rural vs. urban." (Khorana 1998:8) Many of children's literature's texts retell ("traditional") narratives, often with reference to oral sources, or to some earlier written versions. However, the source of the narrative is rarely made transparent, and the issue of perspective or the question of whose version is being told is hardly touched. Considering that many of the early written versions were produced during the period of European colonial

domination, the issue of preserving an African cultural heritage becomes rather complex.
Other texts in African children's literature are loaded with intentions to create a morally acceptable modernity. With a view to bring valuable members of modern society into being, children or young characters are depicted in school or urban environments. Many "modern" narratives transport stereotypical patterns of hard work and success. Some of them bring in gender dimensions: „Novels of progress also demand the uplifting of women, their right to education, employment and equal opportunities. (…) Each novel has a strong female character who works hard to fulfil her ambition to study, to become financially independent and exert her personal autonomy. Feminist authors want to provide young girls with positive role models and to empower them through their reading." (Khorana 1998:8)
The importance and merits of such novels drawing models for young female and male readers are obvious. Still there is a problem in the stereotypical binary gender construction of such narratives. Some of these stories may actually reinforce old gender-stereotyped messages or even create new ones such as women can succeed even in a patriarchal world if only they work hard enough. While binary oppositions are widely found in Tanzanian children's literature, many writers have used their imaginative force and creativity to reach beyond delimitating concepts, subverting hegemonic texts.

"Safari ya Prospa"

Elieshi Lema's narratives are very close to the world of Tanzanian children, conveying their way of speaking, thinking, feeling and their inner development. They are realist fiction dealing with social issues of today's Tanzanian society. Social issues and challenges are skilfully woven into the story, and the novel's background is diligently researched and described. The children's world portrayed in these narratives is not so different from the adults' realities, but the perspective created is particular to children's concerns. Together with this commitment to the "here and now", the novels inscribe fantastic element into the way how children realize their plans and aspirations. "Fantastic" in this context should not be misunderstood as concerning the supernatural or magic, but rather designates the way how everyday routines are disrupted and how space for children's initiatives and

agency is created. We might consider it unlikely, for instance, that a ten year old from a village near Arusha goes to Dar-es-Salaam almost without money to look for his abducted nephew and eventually succeeds in finding him and taking him back. But it is probably just this very readiness to experiment with the unlikely that opens up alternatives for children, something which would otherwise remain locked away by the logic of an adult world. Opening up space for children's creativity this way is very central to the issue of taking the child seriously as an individual and being attentive to its personal development.

The narrative in “Safari ya Prospa” offers ample possibilities for young readers to identify with the protagonists. The two main characters, Sara and Prospa, invite both boys and girls to put themselves into their place, i.e. to substitute the given character with their own personality in their imagination. The journey motive promises a course of events full of adventures. It also stands for the possibility of stepping beyond the daily routine, since it interrupts the temporal order of school and family life. The young readers are offered space to project themselves into the story, to experience themselves in the role of the person who goes through all these exciting experiences, a pattern that is particularly important for teenagers whose wishes to act differ considerably from their actual potential to act.

Additionally, the story invites the readers to empathise with others, to experience the inner state of mind of other personalities, which is particularly important for young readers whose personality is still in formation. Literary texts enable adolescent readers to experiment with a multitude of diverse identities beyond the horizon of their personally lived experiences (Schön 1995:111). “Safari ya Prospa” in this respect is a particularly richly developed text, as its main characters are fascinating personalities that are at the same time diverse and contradictory. Meeting these personalities does not only offer the young reader an encounter with various identities, but also invites the reader to experience diversity and to develop respect for others. In Swahili literature the text has a pioneering role as it is probably the first novel of in-depth psychological development written for and about the age group of ten to fifteen.

“Safari ya Prospa” tells the story of a journey from the village to town, about relationships between girls and boys, children and adults and about social injustice. In many regards, what happens in the story is at the same

time unspectacular as well as radically "new". The boy Prospa, for instance, as a main character and male child admits to his fears and uncertainty, while his equally central featuring companion Sara is an ugly, likeable, creative and rather self-confident girl. Conformist family patterns are depicted as interacting with non-conformist ones in an everyday, matter-of-fact way. Thus the fact that Prospa's sister is unmarried and raises her child on her own working as a teacher is presented to the reader as a matter of fact leading to the obvious conclusion that a parent who takes responsibility for a child is also the one who is legally entitled to custody. The ease in dealing with social conventions and at the same time the deep concern with interpersonal relations remind of Nurudin Farah's narratives.

Elieshi Lema is the first Tanzanian author to give street children a prominent place in a literary text, and her stylistic choices in portraying them make sure that the readers actually learn much about the concerns, experiences and opinions of Tanzanian street children. By developing Prospa's story, she touches on core issues within Tanzanian society, such as social inequality, education, gender relations and intergenerational conflicts. The spatial perspective of the novel follows the travelling children, allowing various regional experiences to intertwine and to form a country-wide whole. Rural-urban interrelatedness figures more prominently than a respective divide or difference. The experience of Prospa and his friends severely questions stereotypical spatial concepts: Home is not necessarily a secure place for women and children, and any idea of a rural idyll is disrupted by the abduction of the child and the helplessness of the police. Towns, despite of their challenges, offer numerous possibilities to the children. Lema's text represents the complex inter-relatedness and interdependence of present-day Tanzanian rural-urban lives. In many respects, it subverts the stereotypical and dichotomous patterns that pervade many of East Africa's literary texts (cf. Kurtz 1998). Lema's most remarkable achievement is the creation of an alternative narrative, of rewriting a story that is caught up in hegemonic constraints. She subverts them much in the sense of Margaret Hourihan's remark: "The trouble with a dualism is that if you simply turn it on its head it is still a dualism. Inversion is not the same as subversion." (Hourihan 1997:205)

Elieshi Lema is an author who is deeply committed to learning and understanding issues she considers important to write about, in the case of “Safari ya Prospa” for instance the living conditions of street children in Dar-es-Salaam. The text expresses great respect for and empathy with the young protagonists.

In an interview in September 2000, Elieshi Lema pointed out the difficulty she experienced when working on youth characters in her texts. While she found it already quite challenging to develop complex adult characters, this was still easier than creating young personalities because she could make use of her own experiences in the adult word. For her, taking time to understand children's worldviews and feelings was a demanding, but nevertheless essential part of the creative process of writing.

> *”Ni muhimu kwa sababu mara nyingi, hatuna subira kwa watoto, hatuna subira kabisa, tunasema ‘We mtoto acha utundu’. Hatujajua, hatujamwuliza ni kwa nini unafanya hivi. Au ”Nieleza unajisikiaje.” No. Tunaingia tu, tunafanya, tunahukumu, tunatoa ama ni adhabu au ni sifa au ni nini. Sasa watoto wanatuonaje, wanatazama hiyo jamii, wanaona “niye watu wa ajabu kweli”. Nilitaka mtoto apotee, yule mtoto anapopotea, Prospa, kila anapopita, anatathmini, anauliza, anafanya uamuzi, na ule uamuzi unamwendesha.”*
>
> “This is important, because very often we have no patience for children, no patience at all. We say: ‘Hey boy, stop that mischievousness”. But yet, we don’t know, we have not asked him, why he behaves like that.” Or “tell me how you are feeling.” No. We are entering, judging immediately, we give punishment or praise or whatever. The children on the hand look at us in their own way, they come to the opinion that grown-ups “really are strange people”. In the story a child gets lost, I wanted that this way. Because when it is being missed and Prospa searches for it, everywhere he passes he judges the situation, asks questions, makes decisions, and these decisions push him forward.” (Lema/Hanak 2001:60).

With all the importance and attention accorded to the shift towards a children's perspective, Lema also believes that conveying girls' and boys' views on society is the most difficult aspect in writing:

> *"Wale wasichana na wale wavulana pia, wanavyopita na wanapokuwa na kuona ulimwengu wa watu wazima – ngumu."*
> "It's difficult to describe how those girls and boys go on, where they are and how they see the world of the adults." (Lema/Hanak 2001:68f)

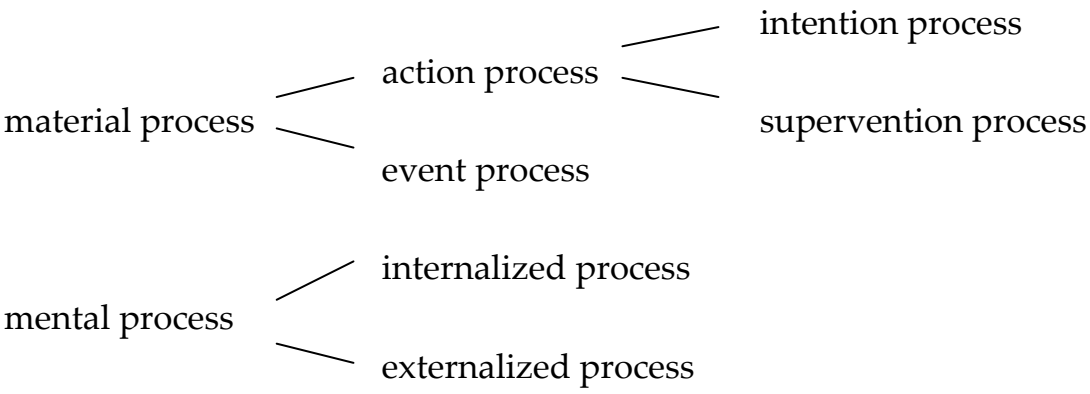
We can conclude that by her pioneering way to deal with children's inner development and subjective perspective Elieshi Lema takes her young protagonists as well as her readers serious in a unique way.

Choice of verbs and the construction of meaning

Authors construct their subjective narrator's perspective through various means. The choice of verbs, use of active vs. passive voice, as well as choice of speech acts or strategies is of particular relevance in this context (Mills 1995). As I am particularly interested in the depiction of social relations in communication, I will focus on dialogue scenes from the two novels.

Following Sara Mills (1995:144) verbs occurring in a text are central to the construction of meaning in a text. For the English language, Mills differentiates between verbs expressing material action and mental action:

> "Verbs in English can be divided into categories, depending on the kind of activity they refer to, and the participants involved can be identified by terms which indicate the process and whether they are performing it, or having it done to them." (Mills 1995:144)



Categories of Verbs – material and mental process (Mills 1995:144)

Mills further argues that "if an author or a speaker consistently chooses a particular type of verbs, a particular text will be produced." (Mills 1995:144) Knowles and Malmkjaer (1996:77) extend this categorisation to include relational processes (as the processes of being). In their study on "Language and Control in Children's Literature" they deal with several linguistic aspects in the construction of ideological messages. They also consider mood as an aspect of the clause that is of particular importance when analyzing formal aspects in the construction of meaning in a text, mood being realised grammatically by the positioning relative to each other by the Subject (S) and the Predicator (P) (Knowles/Malmkjaer 1996:73). Knowles and Mjalmkjar thus conclude that "... the distribution of questions, commands and statements among the participants in linguistic interactions, including the characters in fiction, can reveal a good deal about the relationships between them" (Knowles and Malmkjaer 1996:73). For the Swahili language, we expect the use of forms of verbal derivation to be of similar relevance, as they frequently cause a change of the subject position. In his analysis of Kezilahabis novel (1975) “Dunia uwanja wa fujo” (The World is a Chaotic Place), Mlacha (1991:3ff) found an interrelatedness between the choice of verbs and the development of contents.

From a discourse and text analysis point of view, the question of power and language in texts for and about children poses a twofold challenge. Between adults and children, it is usually grown-ups who dominate.

> "In the overwhelming majority of cases, adults establish structure and maintain these relationships. In spite of the powerful emotional hold that children have over their parents and over many adults, it is generally the case that adults [...], are more powerful than children, socially, economically and physically." (Knowles/Malmkjaer 1996:43).

Thus on the one hand, because of their social status, children consistently receive directions, rebukes that reinforce and recreate their subordinate role in society: They are the ones to be told, to be protected by adults who supposedly know better, they are to obey, to listen attentively. On the other hand, children are full of creative potential, with an astounding learning ability, flexibility and independent mind. On many occasions they are not

passive recipients, but actively devise creative strategies to deal with the adult world.
Age of course is not a social category that can be meaningfully analysed in isolation. Social constructions of roles relating to age can only be understood if looked at in the context of social class biases, sexism and racism. In the analysis of novels it is thus helpful to identify which social group a particular character is intended to belong to.
Gender is of particular interest in this context, as childhood socialisation is fundamental for the development and perception of gendered roles. As Elieshi Lema points out:

> "Children themselves do not have negative ideas towards other genders. They take them over from grown-ups, as they consider them to have authority." (Interview 2000)

Which abilities do boys and girls have to interact with each other, do they reproduce or question their social environment's stereotyping?

Following studies on the status of girl children in Tanzania, children and especially female children could be expected to be portrayed as passive, emotional and conforming to social norms of obedience and passivity (cf. Omari/Mbilinyi 2000). Such characteristics are to be found at the level of formal linguistic aspects as well as at the level of contents (cf. Mills 1995:144).
At a formal level, this would include the following aspects:

- Children are undergoing processes rather than actively initiating them.
- At the level of speech acts in dialogues and interactive situations, children are expected to use speech acts expressing powerlessness and subordination.
- Children are portrayed as emotional rather than analytical or expressive.
- Children avoid counter-strategies against domination that seriously question asymmetric relationships.

Text analysis

Interactive scenes allow the author more than other contexts to develop the protagonists' emotional, social and intellectual depth. The analysis will focus on explicit descriptions of speech acts and non-verbal communication such as:

> *“Sara alimtazama Prospa, akatabasamu. Halafu akauliza haraka: [...].“*(91)
> “Sara looked at Prospa and began to smile. Then hastely she asked: […].”

In addition, direct and indirect speech acts will be interpreted from the context and made part of the analysis, e.g. as in the following passage:

> *“Msemaji wao alimwonyesha kipande cha chupa kilichochongeka na kusema: ‘[...] Ukileta fujo tutakuumiza.’”* (120)
> “Their speaker showed him a broken piece of a bottle and said: ‘[…] If you make troubles we will hurt you.”

In this scene, the speaker of a gang of street kids shows Prospa a broken glass bottle and announces that if he does not obey, he will be hurt. While the author does not explicitly use the verb "threaten" here, the respective speech act is implied in context and direct speech. The example shows that non-verbal aspects such as gestures and spatial movements have to be included into the analysis.

In the following I will analyse communicative interaction from three different situations, namely:

(a) children amongst themselves,
(b) adults towards children and
(c) children towards adults.

The examples are randomly taken from the novel and serve to illustrate the quality of stylistic possibilities explored by the author; no quantitative evaluation is intended here.

(a) Communicative interaction among children

Consent

The first example is taken from a passage dominated by consent, where a command or proposal by the boy Prospa realised in subjunctive mode and uttered in low voice is answered by Sara with a request for confirmation. Prospa confirms and adds some explanatory information in a declarative statement supportive of his initial request.

> *"Prospa alimnongoneza Sara, akamwambia, 'Tushuke hapa'. 'Hapa?' Sara aliuliza. 'Ndiyo. Kaka Peter anakaa Manzese'."* (59)
> "Prospa whispered to Sara saying: 'We should get off at this place'. 'Here?' asked Sara. 'Yes. Kaka Peter lives in Manzese'."

Conflict

> *"Ghafla Sara alisema; 'Twende'. Alimvuta Prospa amfuate. Prospa alikataa: 'Siendi. Siendi. Siendi', alisema kwa hasira. Sara aliondoka."* (60)
> "Suddenly Sara said: 'Let's go'. She pulled Prospa to make him follow. Prospa disagreed: 'I won't go, no, no'. He spoke full of anger. Sara left."

This sequence again starts with a request in subjunctive mode, supported by a physical action of Sara pulling Prospa to make him follow her. The two children have just arrived in Dar-es-Salaam and are about to begin their search for Prospa's cousin Peter. Prospa, confused by the city traffic, is not sure about what to do. Sara, as often, takes the initiative and sets off; her pulling him along is a further indication that she already has decided for both of them. Prospa refuses, rather because he does not want to be told than because he wants to do something else. His threefold refuse that he is not about to come also reflects the fact that he is at loss as to what to suggest instead. Sara pursues her point by walking off, thus ending their interaction.

In both examples, the narrator gives both kids equal attention by showing them as active subjects (e.g. consider as alternatives "she heard him refuse" or "he saw her walking away", or "he was left behind" etc., which would have shifted the perspective of author and reader on one of the two.) This is

remarkable in light of the fact that the novel is actually "Prospa's story", but in long sequences Sara is accorded equally space.

Silence

> *"Alimfuata bila neno, lakini alichukia. [...] Alimchukia Sara kwa kutojali. Alimchukia kwa kujua mambo na kumfanya aonekane mwoga."* (60)
> "He followed her without saying a word, but there was hate. […] He hated Sara because she did not respect him. He hated her because she knew and made him look a coward."

This quotation follows Prospa's and Sara's earlier verbal exchange. Here the perspective of the author temporarily focuses on the boy Prospa. His feelings of helpless anger are at the foreground. While "alimfuata" is an active material process carried out by Prospa affecting Sara, this act is done in compliance with an earlier request uttered by Sara. "Alimchukia" denotes a mental process directed at others, makes Prospa's feelings transparent, and in its repetitiveness probably also the lack of control over his feelings. The verbs attributed to Sara in the subordinate clause, show her as active: she does not care, i.e. she does not waste feelings on him or anyone else, and she makes him look like a coward. Thus while in this passage Prospa is in focus, and we do not learn anything about Sara's motives for acting as she does, he is depicted in a helpless and emotional role. One could add that all this very human behaviour is probably essential for the young reader when emphasizing with one or both of the characters.

Dissent / making fun of the interactive partner / hidden intention

> *"Prospa alimwambia msichana kwamba kwao wavulana hawachoti maji. Wakichota maji watakosa wachumba. Msichana akacheka, akasema: 'Sio kweli.' Prospa hakubisha."* (46)
> "Prospa told the girl that boys wouldn't take up water. If they would do so, no girl would accept to become engaged to them. The girl laughed and said: 'That's not true'. Prospa did not argue."

At that point, the reader actually knows that Prospa's wants to be left alone in order to continue his journey. The girl's family had invited him for the night and warned him not to continue his journey because of the wild animals all around. Prospa, who does not want to disappoint people who

had bid a friendly welcome to him, agrees to stay. The next morning, though, he uses the first opportunity to disappear. He uses a pretext that certainly does not correspond to his personality. The girl simply laughs at him and contradicts him with a short straightforward statement. The argument between the two ends with Prospa giving in: he has no problem of having a younger girl laughing at his expense, as he can finally convince her to accept his leaving.

We can thus sum up that Lema depicts boys and girls as both, capable of creating harmonious consent as well as disagreeing and developing individual viewpoints. In the quotations, the boy Prospa is portrayed as emotional and dealing with situations where he is the weaker counterpart in the relationship. The story describes these incidents as stages of inner growth. Sara, his companion on the trip, and the girl he encounters in the above-quoted passage, is assertive and self confident. The above quoted examples are not meant to create the impression that Lema merely reverses gender dualities. It is rather her ability to depict children's behaviour that differs from prevailing gender stereotypes as just what it is, namely perfectly "normal".

(b) Interaction between adults and children

Directives

Giving directives to children seems to be a frequent pattern in child-adult communication. As in other asymmetric relationships, it is taken for granted that the stronger partners, i.e. adults, tell the weaker ones, i.e. the children, what to do.

> *"Kaeni hapa mpaka nitakaporudi."* (65)
> „Sit here till I will have returned."

In this example, cousin Peter gives his directive without expecting the children to answer. They comply, obviously happy that he accepted them into the house at all. One could add, that his directive is uttered in a context where it actually turns out to be a friendly and welcoming invitation into the home of the speaker.

All kinds of modal forms are found in directions that demand cooperative communicative behaviour from the young listener: imperative, subjunctive, as well as modal nouns such as "lazima" expressing necessity.

Making fun of interactive partners and ignoring arguments

Another probably typical relation between children and grown-ups is that adults often have more knowledge of the world surrounding them than children. Children learn by asking questions. Adults have the option of sharing their knowledge by explaining, or to keep children ignorant and using information as advantage over them. In the following statement, Prospa explains why he didn't trust the police to bring back Peter's nephew Merisho:

> *"'Polisi waliuliza maswali tu'. Prospa alisema. Kaka Peter alicheka ‚Ndiyo kazi hiyo. Sasa?' Peter aliuliza."* (63)
> "'The policemen just asked questions', Prospa said. Kaka Peter laughed: 'Isn't this their job? So what?'"

The declarative statement by the child is thus met with derision, his logic not accepted by the adult, who counters with a statement of his own logic and adds another disparaging question, "so what?"

Ignoring the interactive partner

Depersonalisation and the use of the third person for people who happen to be present

Talking about an attendant in the third person is a pattern expressing contempt, but seemingly permissible for grown-ups towards children.

In the following passage, Sara appears shortly after Prospa had his first encounter with his cousin Peter after arriving in town. Being self-assertive as ever, she starts talking to Prospa without paying much attention to Peter. Peter in turn ignores her completely.

> *"'Nani huyu?' alimwuliza Prospa."* (63)
> "Who's this one?' he asked Prospa."

Sara, who immediately introduces herself before Prospa has the chance to open his mouth, starts to establish communication with Peter, who nevertheless continues to ignore her.

> *"Peter hakumjibu Sara."* (63)
> "Peter did not answer Sara."

Pretending to lack time and interest

Another strategy is not taking the other serious, or pretending that there are more important issues. Again, ther
e seems to be a common consensus that grown-ups' concerns are more important than children's.

> *"'Mipango yangu inalala aisee', alisema Peter, akaanza kuondoka." (63)*
> "'My projects lie flat, I would say', Peter said and set off."

Indirectness

In the following passage, Prospa has finally succeeded to explain Peter that he and Sara, a street child who became his companion during his journey to Dar-es-Salaam, hope to stay with Peter at his place in Dar.

> *"'Haya mambo ni makubwa.' [...] Peter alisema kwa hamaki."* (64)
> "'That's strong. [...]' Peter said with sudden anger."

Indirectness, or rather being vague, in this case is one way of mitigating refusal, especially where the partner appeals to culturally established social obligations. In this instance, Peter, who begins to feel insecure, still hesitates and communicates his anger indirectly.

To sum up, Lema depicts a broad spectre of challenges faced by children in their interaction with adults: Speech behaviour that reinforces inequality is considered normal in interactions between adults and children. It is difficult to imagine, that it could be the other way round, except for rare situations where adults might be socially dependent on children. One of the most remarkable qualities of the text is that while stereotyping is avoided, the

reader is invited to empathise with the children's perspective. Let us finally turn to Lema's representation of the speech strategies used by children towards adults.

(c) Children towards grown-ups

Speech behaviour by children towards grown-ups largely reflects children's weak social position in society. Disobedience or disagreement can be a risky endeavour for children. Getting a grown up to do something he is not willing to do can be a challenging undertaking.

Persuasion, imploring

The following example belongs to the description of the first encounter of Prospa and Peter. Prospa has met Peter by accident after his arrival in Dar-es-Salaam and tries to stick to him as he hopes to stay with Peter. At the same time, Prospa tries to save face by ignoring his cousin's complaint that Prospa could not impose himself on somebody else by visiting him without announcement. In the passages quoted, Prospa is becoming increasingly desperate as Peter pretends not to understand what Prospa wants.

> *"'Nakuomba unipeleka nyumbani basi.' Alimshika Peter mkono kumzuia asiondoke."*
> "'I beg you to bring me to your house.' He took Peter's hand to impede his departure."

> *"'Nilikuwa nataka [...] utanipeleka kwa mjomba Felix basi' alisihi Prospa."*
> "I really wanted […] that you will bring me to Uncle Felix.' Prospa begged."

> *"'Kaka Peter jamani' Prospa alisema kwa sauti ya unyonge."*
> "'Kaka Peter, please', Prospa said in a low voice."

Explicitly begging, imploring gestures and voice and modal forms are used to appeal to his listener's compassion.

Consent
The following quotation deals with the incident when Prospa, at the beginning of his journey, is welcomed by a family on his way. He is told not to continue travelling as the surroundings are supposedly dangerous.

> *"Baba [...] alimwambia: 'Usiondoke.' Prospa alisema, 'Ndiyo baba.'"* (46)
> "The father […] said to him: 'Don't leave the house.' Prospa answered, 'Yes Sir.'"

In this passage, Prospa actually has the intention to continue, but he prefers to tell a lie and to pretend to be obedient instead of openly dissenting.

Initiative / Counter-strategies
Elieshi Lema describes a few incidences where children disagree with grown-ups. However, dissent is not explicitly expressed. Instead, the spirited children – in many cases the girl Sara – bring forward alternative propositions.

Request, question
As mentioned above, Peter finds it difficult to accept that Prospa and Sara intend to stay with him. But because the children express their confidence in him it is equally hard for him to refuse outright. Sara takes the initiative while Peter is still confused and angry.

> *"'Twendeni. Mbona mmethimama?' Sara alianza kutembea." (64)*
> "'Let's go. Why are you still standing?' Sara began to move."

Her proposition contradicts Peter's earlier refusal to take them home. The request in subjunctive is followed by her questioning their behaviour as she starts to walk, making the two starting to move as well.

Direct questions
The abduction of Prospa's nephew Merisho makes Sara, Prospa and Peter debate about the treatment and value of children in society. Again it is Sara who by posing a personal demand questions Peter's earlier voiced materialistic world-view in which children are just a burden.

“Sara aliuliza: ‘We kaka Peter hutaki mtoto?’” (68)
“Sara asked: ‘Kaka Peter, don’t you wish to have a child?’”

While it is socially recognized that children ask direct questions, it is still often dismissed as disrespectful. In the narrative, this way of forming questions again complies with Sara's behaviour.

To sum up, Lema’s description of children’s communicative behaviour towards adults and their expression of an independent mind are of particular interest. While it is clearly shown that children's social space is limited and defined by adults, emphasis is laid on their creativity and initiative in developing their own positions.

Conclusion

In the first part of this paper, several issues pertaining to children's literature in Tanzania and to the writings of Elieshi Lema in particular were discussed. Taking critical discourse analysis as a point of departure, possibilities and merits of some linguistic approaches e.g. in feminist approaches have been outlined. Further, the situation of authors writing for children in postcolonial societies such as Tanzania was put in relation to content and form of children's literature published. An appraisal of Lema's novel "Safari ya Prospa" pointed out the author’s remarkable ability to empathize with children and her achievement in creating discursive space for children through writing.

In the second part of the paper, formal linguistic aspects of the novel "Safari ya Prospa" such as the choice of verbs as well as mode and transitivity were analyzed. Initially it was assumed that children and especially girls would be characterized through passive forms or verbs expressing the undergoing or suffering of processes. Additionally, it was expected to find expressions of emotion rather than verbs expressing activities that affect others. From the examples analyzed a different pattern emerged. Lema develops a style that at a formal level skilfully experiments with language and makes it a tool that depicts especially girl children as making use of the range of communicative abilities at their disposal. Girls and boys alike show courageousness and strength when faced with the challenges of an adult world. Female and male children are shown as masters of their personal development in coming to terms with their feelings of fear, frustration and

sympathy. The choice of verbs, mode and transitivity by the author conveys active and creative roles of child protagonists. Their subjectivity and viewpoints determine the main "story line" and form an important part of the author's subversion of prevalent gender and intergenerational norms and stereotypes.

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