The Unsettled Settler: Personal and Discursive Tragedy in Alexandra Fuller's Memoirs

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The origins of Rhodesia and the uncertainty of white Africans

The medium of memoir allows for a window into the past and memory. Fuller primarily uses this space to evoke the senses through her writing of Africa. However, at the same time, she perpetuates the unexamined trope of Africa functioning as a playground for disaffected Europeans. The terms "sensory" and "sensual" refer to Fuller's writing evoking the senses primarily smell, sight and sound. In these texts (*Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, *Scribbling the Cat* and *Cocktail Hour Under the Tree of Forgetfulness*), nostalgia for a childhood home and memory are utilised to eschew settler colonial violence. I argue that Fuller foregrounds white innocence and African origins while replaying ideas of racialised wilderness and threatened belonging by not critically examining these ideas but instead reproducing images of Africa through Europe's notion of Africa. I engage with the fields of settler colonial studies, critical whiteness studies and diaspora studies.

This thesis examines the way that the project of Alexandra Fuller's memoirs cannot ultimately settle, much like the way the settler colonial project fails to settle in Zimbabwe. Fuller is a vibrant writer whose memoirs are full of sensual colour, humour and wonder but ultimately she is an avoidant writer. The Fuller family's journey of settling in Africa is detailed over the course of her three memoirs but Alexandra Fuller cannot finally settle on what she thinks about herself and her family as settlers in Southern Africa (having lived in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Kenya and Zambia). The memoir as a form is ideally suited to this obfuscation because it is neither history nor the novel and therefore lacks the credentials (historical fact or the suspension of disbelief) associated with either. For all the irony of Fuller's writing, her exploration into the position of herself and her family as colonial subjects ultimately leads to no critical conclusion. In this respect, it is similar to the colonial project itself which is unable to ideologically and existentially settle as being a settler colonial means that you are always from somewhere else outside of Africa.

I analyse Fuller's three memoirs, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood* (2001), which recounts her childhood in Rhodesia[1] during the war of independence (1972-1980); *Scribbling the Cat: Travels with an African Soldier* (2004), which details the

[1] The use of "Rhodesia" refers to the time of pre-independence Zimbabwe (before April 1980).

fragility of white masculinity in Southern Africa, and *Cocktail Hour under the Tree of Forgetfulness* (2011), which illustrates the lure of living in Africa as a white settler colonial and the status this affords the settler. Fuller was born in England in 1969 and moved to Rhodesia (a country heading to war) with her parents in 1972 when she was three years old. Fuller draws on her mother's claim of kinship to Africa (having grown up in Kenya) to strengthen her claims of belonging. Fuller's memoirs provide an opportunity to explore the operation of whiteness in Africa and what it means to call Africa home, even from across the Atlantic, against a complex racial background. I explore how memory and nostalgia aid in the construction of whiteness.

Fuller's first memoirs enter the international literary scene in the early 2000s, a time characterised by uncertainty and disorientation (especially amongst the expatriate community) as Robert Mugabe enacted his controversial land redistribution program[2]. Fuller's memoirs explore themes of belonging and identity as a white Zimbabwean during a time of socio-political upheaval. Through her work, Fuller explores what it means to be a white settler unable to settle in Africa. Using theorists like Svetlana Boym, Zine Magubane and Gloria Wekker, I examine the function of nostalgia, the way memory is transcribed onto the land, the displacement of white families in Fuller's memoirs and the impact this has on belonging and identity as a white person in post-liberation Zimbabwe. This thesis argues that Fuller's use of memoir as a form for revisiting Africa and her childhood enacts what Rosalia Baena calls "reinscribing a revisionary perspective on the history of the British Empire" (436). Memoir allows for a flitting between first person and third person narration that allows for focus to rest on the beauty of the African landscape and to ignore the brutality of a history of settler colonialism. Revisiting childhood through memoir means a shifting of the guilt of the colonial past through the innocent lens of a child whilst simultaneously facilitating a platform to examine the participation of children as colonial subjects. Baena advocates for the examination of these childhood narratives as a "meaningful site for exploring the colonial experience from the perspective of other pawns of the Empire: the children of the British diaspora" who at the time of their childhood were unable or unaware of the consequences of their presence (436-7). Childhood supplements the idyllic quality of the pastoral novel, both serving to foreground innocence whilst subverting the less desirable negative aspects that come with a history of

[2] In the early 2000s Zimbabwe's president, Robert Mugabe, revoked the property rights of commercial farmers and gave the confiscated land to small-scale farmers.

colonialism. The lens of childhood allows for a 'soft landing' in which there is complicity of whiteness without political complicity or indeed, responsibility with the colonial government of pre-independence Zimbabwe. In the context of Southern African literature, farm writing's concentration on the pastoral quality of the landscape subverts the traumatic history of violence that has been written onto the landscape. Baena states that literary criticism often assumes that colonial writers are "British subjects who happened to live in a foreign country, or that their 'native culture' was British, thus failing to acknowledge the complexity of their process of cultural identification" (Baena 436). Fuller acknowledges and explores this complexity of identity throughout her memoirs without ever reaching any satisfactory conclusions. Colonial writers like Alexandra Fuller, Peter Godwin, Doris Lessing and Elspeth Huxley create a "shared myth of what may be called the 'colonial childhood', a myth that challenges dominant preconceived ideas on the presence and meaning of whiteness in the colonies, and contribute to challenge uncritically sanctioned ideas on the historical development of an English identity" through their autobiographical writing (Baena 437). Fuller's memoirs detail the presence of whiteness in Africa, however, these insights are often uncritical. Through a reading of wilderness versus settlement in Fuller's work, I show how the settler can never truly be made autochthonous with the land. The very history of violence associated with settler colonialism is what prevents the settler from settling. Their ownership is precariously balanced due to the history of indigenous people being violently removed from their land.

Zimbabwe (Rhodesia in the world of Fuller's childhood) has a history of disputes around land that precedes the formation of the country of Rhodesia. Fuller's work illustrates in her memoirs how the forced evictions of white farmers from land that historically had been a symbol of belonging and ownership contributes to the transient nature of whiteness in Africa. However, in order to better understand the place in which Alexandra Fuller enters this matter, it is necessary to lay out some historical context. The country of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) was ultimately founded on trickery when in October 1888 Lobengula, the second and last king of the Southern African Ndebele (Matabele) Nation, signed what he believed to be limited mining rights over to the business partners of Cecil John Rhodes (Pakenham 382). Lobengula was described as illiterate but "highly intelligent" and relied on the oral explanation of Rhodes's associates before he signed and sealed the document (Pakenham 382). This agreement was manipulated to appear as a gold concession for his entire kingdom (land between the Limpopo and Zambezi rivers) and in 1889 it was accepted by the British

government as authentic and used to start the British South Africa Company (BSAC) (Pakenham 384). Lobengula was not the first African ruler to be duped by Europeans. His relative King Mbandzeni, the Swazi ruler, had also lost a large portion of the land through unintentionally accepting European concessions (Pakenham 384). Another milestone worth noting in Zimbabwe's history is the Lancaster House Agreement which took place in London on the 10th September 1979 and saw the two factions of Zimbabwe's Patriotic Front (PF); ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) and ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) as well as British representatives come together to decide on the future of Zimbabwe (Gregory 13). The Lancaster House Agreement is significant as it "represented a compromise between the very different positions of Britain and the Patriotic Front" (Gregory 15). During negotiations, the Patriotic Front were preoccupied with the issue of land to the point that it almost led to a collapse in the talks (Gregory 16). British and American intervention was offered in the form of financial compensation to white farmers under the banner of 'economic and agricultural development' (Gregory 16). This fund operated between the years of 1980 to 1990. Fuller's memoirs include these years in their narrative but analogise black African suffering and hardship to that of the white settlers' which absolves the settlers of their involvement in the history of colonial dispossession. Fuller's writing is sensually evocative which further perpetuates tropes of Africa as an idyllic space for discontent Europeans.

I explore the consequences and complexities of calling Africa your home as a descendant of settler colonialists and as a white expatriate by putting into conversation Fuller's two later works, *Scribbling the Cat: Travels with an African Soldier* (2004) and *Cocktail Hour under the Tree of Forgetfulness* (2011) which are both discussed less in scholarly research than *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs* (2001). I draw on theories of settler colonialism and whiteness studies to read, analyse and critique Fuller's work. Settler colonial studies or the study of settler colonialism in literature is an emerging field. I engage with theories in the fields of settler colonial studies as well as race and critical whiteness studies by scholars such as Ranka Primorac, Grant Farred, Cuthbeth Tagiwirei, Anne McClintock and Lorenzo Veracini. Primorac's theories on settler colonialism, white memoirs and the performance of 'white African' helps situate Fuller's memoirs in the framework of settler colonial literature. Tagwirei's theory on whiteness and the transcendental nature of its operation in Africa is used to discuss the mobility and displacement of white settlers. Often images of the pastoral (with an obvious emphasis on farming) are invoked to refer to the process of European colonialists

coming to Africa to settle and work the land. Through the act of invoking images of the pastoral, there is a purposeful diversion from the trauma of colonialism and its harmful effects to the idyllic images of pastoral landscapes seemingly unmarked by terror and trauma.

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 provides a literature review of pertinent literature in the fields of settler colonialism and whiteness studies while Chapter 3 examines the form of memoir and the role of memory and nostalgia in the construction of childhood innocence in *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood*. Chapter 4 performs a reading on the limits of innocence particularly within the construction of whiteness and masculinity in Africa and their position in post-independence Zimbabwe in *Scribbling the Cat: Travels with an African Soldier,* while Chapter 5 explores the tragedy of discourse apparent in all three of Fuller's memoirs but which is especially clear in *Cocktail Hour Under the Tree of Forgetfulness*. Fuller's lack of self-consciousness as a white African expatriate of white settler descent results in her positing the idea that Africa is an active place that happens to those (white settlers) living within its borders but is unable to take this idea further and examine it in order to provide critical insight on her and her family's position as white settlers. Fuller is unable to make definitively clear that the very idea of Africa happening to you because it is 'dramatic' is part of a broader idea or network of ideas by which Europe has made sense of Africa. Fuller is an insightful writer but is unable to take this notion further which proves to be a tragedy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

My investigation throughout this thesis relies on literature and theories around settler colonialism and critical whiteness studies to analyse the way in which Fuller evokes the senses in her memoir writing. The evocative, sensually descriptive nature in which she writes Africa perpetrates unexamined tropes of Africa and subverts a history of colonial violence and dispossession. Fuller's memoirs emerged at an turbulent time in Zimbabwe's postcolonial history when Mugabe's controversial land redistribution programme was gaining international media attention. Her memoirs detail her life growing up in a settler colonial family during a time of civil war (the Rhodesian Bush War/War of Independence that took place during the years 1964 – 1979) and the Fuller family's similar experience of land appropriation. In her memoirs, Fuller grapples with issues of belonging and identity as a white African at a time when the expatriate community is filled with uncertainty around the situation in Zimbabwe. Ultimately Fuller does gain critical introspection about the nature of her and her family's own position as white settler colonials in Africa. Reading Fuller's memoirs alongside theories of settler colonialism and whiteness studies allows for a critical investigation of the memoirs and conscious framing of the ways in which Fuller reproduces an unexamined European notion of Africa within her memoirs. This investigation informs the necessary work of postcolonial writing in settler colonial countries like Zimbabwe in order to mediate the inequalities of the past.

Defining settler colonialist studies/settler colonialism

Lorenzo Veracini defines settler colonialism as the integration of colonial people into the land on which they settle: "successful settler colonies 'tame' a variety of wildernesses, end up establishing independent nations, effectively repress, co-opt, and extinguish indigenous alterities, and productively manage ethnic diversity" (3). Veracini states that the difference between colonialism and settler colonialism lies in the fact that while "colonialism *reinforces* the distinction between colony and metropole, settler colonialism *erases* it" (3). Settler colonialism is the process by which white settlers (of European origin) come to settle a colony in a country which already possesses an indigenous population. The settler colonials undergo a partial assimilation within the colony but do not achieve belonging in the same way as the country's indigenous population due to their origins existing outside the colony, from the European mainland. Settler colonialism, rather than erasing altogether the difference between the colony and the mainland as Veracini suggests, exists as a sort of palimpsest as it cannot be

severed from its origins. Veracini illustrates settler colonialism as a continuum ending in the settler's "claim to be no longer settler colonial (they are putatively 'settled' and 'postcolonial' – except that unsettling anxieties remain, and references to a postcolonial condition appear hollow as soon as indigenous disadvantage is taken into account)" (3). Imagining settler colonialism as a continuum is not entirely accurate as Veracini illustrates that even the most complete or 'settled' stage of settler colonialism is still subject to anxieties and tension between settler colonials and the indigenous people. The discrepancies between the power held by the group of settlers and the indigenous population is a tell-tale sign of the effects of settler colonialism and is present throughout Fuller's memoirs. Veracini continues that: "settler colonialism thus covers its tracks and operates towards its self-supersession (this is why, paradoxically, settler colonialism is most recognisable when it is most imperfect – say, 1950s Kenya or 1970s Zimbabwe – and least visible in the settler cities)" (3). As Veracini suggests, settler colonialism does attempt to camouflage itself and erase its own differences from the land in which it presides but this is not an easy task and fraught with tension and anxieties that more often than not show themselves over time (as illustrated in Zimbabwe in the liberation struggle of the 1970s). Fuller's first memoir focuses on the conflict in Zimbabwe during the 1970s when the cracks in the settler society she grew up in begin to make themselves apparent. The distinction between reinforcing or erasing the difference between colony and metropole is pertinent to understanding the nature of belonging that typifies white settlement in Africa. In Zimbabwe during the 1970s, the focus had been on erasing these differences up until then, however, unequal power relations and tensions between racial groups during this time lead to the Rhodesian Bush War[3]. The author's mother (Nicola Fuller) reinforces the differences between the colony and the metropole by claiming the status and freedoms afforded to her as a white settler in Africa.

As a political category, Grant Farred states that the settler "has been consigned, without great regret, to history even as states such as Australia, South Africa, Argentina, the United States, and… Palestine live with ongoing effects of that history" (796). This speaks to Veracini's point about settler colonialism erasing itself, leaving behind the effects of settler colonialism while the settlers themselves assimilate. There has been a resurgence in settler colonial studies on the back of white expatriates writing back to Africa originating from the

[3] The Rhodesian Bush War (also known as Zimbabwe War of Liberation or the Second Chimurenga) took place between 1969 and 1980 and saw the white minority government come into conflict with the black nationalists represented by the ZANU and ZAPU parties.

United States, United Kingdom and Africa which disrupts the settler's position as historical (Rasch's *Postcolonial Nostalgia: The Ambiguities of White Memoirs of Zimbabwe* 2018, Muponde and Primorac's *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture* 2005). Farred questions: "why is it that the settler can never be settled, that the settler can never be made autochthonous to the land?" but instead "always bears the mark of difference… (the *pied noir* in Algeria, the Afrikaner in South Africa, the Protestant in Northern Ireland, the Jew in Palestine)" (798). Farred answers his question with the notion of history preventing the settler from ultimately settling. This history is one of violence and of the settlement which necessitated this violence. However, it is not just time that prevents the settler from settling, nor is the goal confined to merely settling but possession in imperial conquest. Farred states that:

> the settler can never live alone on the land; instead of being made autochthonous to, in, and through the act of arrival and return, the settler is always disconnected, at the precise moment, from the very land to which he or she claims title. For the settler, the time before persistently presents itself as the only time that matters, the time that unsettles the settler, the time that cannot be passed. Settlement marks a kind of infinity because it represents, due to its foundational violence, the time that will not pass – and cannot be passed – away (799).

The settler colonial's way of life and their ownership of the land (both forming part of their settlement in Africa) is not only at odds with its own history (and its foreignness) but also the surrounding landscape. The landscape the settlement inhabits is marked by the violent history of colonial dispossession and forced removals of the indigenous populations who lived on the land prior to the arrival of white settlers. The domination and power the settler exerts over their surroundings in order to define their settlement in Africa also creates a divide. The violence of settlement is understood in terms of the violence that was used in order to create the settlement (inclusive of the display and enactment of power over the indigenous population) and is shown to be the reason that the settler can never truly be at one with the land as it is impossible to disregard the history of violence. A vicious circle is formed between settler belonging and settler colonialism as a structure of violence: the structural violence of settler colonialism results in the uneasy inhabitation of the settler colonial in Africa but this uneasy belonging on the part of the settler is used to obscure the structural violence of settler colonialism. This complicates Fuller's construction of innocence and the nostalgia she feels for her childhood home as she cannot remove herself fully from the circumstances of the settler colonial mindset into which she was born. The structural violence of the settler presence can only ever allow the settler to possess the land but does not allow for the settler to fully be at home because the land

will always be a possession acquired through circumstances that mark the land. The nature of structural violence means that there is not just one incident of violence but rather continuous systemic violence that maintains the proprietorship of the settled land. This has historically been maintained through economic, political and legal means. The maintenance of structural violence by settler colonials ensures continued ownership and superiority ultimately prohibits belonging.

Settlers may have come to Africa with a desire to become naturalized Africans but their 'naturalization' is a choice and their agency sets them apart from the indigenous population who did not have a choice in the matter but rather were forced to live within the enforced colonial structure. Farred cites Patrick Wolfe's sentiment about the systemic nature of settler colonialism: "Settler colonialism is a structure, not an event" (799). This notion of settler colonialism as a structure rather than an event offers an explanation for the intractability of white settler belonging in Africa explored by Alexandra Fuller in her memoirs. Violence, specifically anti-black violence, is an effect of this structure that remains in place even after the settler colonials have returned to the metropoles. I show how Fuller's focus on the pastoral qualities of the land, childhood, innocence, and a nostalgic longing for home, function as a way of erasing the history of settler colonial violence associated with the landscape through the invocation of "innocence". The notion of white innocence is explored in Gloria Wekker's *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (2016) in the context of the Netherlands but is it is also relevant to discourse relating to Southern Africa. Wekker states; "Imperialist nostalgia is a condition in which colonizers mourn the passing of that they themselves have altered, destroyed or transformed" (109). It uses the appeal of innocence to capture the mind of people and to conceal a history of domination. Wekker continues to illustrate that the reason for the success of imperial nostalgia is its ability to a solicit a "register of innocence" through which "the responsible imperial agent is transformed into the innocent bystander, masking his involvement with the processes of domination" (109).

Rhodesian discourse and settler discourse both contain elements of imperialist nostalgia which, in turn, invoke the notion of innocence on the part of the settler. Lena Englund refers to "Rhodesian discourse" and "settler discourse" as being interchangeable as they both fall under the umbrella term "colonial discourse" (76). Two critics, Ranka Primorac and Murenga Joseph Chikowero, believe that Fuller's memoir, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, "*performs* settler

discourse and ideology" while Englund posits instead that it is a "*portrayal* of settler discourse… [and] Fuller's own childhood and upbringing" (Englund 77). The key distinction between performing and portraying settler discourse is the implied complicity that comes with performing a discourse. The distinction is important as it is indicative of the connotations that come with Fuller's writing of the past. Fuller is self-conscious in her account of her childhood experiences. Fuller is simultaneously conscious of the racist settler colonial discourse in her memoirs originating from her parents but is avoidant in her writing and does not explicitly critique them, leaving this judgement to fall to the reader. Fuller's use of the voice of childhood leads to a construction of innocence from which she can recount the settler discourse prevalent in her childhood. I argue that Fuller both performs and portrays settler discourse. On one hand, Fuller is conscious of her parents' settler colonial ideology and the way in which this bleeds into her childhood and upbringing but she does not ultimately critique these notions satisfactorily, leaving the reader to come to their own conclusions. Englund posits the following question about Fuller's memoir: "whether the overt racism present in her childhood and the nostalgia expressed by her adult self are irrevocable elements of the past" (77). The nostalgic longing for the past is linked to the time of childhood (characterized by definite belonging) before doubt and notions of identity come into question. Fuller's nostalgia for childhood is a longing for a time in which the white settler colonial society into which she was born were more certain of their belonging as they believed in their right to occupy Africa. Fuller does attempt to reconcile the racism of her childhood with her adulthood nostalgia for her past but instead uses the innocence of childhood to avoid coming to conclusions about herself and her family's role in white-ruled Rhodesia. The act of Fuller writing to the past, a time of childhood, is a method used to diminish some of Fuller's complicity through the innocence of the child's voice but Fuller is not the only white writer to do this. Peter Godwin invokes a similar sense of innocence in his memoir *Mukiwa: A White Boy in Africa* (1996) detailing his experience of growing up in Rhodesia in the 1960s during a period of violent transformation.

In Fuller's memoirs the experience of the Fuller family's trauma and loss strengthens their ties to the land and makes a case for the history of suffering equating to ownership and belonging. Fuller uses their history of suffering to make concrete their ownership of, and belonging to, the land as the process of bleeding, sweating and mourning fortifies their perceived deservingness. The power dynamics between the colonisers and the colonised are inherent to the nature of settler colonialism. Benedict Anderson articulates in *The Spectre of*

Comparisons that "the spectre of comparisons becomes sort of a double-consciousness or an inverted telescope through which one can see oneself only through the gaze of the dominant culture; the colonial power thus haunts the post- and anti-colonists' gaze" (as cited in Lubin 672). The spectral quality of Anderson's comparison can be likened to Edward Said's notion of Orientalism in which Orientalists "constitute and haunt the discursive field of Orientalism so that the perception of the Orient is always mediated by someone else's construct" (Lubin 673).

In Edward Said's *The Question of Palestine* he writes that "according to Israeli sources, in 1822 there were no more than 24 000 Jews in Palestine, less than 10 percent of the whole, overwhelming Arab population… these Arabs were usually described as uninteresting and undeveloped, but at least they were there" (9). This dismissive attitude towards the preexisting population of Arabs meant that "Palestine was seen as a place to be possessed *anew* and reconstructed" (Said 9). Anne McClintock posits that the invention of race and imperialism were both fundamental characteristics of Western industrial modernity and used to police anyone who was not middle-class (any "dangerous classes" such as "the working-class, the Irish, Jews" or other minorities) (5). This dismissive attitude towards already occupied land by people deemed unworthy of ownership is indicative of a settler colonialist attitude as it does not hold industrial or imperial benefits. Said reiterates the presence of settler colonialism in Israel's history: "despite the steady arrival in Palestine of Jewish colonists after 1882, it is important to realise that not until the few weeks immediately preceding the establishment of Israel in the spring of 1948 was there ever anything other than a huge Arab majority" (Said 11). Said and McClintock both illustrate how the introduction of settler colonialism combined with the construct of race is used as a means of policing and subjugating the indigenous population so as to facilitate Western modernity's progress in the shape of white settlement.

Land, notions of ownership and belonging in white Zimbabwe

Since the occupation and colonisation of Rhodesia[4] by Cecil John Rhodes, land ownership has historically rested with the white settler population while the black African population was forced to live on arid and inhospitable land. The notions of ownership and belonging in white Rhodesia are linked, by Cuthbeth Tagwirei, to the space of the farm. The

[4] Rhodesia, previously separated into Southern Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe) and Northern Rhodesia (later Zambia), was colonised and occupied by Cecil John Rhodes in 1889 before its independence from Britain under white minority rule was declared in 1965.

farm is figured in literature as a place of belonging for white Rhodesians. Renouncing their farm would be akin to surrendering their nationality or ties to the land. Tagwirei states that "several white identities – exile, refugee and settler − are seen to coalesce in these discourses of ownership and/as belonging and they all point to an ambivalence of belonging to Zimbabwe. In its crudest form, belonging occurs inside the parameters of the fence that marks the boundary of the farm" (Tagwirei 94). The farm becomes "an assigned place, one which the government has conferred upon the white man, and a self-entitled place, one to which the white farmer has earned the right to belong permanently" (Tagwirei 95). The space of the farm becomes the very symbol of settlement for the white farmer in Zimbabwe. This is the linking point to which Fuller tethers her first memoir, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, to the contemporary moment of Zimbabwe's land redistribution programme in the early 2000s. *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* was published in 2001 which coincided with Robert Mugabe's government's reclaiming white-owned farms. Fuller's first memoir engages with this context with the title of the book playing with the phrase "going to the dogs" which means falling into ruin. This title comes from lines by A.P. Herbert, an English humourist, which appear at the beginning of the book: "Don't let's go to the dogs tonight,/ For mother will be there". This title works on two levels: it is a foreshadowing of Fuller's fraught relationship with her mother which is explored in *Cocktail Hour Under the Tree of Forgetfulness,* as well as voicing what many white Zimbabweans and expatriates may have been thinking in the wake of land reclamation by Mugabe's government.

While the pastoral focuses on the idyllic attributes of the landscape which include lush flora reminiscent of the English countryside, Fuller's description of Africa is one that is saturated with constant suffering and hardship (largely her family's and to a lesser extent the indigenous population). In *Zimbabwe's New Diaspora: Displacement and the Cultural Politics of Survival* (2010), Ranka Primorac's chapter "Rhodesians Never Die? The Zimbabwe Crisis and the Revival of Rhodesian Discourse" explores the ways "recent texts by displaced authors who claim Zimbabwean identities - most prominently in recent years, Peter Godwin and Alexandra Fuller – may be related to (gendered) blueprints for the performance of 'white African' identities reminiscent of the colonial era" (204). Primorac states that through the use of grammar and imagery the Zimbabwean rural landscape is depicted as "an essentially white space" (210). Primorac goes on to argue that Fuller's memoir, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, "tells an all-white narrative, and locates a sense of belonging in white settlers' hard

work, resilience, solidarity and sense of humour" (211). This highlights the machismo of the settler colonial mindset which aligns "belonging" with having earned it through hard work (ironically the status and power of being white in Africa is not obtained through hard work). The suffering that the indigenous people endure as a result of settler colonialism and the suffering of the settler cannot be equated. In this example, suffering is shown to possess a degree of utility within settler colonial writing and, in Fuller's work, is used to garner the sympathies of the reader. Fuller's descriptions represent Africa through the use of stereotypes that align with the international media's depiction of African countries as being chronically undeveloped places as a result of what McClintock terms "revamped economic imperialism" by which ex-colonies become poorer and former European colonial powers become richer (393). The Fuller family, and many other families, are seen surviving through trauma, loss, suffering and poverty by sheer force of will.

The issue of land in Zimbabwe creates a divide between the colonisers and the colonised. Farred states that "land constitutes, after the subject's body, the most critical site of the biopolitical because it determines the conditions of life for both the imperialist and the colonized" (Farred 796). In *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock writes about the extent colonised land was treated like a projection of the colonial subject's body (most often women) which needed to be (forcibly) dominated and controlled (3). The settler colonialist holds their ties to the land as imperative: "the settler is not only intent on rooting himself, against the temporal force of history, as it were, into the land: making himself and all (his) subsequent generations integral to – at home in, a part *of* – the land so that land, through the passage of time, becomes the settler's (is owned by the settler; is made, as it were, in the settler's industrial and 'industrious' image)" (Farred 797).

The active process of settling and husbanding the land in the image of the settler is at odds with the state of the land as a possession rather than a home. The settler constructs a house and fences off the perimeter of the land as the perimeter requires physical defences in order to support the settler's claim from constant external threats from the landscape and the surrounding indigenous population. The settler then justifies their claim to land as a reward for the fruits of their labour. David Hughes states that white Rhodesians acclimatised to Africa "through their imaginative project…on broadly environmental terms. By fixating on the land, white writers and their readers exile from their minds the *social* exile in which they lived. No

essential law dictated a zero-sum game, but myopia toward society correlated within 20/20 vision for nature" (5). Hughes makes the point that a fixation on land hides the power dynamics and violence involved in the acquiring of the land. Hughes states that Euro-African writers with ties to the West focus on land often depicted through images of the pastoral: "[w]hether critical or celebratory, the canon of Euro-African writing continues to centre on rural life, entangled with landforms and biota" (4). The writing of white settlers focuses on the land, as their possession, in order to draw attention away from the processes of violence that preceded or the settler's unease that they will never fully call the land home due to the (violent) process of their settling. As part of the process of husbanding the land and claiming it as a possession there is a disappearing presence of the black African people (and therefore labour) on the land (Coetzee 16-17). The space of the farm is framed as a place of white settlement on the land with black Africans appearing in the roles of labourers and criminals.

Writing home through acts of remembering: the childhood memoir

Nostalgia functions as a window into a pristine space of memory that operates beyond geographical and temporal limits. Ashleigh Harris points out that the subtitle of Fuller's memoir *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* is "An African Childhood" which creates a carefully considered position for Fuller before reading has begun as it "provide[s] a nostalgic frame for the text… perhaps because nostalgia gives authenticity to the inscription of the white self into the nexus of discourses that constitute Zimbabwean identity" (108). Harris states that the function of nostalgia, especially that of a Zimbabwean childhood "allows the writer to imagine a space of political and racial innocence and naïveté; a prelapsarian state of unquestioned belonging as a white child in Zimbabwe or Rhodesia. Nostalgia demarcates the space, both temporally and geographically, that delineates 'home'" (108). Delving into the innocent state of childhood allows for a white writer like Fuller to examine her childhood whilst having the option to avoid delving into the politics of growing up white in a racially charged Zimbabwe. Harris goes on to state that writing childhood memories functions as a claim to the land: "writing of the memories of childhood, whether nostalgic or traumatic, and descriptions of childhood belonging… allows authors to inscribe their identities as white Zimbabweans into that country's history, and permits them to write Zimbabwe as 'home'" (117).

Harris posits that memory functions as being "crucially implicated in the inscription of the self into/onto Zimbabwe's land and history" (108). The notion of belonging is centred

around the recounting of childhood memories: "belonging is justified by and embedded in the narration of childhood memory" (Harris 109). Fuller's efforts to advocate her belonging presents through the "narration of [her] childhood experiences in a place that denies [her] belonging, and offers no recourse to the discourse of reconciliation and redemption through which to articulate white identity". This in turn "becomes a means to inscribe [her]self into the historical, political, and geographical landscape of Zimbabwe" (Harris 109). This positioning by Fuller is pertinent as *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* was published in 2001 which is described by Harris as being "a year in which there was a proliferation of speech, writing and reportage on the controversial land redistribution programme in Zimbabwe… the climate of threat for a white Zimbabwean population has been exacerbated in the last few years and the possibility of reconciliation has been destroyed" (113). Harris points out that "Fuller is overt in claiming a white Zimbabwean identity from the outset… she acknowledges the cultural displacement experienced by white, English-speaking Zimbabweans" (113). Fuller's childhood memoir does not attempt to function as a means through which to erase guilt due to her position as a white Zimbabwean. Instead her "writing of childhood memory is personally, rather than historically, redemptive" (Harris 116). Fuller's belonging is corroborated by childhood memory; however, while Harris states that she does not attempt to erase her guilt, the very nature of nostalgic childhood memoir taps into elements of the prelapsarian state of childhood where Fuller's identity as a white Rhodesian had not yet been dislocated.

Fuller's first memoir (*Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*) about her childhood in Africa was written while she was living in the United States which brings into question her positionality. Unlike the indigenous populations of Africa, white settler farmers were amicably received in the United States, Australia and South Africa. The displacement and dispossession of white farmers, while traumatic, cannot be read through the same lens as the experiences of black African people. Harris argues that:

> a very different mode of writing white Zimbabwean identity can be seen to emerge alongside, and perhaps because of, the international media's construction of white Zimbabweans as victims of, and in, their 'homeland'. Fuller living in the United States, clearly writes into such constructions since her text articulates white Zimbabwean identity through a discourse of victimhood: an articulation that is in danger of obfuscating the complexities of Zimbabwean racial history (117).

Fuller's memoir is writing into the space created by the international media's portrayal of Zimbabwe under Mugabe's regime as her family lost their farm through a similar process of

land redistribution. However, Fuller does, somewhat painstakingly at times, include detailed sections that delve into Zimbabwe's complex racial history, perhaps in an attempt to provide a more holistic view of the issue and shine a light on her own positionality. Harris states that Fuller's book fulfils the function of being personally redemptive rather than historically redemptive; however, Fuller's positionality begs the question whether this perceived victimhood was used to avoid historical guilt. Fuller is self-conscious of her positionality as a white person who has grown up in Africa in her writing. A re-imagined childhood allows for the Fuller to depict the ugliness of the past while distancing herself from blame (a recounting of memory without guilt). Tagwirei argues that this "consciousness in white Zimbabwean narratives has several functions" one of which is that "it gives the author license to depict ugly aspects of the Rhodesian past" (Tagwirei 141). Tony Simoes da Silva argues that *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* "draws unashamedly, and provocatively, on colonial vocabulary and narrative tropes of the White person's love affair with Africa" (473 as cited in Englund 76). Fuller contrasts her mother's experience growing up in Kenya during the Happy Valley era to her own upbringing in Rhodesia. In the comparison, Fuller distances herself (as an adult) from some aspects of "colonial vocabulary and narrative tropes" inherited from her mother but simultaneously perpetuates narratives of harsh, unforgiving African landscapes and impoverished black African populations. The meaning of Africa for the white person cannot be assumed to be the same as the one experienced by Africa's black population. Fuller and her family settled on land and through their suffering to make and continue to call the land home, earned their place of belonging on the land. Fuller's memories and nostalgia for her childhood are what keeps her love of Africa intact even from her home in the United States.

Whiteness: an ephemeral experience in Africa, displacement, non-belonging and ties to the land

Whiteness in Africa is characterised by its transient nature and this reflects in Fuller's memoirs. In *Bringing the Empire Home: Race, Class and Gender in Britain and Colonial South Africa* (2004) Zine Magubane argues that the construction of race was a colonial project and that whiteness as an identity was forged through the othering of black people in the colonies (139). The nature of whiteness in the colonies is shown to be characterised by its mobility. Tagwirei states: "Fuller's [memoir] represents whiteness as an ephemeral experience. The meaning of whiteness is mediated through perpetual physical movement as whites travel from one point to another" (Tagwirei 151). Tagwirei makes a connection between the function of whiteness in Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa as visible in Rhodesian land policies which

are similar to those in apartheid South Africa. Tagwirei argues that "in critical whiteness studies, the absence of visibility associated with whiteness is revealed as a function of hegemonic normalization; 'non-whites' are visibly 'other' only under a discursive and material regime that stigmatizes deviations from the supposed norm" (Tagwirei 152-153). Whiteness operates as the norm, which renders it invisible while anyone who is 'non-white' is recognised as visibly different and othered. An example of the ideological purity of whiteness in the colonies details the relationship between the British and the Dutch: "When the Dutch were kind, progressive, or enterprising they were 'white'; when they were mean, backward, or retrograde they were 'black" (Magubane 139). In this instance, the terms "white" and "black" refer more to the exhibition of desirable behaviour (or lack thereof) rather than relating to the colour of the individual's skin or geographical origins. Whiteness in academia has historically been met with normative blindness resulting in unawareness around the role of race, the privileges it affords white people, how it shapes lives and ultimately society (Steyn xxvi). This othering that Tagwirei discusses is similar to that practiced in apartheid South Africa: "in Rhodesia, whiteness was visible in land policies in which, similar to apartheid style, the materiality of social life was explicitly marked 'white' and 'non-white'" (Tagwirei 153). Tagwirei goes on to state the importance of movement in both groups: "for colonial whites, just as much as for the blacks depicted in Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, movement is a constitutive trope through which one's race-bound identity – here, whiteness – is understood as unstable and fluid. This idea is consistent with the make-up of erstwhile Rhodesian society, which was by its very nature a community of immigrants. At various stages in the life of the colony, whites were always coming in and going out again" (Tagwirei 173). This theme of movement features strongly throughout Fuller's memoirs. Movement is shown to play an important part in the Fuller family's life, however; it does not help create a sense of belonging in Africa. The Fuller family's "movement from one farm to another exacerbated this sense of displacement and alienation. The land that they farm is never a source of stability for them since they are constantly uprooted; moving from Karoi to the Burma Valley farm called Robandi, from Robandi to Devuli, from Devuli to a tobacco farm in Malawi, and from Malawi to Zambia. The family thus interact with the land they farm more as *bywoners* (tenant farmers) than as landowners and as their relationship with the land becomes increasingly transitory, the landscape is described as increasingly hostile" (Harris 115). This mounting hostility exuded by the "African landscape seems to parallel the Fuller's family's sense that the Zimbabwean nation is increasingly hostile to white farmers" (Harris 115). In *Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used to*

Be: White Identity in A Changing South Africa, Melissa Steyn articulates the necessity of examining whiteness as a construct:

> A core trope in the powerful master narratives that played out their domination both internally, and also internally within nation states, through modern colonial times, is a construct of 'whiteness'…turning the critical gaze on the dark center of whiteness is a necessary, but still embryonic, part of the postcolonial undertaking (xxviii).

Steyn posits that the postcolonial work moving forward is to examine whiteness against othered identities: "[i]f colonial narratives provided the social identity of whiteness, postcolonial narratives must help to redefine and complicate identities for those interpellated by discourses of whiteness, by bringing them into dialogue with 'other' identities" (xxviii). While Veracini suggests the necessary postcolonial work involves an erasure of otherness: "colonised 'others' must cease being perceived as fundamentally docile and indigenous people must cease being and being understood as inherently vulnerable and endangered" (10). Fuller does not do the work entailed in either of these suggestions but instead focuses on the sensory experience that the form of the memoir facilitates.

Trauma (national and personal) is shown to encourage movement in Fuller's memoir. Counterintuitively, migration strengthens the Fullers' claim of an African identity. Harris argues against Fuller's childhood memories being exclusively nostalgic as the personal traumas that she and her family face prevents this from being possible (116). The deaths of the Fuller children become entwined with the Fullers' loss of land, therefore, movement can be seen to serve as a means of healing resulting in an increased attachment with the land forming through the necessary need for constant reinvention. Harris states that "[g]iven the link that Fuller draws between birth and land, it is not surprising that the deaths of the three Fuller babies are connected to the family's losses of land… In each case it is Africa that claims the lives of these babies" (115). These deaths are through illness and accident rather than any physical acts of violence. Tagwirei also makes the connection between trauma and movement in Fuller's memoir *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*: "they are never settled in one place for a very long time; paradoxically, however, these traumas, and the migrations to which they lead, strengthen rather than weaken their claims to an African identity… Incidentally, each death results in a deliberate physical move in search of healing and an increased sense of attachment to the African land that has claimed the children's lives" (173). Tagwirei states that the death of the Fuller children combined with "loss of land and white privilege stimulate the Fullers'

need to re-invent themselves through movement" (173). For Fuller these traumas cement the Fuller family's ties to Africa: "[t]he land that takes these children is the homeland; not through a nostalgic memory of childhood or idealistic reinvention of the relationship to the land, but through the personal trauma experienced there" (Harris 115). While the Fuller family's movement contributed to their sense of displacement it also, (aided by the personal and political trauma experienced), helped to strengthen the Fuller family's sense of belonging to the land. The white settler's dispossession and migrations are not the same as the black African's experience because personal trauma strengthens their attachment to the land while the black African's trauma is structured to keep them outsiders to the land.

Tagwirei posits the notion of the "transnational condition of whites" which he describes to be a reaction to "the inability for whites to find a stable residence in Africa as they are either displaced or exiled" (173). In *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, "the attainment of independence by blacks is immediately followed by a white exodus, a response Fuller finds characteristic of white Afrikaners whose children are the first to leave [Fuller]'s white-only school… Mobility is rendered as an integral aspect of white existence" (Tagwirei 173-174). Tagwirei illustrates why movement and migration cannot be read in the same way for white settlers and black Africans. Tagwirei argues that while "the Fullers do not immediately leave Zimbabwe, their fate as part of a migrant white culture is sealed when they lose their farm through the Zimbabwean government's land redistribution programme, seen as a programme of black appeasement" during the early 1980s (174). Tagwirei claims that Fuller's *Don't Let's go to the Dogs Tonight* ultimately points out "that whiteness is anything but bounded. On the contrary, it is in constant flux." (178). White people are able to move more freely in the world that receives and belongs to them with an ease that is not afforded to black people, therefore, the two cannot be equated at the level of discourse. Historically for black subjects migration has been forced through slavery or violent displacement. Homi Bhabha states in "The White Stuff" that "to reveal *within* the very integuments of 'whiteness' the agonistic elements that make it the unsettled, disturbed form of authority that it is – the incommensurable 'differences' that it must surmount; the histories of trauma and terror that it must perpetuate and from which it must protect itself; the amnesia it imposes on itself; the violence it inflicts in the process of becoming a transparent and transcendent force of authority" (21). Bhabha is calling for a more in-depth interrogation of the notion of whiteness as it is revealed to be a perpetrator in a historical legacy of terror and trauma from which it too needs to protection.

White African identity and the 'brutality' of the wilderness

Fuller exhibits caution when claiming her African identity as she is astutely aware of it being accompanied by her white European ancestry. In *Strategies of Representation in Auto/biography: Reconstructing and Remembering* (2014) M.J. Chikowero's chapter "We Were Little Kings in Rhodesia' Rhodesian Discourse and Representations of Colonial Violence…" examines two works (*Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* and *Kandaya*) to determine "the values, anxieties, ambiguities and fractured identities betrayed by white characters' relation to Africa even as they actively seek to suppress black nationalist movements during the last days of the colonial era" (119-200). Ultimately, Chikowero concludes that Fuller is claiming "victimhood", which is true in a sense, but needs to be understood in the circumstances in which this white victimhood in Africa arises (131-132). Both Primorac and Chikowero discuss the issue of Zimbabwean/Rhodesian identities and how they have been affected by dispersal of the community subsequent to independence and later Mugabe's land reform which began in 2000 (Englund 76). Although a problematic construction exists in the West, that Africa can be essentialised, Fuller does not align herself to one country in Africa but rather the continent itself. Doris Lessing states that "[a]ll white literature is the literature of exile, not from Europe but from Africa" (700). I believe Lessing is articulating that to claim belonging in Africa as a white person is, quite simply, a complicated and contested matter. Tagwirei states that "Fuller inscribes her whiteness into Africa, as opposed to the nation-state, as a way of coming to terms with the ephemeral experience of whiteness. While she embraces her multiple heritages, which include European pasts, she insists on her Africanness while simultaneously remaining suspicious of such an identity in view of the vastness and varied nature of the continent" (Tagwirei 179). Tagwirei highlights that Fuller acknowledges "the ambivalence that her whiteness provokes in this regard, but nevertheless inscribes her identity in transnational space when she says: 'I appreciated that we, as whites, could not own a piece of Africa, but I knew, with startling clarity, that Africa owned me'" (Fuller as cited in Tagwirei 179). Englund believes this passage to be "ambiguous, as it is clear that Fuller would still like to claim an African identity—and also to some extent sees herself entitled to it—but admits that it would cause too much controversy" (80). Fuller is avoidant in making clear claims about her identity or her and her family's position in Africa. White settlers are troubled by their inability to no longer live comfortably in Africa as a white person and not because they can no longer claim to be African. Fuller is not merely someone who is distanced from her 'home' but an example of white people in Africa who decide to break their ties with Africa voluntarily as their whiteness is no longer concretized by the power relations. The

colonial structure protected white settlers in their power through their being white and African but without this structure in place, this power dynamic cannot be sustained.

The brutal history associated with settler colonialism and the structure of violence that allowed for white settlers to settle in Africa is often overlooked like in the case of Fuller's memoirs. Another example of this is in Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull*, where she writes of her reaction to the natural landscape after hearing of a case where a man lost his wife and children in an explosion caused by a landmine:

> out on to the stoep overlooking Nelspruit. I gasp for breath. Like two underwater swimmers, my eyes burst out to the horizons ... the mountains lit in a blushing light-blue hedge of peace. I am drowning. My eyes claw at the trees, the kloofs ... see, smell ... the landscape of paradise and a language from paradise: *mispel, maroela, tarentaal,* I whisper. The air is drowsy with jasmine and *kanferfoelie.* I sit down on the steps and everything tears out of me (Krog 48-49).

The phrase "landscape of paradise" comes layered with irony as Krog has just been privy to a testimony proving the landscape, under its beautiful exterior, holds a history of extreme violence. Krog's concentration on the pastoral quality of the landscape juxtaposes the beauty with the brutality which has parallels with Fuller's descriptions of the landscape amidst war and accompanying violence. The death of the Fuller children is a trauma that similarly connects the white Fuller family to the land. Similarly, in his book *White Writing*, J.M. Coetzee argues that pastoral art functions as a mechanism for asserting the values of the Edenic garden: "[t]o pastoral art the West has assigned the task of asserting the virtues of the garden – simplicity, peace, immemorial usage – against the vices of the city: luxury, competitiveness, novelty. In the variety known as georgic, the pastoral also holds up the garden in bloom against the garden in decay, the garden degenerating into wilderness" (Coetzee 4). Coetzee positions this narrative in the context of South Africa where the pastoral "looks back, usually in the spirit of nostalgia, to the calm and stability of the farm, as still point mediate between the wilderness of lawless nature and the wilderness of the new cities; it holds up the time of the forefathers as an exemplary age when the garden of myth became actualized in history" (Coetzee 4). There are clear links to the idyllic garden of Eden (imbued with verdant abundance to which the pastoral aspires). This place of myth existed during the Halcyon age when the settlers could claim their 'rightful' (sanctioned by God through settler narratives) place (land) in Africa solely through their hard work and determination. Coetzee's description is found to reflect true in other areas of Southern Africa including Fuller's work which is a "literature of… unsettled settlers" where

“the retrospective gaze of the pastoral has understandably proved more reassuring than the prospective gaze of its twin genre, the utopia” (Coetzee 4).

In the following chapters, I rely on the frameworks provided by settler colonial studies and whiteness studies in order to discuss the ways in which Alexandra Fuller’s memoirs recount an unexamined European notion of Africa; as a place filled with excitement and possibility for white settlers. Chapter 3 performs a reading of memoir as a form and the functions of nostalgia in *Don’t Let’s Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood*. Chapter 4 examines the limits of innocence specifically relating to the construction of whiteness and masculinity in *Scribbling the Cat: Travels with an African Soldier*. Chapter 5 implements an analysis of the tragedy of discourse in *Cocktail Hour Under the Tree of Forgetfulness* in the ways that Fuller perpetuates unexamined tropes of Africa like the dichotomy between civilization and wilderness.

Chapter 3: Understanding Memoir: An exploration of memoir as a form and its function in *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood*

Alexandra Fuller's use of memoir as a form allows her to straddle the divide between truth and fiction while avoiding hard truths or ultimately commenting on the position of her settler colonial family. Fuller's return to childhood, a time of innocence, in her memoir allows for a narrative that avoids the guilt and complicity that accompanies being a colonial subject. Fuller's first memoir, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood* (2001) (henceforth referred to as *Don't Let's Go*) recounts a nostalgic childhood inspired by growing up white in pre-independence Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). The memoir is positioned between history and novelistic truth, which is both an advantage and disadvantage. The advantage of this position is that Fuller is able to play within the realm of memory and switch between first person and third person narrative as well as past and present which allows simultaneously for insight but also a shift of responsibility for the history of colonial dispossession as Fuller is able to distance herself from the subject matter she describes. The disadvantage is that memoir is imbued with neither the factual authority of history nor the literary authority of the novel. Fuller's memoirs and her innocence as an observer prevent her from saying anything definitive about Rhodesia/Zimbabwe's colonial legacy of dispossession. Fuller's memoirs are filled with rich sensory descriptions of the landscape and the people who inhabit it. Anthropologist David Sutton devised a term called "polytemporality" to describe the way memory affects a person's senses. Polytemporality illustrates how "the present moment seems to 'hum' with memories of past words and past times" (472). The unstable nature of memoir favours the senses (Sutton 470), which proves to be a limitation, and in doing so displaces the history of Africa as well as the narrative of colonial dispossession. I draw on scholars like Svetlana Boym, Ranka Primorac and Anthony Chennells's theories on nostalgia to aid in my analysis of Fuller's memoir in the context of white writing.

Fuller's memoirs include details from her own observations and memory as well historical facts which she melds together without clearly condemning or condoning any point of view. This approach is illustrated in her description of how Cecil John Rhodes 'acquired' Zimbabwe:

> Between 1889 and 1893, British settlers moving up from South Africa, under the steely, acquiring eye of Cecil John Rhodes, had been … What word can I use? I suppose it

> depends on who you are. I could say: Taking? Stealing? Settling? Homesteading? Appropriating? Whatever the word is, they had been doing it to a swath of country they now called Rhodesia. Before that, the land had been movable, shifting under the feet of whatever victorious tribe now danced on its soil, taking on new names and freshly stolen cattle, absorbing the blood and bodies of whoever was living, breathing, birthing, dying upon it. The land itself, of course, was careless of its name. It still is. You can call it what you like, fight all the wars you want in its name. Change its name altogether if you like. The land is still unblinking under the African sky. It will absorb white man's blood and the blood of African men, it will absorb blood from slaughtered cattle and the blood from a woman's birthing with equal thirst. It doesn't care (26-27).

Fuller's addendum "I suppose it depends on who you are", points to the ideological discrepancy between how the settler colonials viewed their settling of the land and how this was and continues to be viewed by the indigenous black population already settled on the land. Fuller illustrates a picture of the visceral nature of the African land (invoked by images of soil and blood (from birth and death) as she constructs a metaphor in which the African landscape is uninterested in the 'petty' squabbles being played out over territory and is undiscerning about whose blood its soil will absorb because ultimately "it doesn't care" (27). Fuller's choice to focus her memoir writing on the sensuous, visceral nature of the African landscape means that she can avoid commenting on the history or narrative of colonial dispossession ascribed onto the land. The land may not care but it is unlikely that Fuller herself has no thoughts on this process as she spent her childhood in Southern Africa and some of her adulthood in the United States, affording her distance and perspective to examine the colonial narrative.

Memoir is an ultimately nostalgic literary form which Fuller uses to write back to the time of childhood through memory. In the case of Fuller's memoirs, nostalgia and whiteness should be read together as Fuller's writing falls into the category of postcolonial writing characterized by navigating the colonial past in order to make sense of her identity in changing times. Nostalgia is a consequential response to the experience of ideological and material change coupled with collective uncertainty. Fuller's first memoir emerges onto the literary market in the early 2000s during a time characterised by disorientation and uncertainty especially amongst the white expatriate population as they witnessed Robert Mugabe's land redistribution programme come into effect from afar. Fuller writes back to the time of her childhood that no longer exists in the post-independence context of Zimbabwe. Fuller's nostalgic memoir writing is a way of delaying change when faced with an indeterminate future. Fuller's act of memoir writing is borne in part from the anxiety of uncertainty coupled with the

already uneasy sense of belonging experienced in Africa as a white person. The plea in the memoir's title "don't let's go to the dogs tonight" echoes the fear of the country falling into disarray if it were to fall under black rule.

The inclusion of "An African Childhood" in the title links Fuller to claims of belonging in Africa and having a traceable African identity. The nature of Fuller's childhood as specifically African romanticises her experience in Africa in the eyes of a Western audience from the outset as Fuller is a white woman who has grown up among a black majority in Southern Africa, which brings up questions of belonging. The use of the article "an" is indicative of Fuller's childhood in Africa being a rarified experience. The experiences of war, trauma and loss described in Fuller's memoir are framed as merely coming with the territory. This 'territory' aligns with the idea of Africa as a dark, wild continent and notions of wilderness which will be explored in Chapter 4. "An" is distancing, as if describing something not fully settled. It is also observant and to a degree, voyeuristic and anthropological. It is a childhood that describes belonging from a place of unease. Fuller describes the African landscape of her childhood with an intensity that suggests the precarious existence that comes with living through a war and experiencing the effects of losing that war: "Lost. Like something that falls between the crack in the sofa. Like something that drops out of your pocket. And after all that praying and singing and hours on our knees, too" (146). War is a predominant theme in the memoir and it causes unease and uncertainty within the Fuller family with the Fuller parents being described as going to sleep with loaded guns besides their bed. This sense of unease and uncertainty is mirrored in the time of Fuller's publication of her first memoir in 2001 when Zimbabwe's future appeared uncertain, especially for its white population. The settlement that doesn't fully settle and subsequently creates unease is seen throughout Fuller's memoir. The settler colonial settlement is seen to be locked in conflict with wilderness though the ties to the land remain dogged. Primorac states that Fuller's narrative of "personal memory [is] used as a means of critiquing the dominant version of Zimbabwean nationalism" (211). Fuller's return to an anxiety-driven childhood is used as a way of critiquing the contemporary Zimbabwean nationalism found in the international media. This particular version of Zimbabwean nationalism, prevalent during the early 2000s when the memoir was published, is characterised by authoritarian rule that was rooted in anti-colonial nationalism during the struggle for Zimbabwean independence. During this time there was a demand for extreme loyalty towards the ruling party; the Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) even when

their policies were controversial like in the case of land redistribution which caused white families to have their land and livelihoods taken away from them much like what the Fuller family experienced with their farm Robandi.

The narrative voice in *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* switches between a child's and an adult's voice (as well as first and third person), which Lena Englund suggests results in "the child's voice perform[ing] Rhodesian discourse to a large extent, but that the adult narrator merely portrays such discourse and ideology" (73). The child voice perpetuates racial ideologies and discourse but is forgiven on the grounds of their naïveté, while the adult voice (seemingly reflecting that they have learnt the error of their ways) distances herself from them. Fuller does not apologise for, or overtly critique, the unambiguous racism described in her memoirs perpetrated by herself and her family. The time between childhood and adulthood allows for narration while avoiding complicity in the acts of colonial dispossession and violence and the accompanying guilt. Englund's description of Fuller's memoir is that it is defined by "the deaths of three of her siblings" which were "the greatest tragedies in her childhood" as well as the "constant movement from farm to farm and the relocation from Zimbabwe to Malawi" (74). Suffering becomes the catalyst for movement and forms part of the Fullers' complicated relationship with the African landscape, one which the Fuller's believe only strengthens their claim of belonging in a political landscape plagued by racial upheaval.

In her memoir, Fuller recounts how her parents were ready to give their lives for the land in order to achieve a white-ruled Africa. Nicola Fuller, the author's mother, recounted to her: "We were prepared to die, you see, to keep one country white-run" (Fuller 23). Fuller does not critically engage with this statement and the explicit racism contained in it. Nicola Fuller is stating that dying in the effort to keep the country under white-ruled was preferable to it falling under black rule. Nicola Fuller's comment illustrates the degree of sacrifice the Fuller's parents were willing to go to (putting their own lives and the lives of their children in danger) in order to protect their status and claim of belonging which relied on a system of white rule and white supremacy. Fuller's criticism of Zimbabwean nationalism is expressive of a white settler mentality, a view that often finds fertile ground in Western readerships. Nicola Fuller's willingness to die for Rhodesia in order to keep it from black rule is sanctified as sacrifice, while the plight to reform the land and gain independence is viewed as antagonistic resulting in war. This depiction of the dedication to the cause of white-rule in Rhodesia bears similarities

to what Primorac calls "post-independence neo-Rhodesian texts" which focus on the worthiness of the white settler's struggle. Primorac states that "Fuller's story is reminiscent of the post-independence neo-Rhodesian texts in that it tells an all-white narrative, and locates a sense of belonging in white settlers' hard work, resilience, solidarity and a sense of humour. Fuller also (pointedly?) refuses to apologise for the stark racism of the settler milieu she describes – even though most of her story takes place after independence" (211). Fuller does not critique her mother's racism or offer any insight into how it is understood in the moment of black-ruled Zimbabwe in which she writes. In her failure to critique the white settler mindset and its inherent racism, Fuller is as good as condoning it to the undiscerning reader.

In her memoir, Fuller describes how the African land is vital to life in Africa (both her family's lives, and the lives of all Africans regardless of race). After recounting losing their farm, Robandi, Fuller writes:

> Rhodesia has more history stuffed into its make-believe, colonial-dream borders than one country the size of a very large teapot should be able to amass in less than a hundred years. Without cracking. But all the history of this land returns to the ground on which we stand, because all of us (black, white, coloured, Indian, old-timers, newcomers) are fighting for the same thing: tillable, rain-turned-over-fresh, fertile, worm-smelling soil. Land on which to grow tobacco, cattle, cotton, soybeans, sheep, women, children. In Rhodesia, we are born and then the umbilical cord of each child is sewn straight from the mother onto the ground, where it takes root and grows. Pulling away from the ground cause death by suffocation, starvation. That's what the people of this land believe. Deprive us of the land and you are depriving us of air, water, food, and sex (154).

The above passage illustrates the strength of the bond between the Rhodesian people (both of settler colonial descent and indigenous peoples) and the land. In the above quote, Fuller draws from black cultural practice, practices which the black population cannot honour in the same way due to their precarious relationship to the land as a result of settler colonialism. The land (framed not only as a woman but a mother) nourishes her people through farming the same way a foetus is nurtured by its mother's body *in utero*. The children born in Zimbabwe are forever tied to the land through metaphorical umbilical cords. In this way the land is seen to be a surrogate mother; integral to nurturing its children, and without it, death becomes inevitable. Land and the farm are framed as being integral for sustaining life itself. Fuller lumps together white people and people of colour in Africa as if their experiences are identical. Fuller does little in the way of critically engaging with the history of settler colonialism and the impact this

has had on black Africans. Fuller's evocative descriptions of the land and its "fertile, worm-smelling soil" subverts the violence and suffering experienced by the indigenous people due to colonialism.

The act of revisiting childhood, in Fuller's case through the act of writing a memoir, is indicative of nostalgia. This nostalgia is for the time of childhood (pre-civil war, pre-independence Rhodesia) which was characterised by white rule and white supremacy. In *Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel,* Anthony Chennells describes Rhodesian writing as the "literature of nostalgia" (214). As mentioned above, the timing of Fuller's publication of her memoir coinciding with Mugabe's contentious land redistribution programme, allowed for the space in which Fuller could voice a similar injustice at losing their family farm to a similar process. In making this comparison, Fuller absolves the gratuitous violence of colonial dispossession by analogising the loss of land by black Africans to her white settler family's loss of their farm. Fuller's choice to revisit this time in her life speaks to the uncertainty and concern for the future experienced both in Fuller's childhood and in the early 2000s during Mugabe's regime. Fuller's parents were British settler colonials who fought for white-ruled Rhodesia ("we fought to keep *one* country in Africa white-run… just one country. We lost twice" (Fuller 17)). Nicola Fuller is referring to the wars of independence in Kenya (1947 - 1963) and then in Rhodesia (1964 – 1979) which both marked the end of white-rule in their respective countries. The seeming necessity to have an African country under white rule is in order to preserve the way of settler colonial life and the status that comes with being white in Africa (a way of life to which white settlers colonials like Nicola Fuller had become accustomed). The depth of the Fuller parents' conviction to live in a white-ruled African country is encapsulated in a quote by Nicola Fuller: "We were prepared… to take our baby into a war to live in a country where white men still ruled" (Fuller 22-23). Nicola Fuller recalls that her belief had been "[i]f we could have kept one country white-ruled it would be an oasis, a refuge. I mean, look, what a cock up. Everywhere you look it's a bloody cock-up" (Fuller 18). Fuller does not analyse her mother's statement and therefore it is up to the reader to make the connection between a utopian white-ruled African country which functioned as a "refuge" and the "bloody cock-up" which happened subsequently to the country being governed by a black government. This opinion is echoed in the memoir's plea to "not go to the dogs" (or fall into a case of black majority rule). Nicola Fuller's sentiment is framed by Fuller as expressing a nostalgia for a Rhodesian past of "make-believe" that existed within "colonial-dream

borders" as Fuller puts it but fails to state that it is in fact overtly racist (Fuller 154). Fuller does not engage with the racism inherent in her mother's observation explicitly and only later in her memoir does she frame her mother's dream of white-ruled Africa as being one that could only exist in the imagination of white settlers. Fuller is aware of this dream for Rhodesia being just that; a work of imagination that could not be sustained by the nature of reality but her juxtaposition is subtle rather than overt.

Svetlana Boym defines nostalgia in her essay "Nostalgia and Its Discontents" as being a "longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed" (7). This ties in with the point that Fuller notes; that the settler colonial dream for Africa is the stuff of "make-believe" and that it never really existed (154). In this moment, Fuller recognises that the settler colonial dream relies on a constructed notion of Africa in order for it to function as a white utopia, however, this is an idea that exists as part of the construction of whiteness in Southern Africa and is not a reality shared by the black African population but instead built on their subjugation. According to Boym, nostalgia "is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy" (7). In Fuller's case, she is aware that her nostalgia for the time of her childhood is for a time that never really existed except in the imaginations of white settler colonials as part of a constructed European and North American notion of Africa. Boym's relating nostalgia to loss and displacement exists in dual temporal planes (past and present) in the case of Fuller's writing which strengthens her association with the two times in her life: on one hand is the past when the entire Fuller family experienced loss and displacement through the effects of war and the loss of land and life that is associated with it, and on the other hand Fuller's present (at her time of writing) is characterised by uncertainty and displacement associated with Mugabe's regime. Boym cautions that the "danger of nostalgia is that it tends to confuse the actual home and the imaginary one" (10). Fuller's nostalgia is less for a place or a specific piece of land but for a time (her childhood) which was characterised by white-rule (and subsequently white supremacy) in Africa which is not a fact that Fuller sufficiently unpacks in her memoirs. Boym states that "nostalgia appears to be a longing for a place, but it is actually a yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams" (8). Fuller both recognises the impossibility of the settler colonial dream of Africa and yearns for this time when the dream was seemingly still within grasp as long as the country was under white-rule.

Boym characterises modern nostalgia as being very subjective and not easily generalised:

> [m]odern nostalgia is paradoxical in the sense that the universality of its longing can make us more empathetic towards fellow humans, and yet the moment we try to repair that longing with a particular belonging—or the apprehension of loss with a rediscovery of identity and especially of a national community and unique and pure homeland—we often part ways with others and put an end to mutual understanding (9).

Fuller's nostalgia for the Africa of her childhood is not easily transferable (to all Zimbabweans or even Rhodesians) as it is specific to a white settler colonial experience in the 1970s and 1980s. Fuller's nostalgia is further informed by her expatriate status and the longing for a sense of belonging in a time of uncertainty.

Boym defines two different kinds of nostalgia: "Restorative nostalgia takes itself dead seriously. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, can be ironic and humorous. It reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgment, or critical reflection" (15). Fuller's nostalgia is a form of restorative nostalgia as she returns home in her writing with an obsessive determination through efforts to reconstruct and relive the experience of the past. Boym states while "restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space" (15). Fuller's nostalgia (although she recognises it is for a time of 'make-believe' and not a place) is reconstructed through the act of memoir writing as it only continues to exist in her memory. Fuller's nostalgia is less about challenging her parents' colonial views and the choices they made whilst fighting to protect white-ruled Rhodesia during her childhood and more about longing to revisit a time of belonging and certainty (in the past) from a present characterised by uncertainty and displacement. Boym points out that bouts of nostalgia are common after revolutions and gives examples of the "political and cultural manifestations of longing" that came after the Russian Revolution and the French Revolution (10). This sentiment is echoed in the timing of Fuller's memoir being published in the early 2000s when the Mugabe regime was enacting controversial changes like land redistribution. The individual experiencing nostalgia or the "nostalgic" is unsurprisingly "never a native, but rather a displaced person who mediates between the local and the universal" (Boym 12). This is once again illustrated in Fuller's positionality as a white African living in (and writing from) the United States. Boym posits that "[i]mmigrants' stories are the best

narratives of nostalgia—not only because they suffer through nostalgia, but also because they challenge it. These stories are often framed as projections for the nostalgia of others who speak from a much safer place" (16). This safe space can be understood as both Fuller's adult home in the United States and her parent's home in Zambia which she visits as an adult. Fuller is looking back at the time of her childhood which was marred by the violence of the Rhodesian Bush War. Boym goes on to state that "[t]he imperative of a contemporary nostalgic is to be homesick and sick of home—occasionally at the same time" (18). Fuller's longing for the home of her childhood is amplified due to her living in the United States as an adult, but the United States' distance from Africa is possibly part of her rationale to live there.

Fuller utilises memoir to recount the story of her childhood as a means to avoid critically examining her own part in Zimbabwe's history of colonial dispossession and ultimately fails to comment on the position of her settler colonial family. This failure to acknowledge Zimbabwe's history of settler colonial violence forms part of a history of denial on the part of white settler colonials. Fuller's memoir combines history and memories which allows her to switch between the first person and third person narrative as well as past and present enabling her to include or exclude (or avoid) any information she wishes. The return to childhood in the white authored memoir is a return to a time of innocence that was not complicit in colonial violence and dispossession. The memoir does not contain the same factual authority of history but is susceptible to the framing of Fuller's memory and whim. The nostalgic nature of memoir writing coincides with the atmosphere of uncertainty and disorientation that was present at the time of the memoir's publication in the white Zimbabwean and expatriate communities as a result of Robert Mugabe's land redistribution programme. Fuller's avoidance as an observer precludes her from making definitive decisions or statements about Rhodesia/Zimbabwe's colonial legacy of dispossession. Fuller is a richly descriptive writer who uses the unstable quality of the memoir's ability to evoke the senses. However, this focus on the senses displaces the brutal narrative and history of colonial dispossession in Africa.

Chapter 4: The Limits of Innocence: The construction of whiteness and masculinity in *Scribbling the Cat - Travels with an African Soldier*

In Alexandra Fuller's second memoir, *Scribbling the Cat: Travels with an African Soldier* (2004), whiteness and masculinity are shown to be prevalent constructs in the operation of the colonial enterprise but ultimately act to inhibit introspection in colonial subjects. The construction of whiteness in Alexandra Fuller's memoirs is linked to her use of nostalgia. Fuller is writing from the time of post-independence Zimbabwe to the past (pre-independence Zimbabwe) when the country was still under white rule. Fuller's first memoir (*Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* published in 2001) and her second memoir, *Scribbling the Cat: Travels with an African Soldier* (2004), arrive on the literary market when disorientation and uncertainty are rife (especially in the white expatriate community) in the wake of Robert Mugabe's land redistribution programme in Zimbabwe (a system that took land away from white farmers and gave the land to black Zimbabweans). Fuller's memoirs deal with the larger theme of what belonging means to white citizens of Southern Africa who have benefitted from the old colonial system but are now living in an independent country with a black government where they are no longer afforded those same benefits. The title of the memoir, *Scribbling the Cat*, is a reference to the platitude "curiosity killed the cat" as "scribbling" is revealed to be a euphemism for killing used by white Rhodesians in the years during the war (Fuller 256). The memoir details Fuller's journey with the white ex-soldier K, a contradictory figure, who is simultaneously a racist and a perpetrator of horrific acts during war time but is also a teetotaler, and born-again Christian prone to tears. Fuller's interest in K appears to be an attempt on her part to gain a better understanding of the circumstances of the civil war that shaped her life. Ultimately, as with the first memoir, Fuller fails to gain any new insights or clarity into her own position. Fuller ends her memoir on an unsatisfactory note as she seems to be in roughly the same place that she started her memoir in. This failure to gain insight or be introspective seems ultimately to boil down to a lack of curiosity or willingness for complete introspection on her part. Fuller acknowledges her involvement in the performance of settler colonial discourse and the part she played during the Rhodesian Bush War (Fuller reminds the reader that she was a child). In *Scribbling the Cat,* Fuller does not use the innocent voice of childhood to avoid accountability in the same way as in *Don't Let's Go.* Instead, she creates a strong parallel between her involvement in the war and K's which is indicative of a large amount of guilt associated with the time of the civil war.

In Fuller's memoirs, the European forces (settler colonials) are represented as masculine aggressors while Africa (the land and its people) is represented as a passive feminine recipient. Within Fuller's memoirs, masculinity is represented as a conquering force. In *Scribbling the Cat*, masculinity is embodied in the figure of the white African soldier (K) who fights in the Rhodesian Bush War over land. The land as well as women and children are represented as feminine in this dichotomy and come to be innocent casualties in the war of men. War (embodied in the figure of the soldier) is shown to be the ultimate display of masculinity performed through violence and domination (over land and people). Fuller meets K in the post-independence context of Zimbabwe where he is no longer a soldier but a farmer working his land in Zambia. However, K is still described as having a commanding presence over the African land on which he walks: "He looked bulletproof… He looked cathedral" (Fuller 20). Fuller describes seeing K on his farm (his 'natural' habitat so to speak): "I couldn't decide if the man had shaped the land or the other way around" (56). Fuller describes K as "more than ordinarily beautiful, but in a careless, superior way, like a dominant lion or an ancient fortress" (20). The language Fuller uses is romantic but is not reflective of a romantic relationship developing later in the memoir (at least not one that Fuller reciprocates). Despite his commanding presence, K is no longer framed as an aggressor in the same way he was before (as a settler colonial soldier fighting for white-ruled Africa) but at times rather the passive recipient (or even victim) of the 'drama' Africa has to offer him. K's young son is revealed to have died from meningitis and his wife subsequently left him. K's lack of offspring or family means he has no legacy to pass on and ultimately fails at being the paternalistic figure important for the continuation of settler colonial ideology. In the aftermath of his fighting in the Rhodesian Bush War, the loss of his young son and the collapse of his family, K turns to God and becomes a born-again Christian. Masculinity in Fuller's memoirs is characterised by possession over land (in the form of farms) which renders the land as female and mirrors the tropes McClintock articulates in *Imperial Leather* of the African landscape as passive and feminine to the imperial forces' aggressive masculinity.

Through the character of K, the white African soldier fighting in the Rhodesian army, Fuller explores the operation of white masculinity in Southern Africa through notions of territory, husbandry, offspring and nostalgia for the 'utopia' of white-ruled Rhodesia. K, like so many other white settlers during white-rule in Rhodesia (Fuller included), was raised to believe his status, freedom and power were his birth right as a white person in Africa. Zoë

Wicomb speaks to the perceived 'natural state' of whiteness in the settled country in her collection of essays titled *Race, Nation and Translation* (2018) where she states that "the colonial terms 'European' and 'native', inappropriate for the new project came to be replaced by 'white' and 'non-white', as whiteness assumed native status in the promised land" (143). The binary between the presence of whiteness or the lack thereof ('non-white') is how whiteness is understood as the "native" or ideal state of being in the settled country. Primorac states that the ideal Rhodesian colonial-era settler is of a "male, white and British by origin (yet local by choice)" (206). This gendered notion of the perfect white settler is embodied by K who, even after the Rhodesian Bush War ends, chooses to continue to live in Zambia (Northern Rhodesia pre-independence). The white Rhodesian government's loss (for whom K fought) in the Rhodesian Bush War, left K, and many white men and women like him, disillusioned, as they were stripped of their superior status under black-rule and Zimbabwe's independence. In *Whiteness Just Isn't What It Used to Be*, Melissa Steyn details her findings that white South Africans were united in the understanding that white people "were privileged in the old order" and that this privilege was part of the taken-for-granted life-world of the old order" (50). Steyn is referring to Apartheid in South Africa but these racial dynamics are also relevant in the greater Southern African context like in the case of Zimbabwe.

Fuller's construction of whiteness in her memoirs frames white settlers as being made worthy of their land in Africa through their experiences of struggle, loss and trauma. The Fuller family's experiences of loss and trauma parallels K's experiences of the war and his subsequent loss of his young son and his family unit. Both the Fullers and K suffer a loss of status that comes with being white in Zimbabwe before it gained its independence. The white characters in Fuller's memoirs have rich interior lives that get explored in the memoir while the black characters are introduced in a superficial capacity (referred to using outdated colonial terms such as 'servants', 'nannies' and 'garden boys'). Steyn states that "whiteness brought the power to define both the self and the other" (8). Fuller shares intimate details of her family's financial, mental and inter-personal struggles while the entirety of *Scribbling the Cat* is an exploration of K's past; the alcohol abuse, regret and loss he felt and details some degree of character progression as he swears off alcohol and becomes a born-again Christian. Comparatively, black Africans are introduced in the memoir through their relationships to white characters and often involve the use of colonial tropes like "grateful native" or "bloodthirsty savage" or "trusted Ndebele servants" (McGregor and Primorac 207). Fuller does not attempt to critique

this language and the explicit racism found in these labels. The idea of the cultured white settler is contrasted to the 'savage' black native in the same dichotomy used by the European Enlightenment which saw white progress and reason forming the rationale for colonialism. McClintock states that "imperialism and the invention of race were fundamental aspects of Western, industrial imperialism" (5). The creation of this dichotomy was viewed as necessary in order to create an inferior class (black Africans) to do the manual labour and a superior class (white settlers) to ensure they do so. This dynamic is still seen in action on K's farm in Zambia in the early 2000s.

The construction of whiteness is tied to notions of wilderness and the boundary of the farm. The farm becomes central to structuring whiteness in Southern Africa. The existence of the dichotomy between settlement and wilderness is a notion springing from colonial discourse. The term settlement is defined as a place where a community is established in a space which was previously uninhabited. In the context of settler colonialism, the understanding of an uninhabited place has been historically unreliable as native laws and claims pertaining to land were often maliciously ignored by colonial settlers. The dichotomy between settlement and wilderness in Fuller's memoirs demonstrates the inability for white settlers to successfully settle and tame the African wilderness with their 'civilisation' (associated with whiteness) and is a symptom of the failure of the settler colonial dream in Southern Africa. The fear of wilderness is a symptom of a larger fear of displacement and outsiderness, which white settlers needed to overcome in order to create successful settler colonies. Veracini's statement that "successful settler colonies 'tame' a variety of wildernesses" is a reference to the white settler's desire to eradicate indigenous alterity and supervise ethnic diversity in order to escape the feeling of precariousness and outsiderness (3). William Cronon reframes the conventional thinking surrounding the boundaries between civilisation and wilderness in "The trouble with wilderness: or, getting back to the wrong nature" when he suggests that wilderness is in fact a construct, a man-made creation. Wilderness is a term whose connotations have changed significantly over time. Cronon highlights the word's strong history of biblical associations: according to the King James bible, the wilderness referred to "places on the margins of civilization where it is all too easy to lose oneself in moral confusion and despair" (8).

These margins are what attracted disaffected white colonials to Africa as they afforded them freedom and status without social and capitalist controls of mainland Europe; however,

the African wilderness simultaneously frightened and threatened whiteness through its physical proximity. In *White Writing*, J.M. Coetzee discusses the religious significance of wilderness:

> 'The wilds,' 'the wilderness' are resonant words in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. In one sense, the wilderness is a world where the law of nature reigns, a world over which the first act of culture, Adam's act of naming, has not been performed. The origins of this conception lie in the pre-Israelite demonology, where the wilderness (including the ocean) was a realm over which God's sway did not extend. But a second sense of the wilderness grew up in the Judaeo-Christian theology; the wilderness as a place of safe retreat into contemplation and purification, a place where the true ground of one's being could be rediscovered. Even as a place as yet incorrupt in a fallen world (49).

The wilderness "was a place to which one came only against one's will, and always in fear and trembling" but also a sacred space in which self-discovery becomes possible (Cronon 9). The wilderness is seen as other; both an untouched and dangerous place that needs to be ultimately conquered, possessed and domesticated by man and a desirable place for introspection and calm. This battle between nature and reason can be traced to the Enlightenment and, subsequently, the rationale of colonialism. Cronon uses the analogy that "[w]ilderness had once been the antithesis of all that was orderly and good – it had been darkness, one might say, on the far side of the garden wall - and yet now it was frequently likened to Eden itself" (9). The civilised space has long been presented as the converse of the wilderness space but relies on the wilderness in order to demarcate the border between the two spaces as illustrated in the image of the garden wall or the clean lines of a garden lawn: "There is the clearing in the middle of the bush, signifying civilisation. This clearing will have neat green lawns, which contrast with the dense, chaotic bush just beyond their trimmed edges. That clean-cut edge is crucial. It indicates the perimeter of civilisation" (Ndebele 1). The 'civilised' space of the farm becomes central to the structuring of whiteness in Southern Africa as it represented an outpost of order amongst the chaos of a precarious, unpredictable and dangerous wilderness.

Antje Rauwerda speaks to settler belonging and identity in Fuller's memoir, *Scribbling the Cat*, in her essay "*Exile Encampments: Whiteness in Alexandra Fuller*'s *Scribbling the Cat - Travels with an African Soldier".* Throughout her essay, Rauwerda invokes images of a house to illustrate the vulnerability and crisis of identity experienced by white Africans: "rootless houses signify an effort to build a future that does not use the foundations of a violent, racist white past" (52). Rauwerda notes Robert Mugabe's argument for land reform which was: "that there is no place for whiteness in Africa" (52). The Lancaster House Agreement mentioned in

the introduction provides the historical contextualisation for the inauguration of Mugabe's land reform. Mugabe enacted this 'reform' by "encouraging the seizure of white-owned farms" (Rauwerda 52). These farms often belonged to "tenacious white farmers who [were] committed to not leaving the Africa they and their families, sometimes several generations' worth, [had] called home" (Rauwerda 52). Continuing the metaphor of the house and its link to the notion of home, Rauwerda views the "dislocation of the formerly privileged as tragic in the same ways that any subaltern dislocation is tragic: home and identity become fragile, vulnerable constructs" (52). Rauwerda draws parallels between the intense loss and confusion experienced by white farmers (descendants of settlers) who lost their land during Mugabe's regime to the experience of the native population as the ancestors of those same settlers had claimed the native land for their own settlements. This analogy is flawed as the dispossession of white farmers from the land was not in order to conscript them into a labour force or because they were considered ontologically unworthy of it like in the case of the indigenous populations. Analogising the two different experiences of the loss of land (by white Africans and black Africans) subverts the gratuitous violence that was involved in the colonial project to 'clear' land of indigenous populations.

The manner in which the space of the farm operates as an integral part of the construction of whiteness is illustrated when Fuller visits K's farm in Zambia for the first time and he brings her attention to the silence and says "Where else in this country can you go without hearing anything at all? No insects, no birds, no *gondies*" (Fuller 50). Fuller notes in the glossary at the back of the book that *gondies* is a "derogative term for blacks" (254). In the passage, Fuller writes that the air feels "suspended and bitter; air that is not used to being chilled and so sinks in on itself and becomes deadened" (50). The air is imbued with a sense of bitterness though it is unclear whether this bitterness is white bitterness at the experience of living in a country under black rule, a legacy of black bitterness at the hands of white settlers, or something else. K's experience of the silence is akin to a religious experience and he adds that he comes to pray in exactly this place. K states that "it's [his] church" and that he comes there to kneel because he feels "utter peace" and "complete serenity" (50). Fuller does not comment on or critique the juxtaposition between the lack of black people in the space and K's experience of religious serenity. Moments like these indicate the implicit racism still alive and well in the white settler mindset embodied in K. A few pages later, K states "I don't like to have *gondies* around the house" but makes the exception for "someone" to come clean around

the house and do the laundry as well as a gardener but for the rest of the time "if anyone wants [him] they must hit the gong by the gate" (Fuller 53). K's racism is clear in this example as his belief that black Africans are unfit to be around his house unless they are performing a task of labour for which they have been instructed to perform. The movement of black Africans within the space of K's farm is restricted and controlled to the extent of K's (the white farmer) demands and desires. Zine Magubane speaks to the construction of race in *Bringing the Empire Home* (2004): "it was an act of discrimination that constructed the categories of black and white themselves and attached to them the labels of superior and inferior" (137). K's use of the derogatory term "*gondies"* for black people reinforces the history of discrimination and at the hands of a system of white supremacy. Fuller illustrates the deeply racist ideology that was commonplace when she was growing up in Rhodesia: "Black Rhodesians are also known by the white Rhodesians as 'gondies', 'boogs', 'toeys', 'zots', 'nig-nogs', 'wogs', 'affies'. We call the black women 'nannies' and the black men 'boys'" (25). The use of derogatory terms and the calling of fully grown men "boys" strips black Africans of both agency and dignity. The inclusion of the word "we" in the second part of this quote implicates Fuller in this racist rhetoric, however, Fuller fails to criticise the overt racism around her or the part she played. In this instance, Fuller's inclusion in the statement is illustrative of representing settler colonialism whilst also reporting on a time (her childhood) when she performed settler colonialism. However, Fuller does not critically engage with this racist behaviour beyond reporting it which can be read as a passive form of condoning it.

Fuller acknowledges her involvement in the Rhodesian Bush war and her performance of settler colonialist discourse when she reflects on K's involvement in the war as containing parallels to her own. K tells Fuller the story of a horrific act he committed during the war; the time that he shoved hot *sadza* (maize porridge) into a young girl's vagina as a form of torture in order to force her to reveal the position of some nearby soldiers (Fuller 152). When K adds that the young girl died from her injuries two weeks later as a result of infection, he is clearly remorseful and reflects "I didn't need to do that to her. I was an animal. An absolute fucking savage" (Fuller 152). Fuller describes herself as "swallowing a wave of nausea" when she hears K's story. Fuller's response is illustrative of a large degree of guilt when she claims that is she as good as the young girl's murderer: "I *own* this now. This was *my* war too. I had been a small, smug white girl shouting, 'We are all Rhodesians and we'll fight through thickanthin' I was every bit that woman's murderer" (152). In part, the guilt seems to spring from Fuller's

acknowledgement of the "brutal" and "indefensible" nature of the war and its associated acts which she had been avoidant as she preferred not to know the details (Fuller 152). This lack of curiosity on the part of Fuller coupled with the purposefully explorative journey she takes with K creates tension throughout the memoir.

The farms that the Fuller family live on are often described in terms of their staunch colonial influence. One is described as a "faux-Spanish house, with its stucco walls and its long, cool stretches of linoleum and its vast veranda and its spacious garden" (Fuller 247). Another of the farms that the Fuller family called home, Robandi, is described as an abandoned farm being reclaimed by the encroaching wilderness; "the whitewashed sitting rooms where dinner parties (with proper place settings and flowers on the table and servants in white uniforms, stiff with desperate civilization) took place are creeping green with mould" (Fuller 129). It is ironic that Robandi is the very farm that the Fuller family lose to the encroaching racialised wilderness. There is a clear need for the separation between civilisation and wilderness on the white settler farm, the boundary of which is needed to be maintained so as to uphold order (pre-independence this was in the form of white-rule). Fuller describes the first thing they do as a family when moving into a new farm in order to stake their claim on the land: "We erect a massive fence with slanting-backwards barbed wire at the top around the house" (53). This reclaiming of the land is physically illustrative of what Primorac describes as "an uneasy sense of belonging" (211). There is a fear that exists in parallel to the fear of the encroaching wilderness, it is a fear of displacement and outsiderness. Fuller articulates the constant threat of encroaching wilderness: "Rhodesia's war has turned the place back on itself, giving the lands back to the vegetation with which it had once been swallowed before people" (101). It is unclear from this comment whether the time "before people" refers to before the white settlers settled the land or precedes the indigenous population who lived on the land before the settlers' arrival. It is made clear, however, that a return to the state of wilderness would mean a return of the lawlessness and abandonment that traditionally is associated with it. Fuller continues to say "this part of Africa would reclaim its wild lands if it were left untrodden" (112). This fear of returning to the state of wilderness is synonymous with the fear felt by white Rhodesians that the country would go to "the dogs" if it fell under black-rule, an idea which runs throughout the first memoir (*Don't Let's Go*) and informs the book's title.

Gender dynamics in the colonial enterprise were complicated with depictions of conquered land being framed as passive and feminine, while colonialists were described as a masculine, conquering force. Within the ranks of white settler colonials there were further divides between men and women. Women were both colonisers (over men and women of colour) and restricted by their white male-counterparts (McClintock 5-7). Fuller meets K in the aftermath of Zimbabwe's independence on his post-independence Zambian farm. K shares his hope to rebuild his family with a suitable partner in the future. K details an inversion of the gender hierarchy as he places his wife first while he places himself last of all even below animals and servants respectively:

> I would nurture a woman. She would be head of the family now. I wouldn't have to dominate her. I would put everyone else first. First God, then my wife, then my children, the dogs, the servants… I would be last. I just want to share this with someone (Fuller 63).

Since his first marriage, K had made some life changes as he had stopped drinking alcohol and become a born-again Christian. K appears to no longer need to define his identity through traditional superior masculinity and the suppression of women. K makes this comment in post-independence Zambia but still shows that he has held onto racist beliefs with the servants (black Africans) being placed below the dogs in the hierarchy of family importance. While K may no longer feel the need to be superior to his wife he sees no issue with maintaining his superiority over black Africans. It is therefore implied that this hypothetical woman who K would nurture and allow to be head of the family is a white woman. It becomes clear that K believes this might be Fuller but she does not reciprocate his feelings.

Scribbling the Cat is reflective of the precariousness still strong in Fuller's psyche as a white expatriate Zimbabwean revisiting Africa during Mugabe's land redistribution programme. *Scribbling the Cat* springs from Fuller's own feelings of uncertainty and questions surrounding identity which leads her on a seeming journey of *incognito* self-discovery with the white African ex-soldier K who she hopes will be able to shed some light on her own experiences of the civil war. I discuss Fuller's construction of whiteness and how it is associated with status but also severe precariousness which is likened to the historical dichotomy between civilisation and wilderness. K is described as a racist and perpetrator of horrific war crimes but simultaneously a born-again Christian who does not shy away from emotional tears. K is able to step away from traditional gender dynamics by allowing his wife

to be head of his family but maintains his superiority over black Africans. In the title of the memoir, Fuller chastises herself for indulging in her curiosity ("scribbling" being white Rhodesian slang for killing and is a play on the platitude "curiosity killed the cat") yet she doesn't seem to be curious enough to gain any level of introspection into herself. Despite the eventful journey she embarks on with K, Fuller seems to end the memoir in the same psychological place (without any new revelations or insights) as the one she started in. The abruptness of this ending is a reflection on the colonial enterprise's (represented by the core constructs of whiteness and masculinity) inability to gain a measure of introspection through which to critique itself and as a result continues to persist with notions of anti-blackness.

Chapter 5: A Tragedy of Discourse: Unexamined tropes of Africa in *Cocktail Hour under the Tree of Forgetfulness*

A key dynamic in Fuller's memoirs, is the tension between the idea of colonialism as an active process in which Fuller's Africa (Kenya, Zimbabwe and Zambia) is exerted onto passive Africa (the landscape and black African population) and Africa's active ability to provide drama for new settlers. Fuller's memoirs convey her white experience of Rhodesia to a largely Western audience and in the act of doing so she perpetrates unexamined tropes of Africa. In *Cocktail Hour Under the Tree of Forgetfulness* (2011), Fuller provides descriptions of her mother, Nicola Fuller, and her desire to live a life "Worthy of Fabulous Literature" (along the lines of Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa*) even if she had "overdone it in some areas", like in the categories of "tragedies, war and poverty" becomes the main source of these unexamined tropes (Fuller 5-6). The very notion of a dramatic continent that disaffected Europeans and Northern Americans can go to because, once there, they won't have to be architects of their own meaning, is itself a colonial construct.

It is through the Fuller parents that we are introduced to the idea of Africa being a naturally dramatic place. Fuller describes her parents' experience of life in England as paling in comparison to their lives in Africa: "however much my parents tried to ensure a colourfully chaotic life for themselves, there was an underlying sense that as long as they stayed in England, they would always have to be the source of their own drama" (Fuller 152). This notion of Africa being a dramatic place for disaffected European settlers relies on a construction of Africa that operates for the sole benefit of these settlers with no consideration of the subjugation of black Africans necessary for the construction to operate. The status and power that comes with being a white settler in Africa afforded otherwise working-class Europeans like Fuller's parents more status and power: "Many of the English settlers who emigrated to South Africa did so precisely to escape shame and humiliation that accompanied a loss of social status" (Magubane 136). In Roxanne Coady's podcast "Just the Right Book", Fuller describes her parents as connecting and bonding over "drama, tragedy and diversity" which she labels as an addictive and unhealthy way of connecting (Coady 11:35). Fuller states how her parents literally ran from the tragedy in their lives instead of dealing with it when she recounts the fact that during her childhood her family moved twenty times in eighteen years (Coady 12:26).

In the episode of Coady's podcast titled "How do you become a racist? Alexandra Fuller on her childhood in Rhodesia" (2019), Fuller speaks about her understanding of her mother's racism and how it differs from her understanding of racism:

> My books have been really difficult for her, for me it has been a constant itch, I can't stop bringing it up. How you can operate with that much neurosis… to structure an entire country to make millions of people invisible and to make their pain untouchable to you, there's a certain amount of damage that you have to come out with, you have to be a bit numb. The thing that struck me about it is that she is very white settler… and it bode you well to be utterly hurtless because what you were watching was the ruthless decimation of a culture and subjugation to make room for you (Coady 07:24 – 08:20).

Fuller says that, unlike her white settler mother, she is constantly preoccupied by the topic of racism and the manner in which white supremacy as a system operated in white-ruled Africa. Fuller refers to the "neurosis" necessary to create a structure that operated on the basis of subjugation of an entire population of people. Through the use of the word neurosis, Fuller suggests racism relies on a degree of mental illness in order to exist in the mind of a person. Fuller goes on to describe racism as a form of "neurotic numbness" which seems causally ambiguous as it appears to be a state that both precedes racism and exists as an effect of it (Coady 16:15). This numbness seems to have a lasting effect on the perpetrators (white settlers) of the racist system. Ironically, this numbness seems to be necessary to maintain the white settler colonial's peace of mind or else they would need to acknowledge the pain of the subjugated and the pain associated with a history of colonial dispossession. Fuller relays her belief that it was necessary in colonial Africa to have a stiff upper lip in order to disconnect from one's feelings because if you were connected with your feelings the subjugation of other people would become harder to justify (Coady 8:35). Nicola Fuller's response to the death of the family cat is reflective of this stiff upper lip ideology: "You learn not to mourn every little thing out there… No, you can't, or you'd never, ever stop grieving" (Fuller 203). This disconnection or "neurotic numbness" is discussed by Fuller in relation to her mother's inability to recognise their complicity in Rhodesia's violent colonial history, something she identifies as "very white settler", but she does not appear to identify with it herself. Fuller comments on the disconnect that exists when she relays her settler childhood experience (which she finds surprises many readers) as she is so "articulate of it and loving of the people that were in it and so hateful of the belief system" (Coady 16:20). Fuller's hatred of the belief system is not always clear in her memoirs unless she believes that her unpacking of the historical events surrounding it in detail, without explicit critique, is considered an expression of hatefulness.

Fuller makes herself complicit with the white settlers of former Rhodesians through the inclusive use of the word "we": "We longed for the warmth and freedom, the real open spaces, the wild animals, the sky at night" (153) and "We see our lives as fraught and exciting, terrible and blessed, wild and ensnaring. We see our lives as Rhodesian, and it's not easy to leave a life as arduously rich and difficult as all that" (185). Fuller's first description of Rhodesia being a warm and free place paints a very idyllic image of a desirable African wilderness viewed through the colonial lens of acquisition. This freedom and "the real open spaces" are both at the expense of colonial subjugation and the forced clearing of the indigenous African people off land in order to make the 'real open spaces'. The use of the word "real" in this case is ironic as the spaces are not authentically or naturally open but rather more accurately purposefully cleared as a result of colonial invention in order to facilitate a privileged existence for white settlers. Africa is represented as an idyllic place full of seemingly inexhaustible mineral riches, animal life and beautiful sunsets but this is all just an idea. This notion, of Africa being atavistic, meaningful, dramatic, exciting, is part of Europe's idea of Africa rather than Africa's idea of itself.

Fuller describes white Rhodesians (herself included) as having lives characterised by hardship ("fraught", "terrible" and "wild") which are immediately juxtaposed next to the positive, desirable qualities ("exciting", "blessed" and "ensnaring"). The use of the word "arduously" is connotative of substantial labour necessary for making their life that "rich" which can either be read as referring to the hard work on the part of the white settlers to achieve a settlement in Rhodesia or is a sardonic quip on the constructed nature of their existence. The use of the word "difficult" is indicative of Fuller's awareness that the 'difficult' nature of life in Africa as a white person is both desirable and of the settler's own making (on the back of the subjugation of black Africans). It is ultimately an artificially constructed and coveted 'difficult' life. In these examples, the evocative and sensuous nature of Africa is at the forefront while the subjugation of black Africans in the process of settler colonialism is overlooked in favour of the beautiful descriptive qualities of the African landscape. Fuller's labelling of racism being "blatantly what it is" is surprising as she does not explicitly label any of her family members or white characters depicted in her memoirs as being racist (Coady 16:04). Indeed, Fuller is loving of her childhood experience growing up in white settler Africa and of the people in it (in the quote it is unspecified if these refer to white or black Africans) but the hatefulness of the structure of white supremacy does not translate in Fuller's writing itself. Fuller finds

similarities between her experience detailed in her memoirs which remain relevant as Rhodesia is framed as a petri dish for casual racism reflected in the global north and the racism that happens on a global scale (Coady 16:40).

In Fuller's memoirs masculinity is embodied in the expression of extremist machoistic white patriotism (an expression of racism) by white Rhodesian families during the civil war. The Fullers' identity is seen being firmly tied with the land of Rhodesia even through the terrible losses of war: "our fate was one million per cent Rhodesian and even at this late date, we carried on fighting as it were the last place on earth, as if to lose it would be the same as losing ourselves" (Fuller 187). This is illustrative of the ferocity in which white Rhodesians fought to keep Rhodesia white-run. Living and raising a family in Rhodesia had led the Fullers to become 'African in orientation' (as Fuller puts it) and accustomed to the status and freedom associated with living as white people in Africa. The Fullers were not about to give it up and leave for Britain. In Coady's podcast, Fuller speaks of her harrowing experience as a child growing up on the front lines of a civil war in which even the children would become involved. The Fullers' are all described as active participants in the war: "Actively participating, including the children. I mean, we were given Uzi submachine guns at six" (Coady 19:16). This image of young children with machine guns is incredibly graphic and disturbing as it represents not only a loss of innocence but the active involvement in a system they do not understand resulting in consequences they cannot possibly grasp. Speaking of her childhood as an adult, Fuller is conscious of the irreparable damage growing up in those conditions causes:

> I start to feel slightly insane because I had the childhood that people in [the United States] think they want their children to have. You don't want to take away a six-year-old's innocence with that much fear and hatred. Speaking from experience, a child has no ability to rebound from that and the parents having taught that feel no, and the structure having taught that feels no duty to unteach that. The war ends…You're supposed to walk away from all that fear and all that training and all that horror as if it didn't happen. The truth is that I've written about it so much to try to unlearn it and try to get to the bottom of it and understand it because it wasn't passive. Passive is white privilege. We were more than that. We were active, militant. My father was called up. He fought for six months of every year by the time the war ended. My mother volunteered. We all ended up getting roped into it, whether you volunteered or conscripted or not if you were living that close to the front line (Coady 19:35 – 20:49).

Fuller recognises that her Western audience might idealise her childhood but that in reality it was far from ideal but rather a childhood robbed of its innocence too young and replaced with a sense of fear and hatred which is never really addressed even after the war ends. This burden

ultimately falls on to the child (Fuller is this case) as something to carry (and perhaps unravel) throughout their life. The innocence of the evocative sensory experience that Fuller infuses her memoirs with has its limitations, and history – in the ghastly shape of civil war – intrudes to rob Alexandra Fuller and the Fuller family of their innocence. History will do more by not only robbing Fuller of her innocence, it will rob her and white Rhodesia of their children (brothers, sisters, sons), their land and farms, their past and their country. Africa might be more dramatic and exciting than Europe but it is also more dangerous and tragic.

Fuller frames belonging to Africa as a white settler (or their descendants) as being precarious in nature and vulnerable to various losses. The focus on childhood and the innocence that characterises it highlights the high stakes of war and the extent of which can be lost; not only innocence but innocent life. Fuller's younger brother, Adrian, who died when he was a few weeks old from meningitis, is described as being the "most African: a victim of circumstances, he lies anonymous in that beautiful, bloodied soil, with no date to mark either his birth or his passing. His grave is as good as empty" (Fuller 144). Adrian is described as "most African" in a land inundated with white unease as he is a victim of circumstance and becomes a symbol of what white settlers are at risk of losing (their children, their innocence and their lives) in their fight for white-ruled land in Africa. The imagery of the soil being "beautiful" yet also "bloody" pairs the ideas of brutality and beauty without critically engaging with the brutality. Once again, there is the idea of Africa being an active place ("most African: a victim of circumstances"), a place which is filled with drama that is both beautiful and tragic in nature. This idea of Africa is not critically examined by Fuller but is rather reproduced in her memoir. The fact that Adrian's grave bears no date to show his birth or death means he belongs to the land with a sense of permanence (as it is not marked by any measurable amount of time). Nicola Fuller's view of her daughter, Alexandra Fuller, is that she has: "no patience with nostalgia" as "[she's] relinquished wonderful Old Africa and crossed the Atlantic to join the dull New World" (Fuller 16). In Nicola Fuller's estimation, the fact that her daughter has left Africa in order to live in the United States means that she has no time for nostalgia. It is implied that this nostalgia Fuller apparently has no time for is the system of white supremacy that functioned under white-rule in Rhodesia. The fact that Nicola Fuller refers to Africa as "wonderful" and "old" while the United States are referred to as the "dull New World" reflects that she determines worth to be found in the old values of white supremacy while the idea of newness is negatively associated with (in the context of Rhodesia) the end of white-rule which

results in uncertainty and displacement. Fuller is a nostalgic writer but perhaps not in the way her mother would be, as she is at times too dismissive and disparaging of the system of white supremacy in Rhodesia. In Nicola Fuller's mind, after all the fighting for white-rule and land in Rhodesia she cannot comprehend why Fuller could leave Africa (symbolically forsaking it) in order to live in a country so disparate from the one she grew up in. Fuller is nostalgic in her memoir writing through the portrayal of the milieu of her childhood but is, in her own words, hateful of the system of white supremacy that characterised her childhood in Rhodesia. Fuller could be more clearly hateful of the system and history of subjugation if she addressed and responded more critically to racist and white settler rhetoric instead of merely reporting it in her memoirs.

In *Cocktail Hour*, Fuller details the nature and temperament of her 'white settler' mother as a way of exploring belonging through her own past, her involvement in the system of white supremacy in Rhodesia and her beliefs. However, Fuller is not sufficiently critical of her own position in respect to her white settler past and ultimately does not come to a conclusion about her settler colonial family. In the interview she participated in, Fuller is able to clearly articulate the hatefulness she feels for the racist system that operated in Rhodesia but this fails to clearly translate to her memoirs. Fuller's memoir still heavily relies on rich sensual descriptions of the African landscape and its people which subverts the brutal history of colonial violence. Fuller is in many ways an avoidant writer as she does not scrutinise the terms by which she makes sense of her experience of Africa (at least not consistently and rigorously). At different times throughout her memoir writing, Fuller swings between portraying settler colonial discourse and perpetuating it through her failure to explicitly critique it. This lack of self-consciousness means that, although she posits the interesting idea that Africa happens to you, she is unable to take this any further and suggest, for instance, that the very idea of Africa happening to you because it is dramatic is part of a broader idea (or network of ideas) by which Europe has made sense of Africa. Fuller is unable to recognise that some of her most important insights are compromised by her presumed innocence, a failure to reckon with her complicity in a system of white hegemony and acknowledge her complicity, hence the idea of a double tragedy.

Chapter 6: Conclusion – The dual tragedy of Fuller's memoirs

My dissertation expands the body of settler colonialism in literature, specifically literature pertaining to Southern Africa through the examination of the white authored memoir (specifically Alexandra Fuller's). Research such as this, that turns the gaze on whiteness, is an important postcolonial undertaking. The work of postcolonial authors and their writing in settler colonial countries (like Zimbabwe) is necessary to address and mediate the inequalities of the colonial past. The construction of whiteness, nostalgia and the work of memory within Fuller's memoirs provides insight into the necessity for portraying a critically examined account of Zimbabwe's settler colonial past. The racism present in Fuller's retelling of Rhodesia's past (and Zimbabwe's present) is illustrative of a larger issue of racism, white supremacy and anti-blackness perpetrated and experienced on a global scale.

A dual tragedy exists in Fuller's memoirs; the tragedy that stems from the practical fact of the Fuller family living in Africa during a time characterised by instability, displacement and uncertainty, and the discursive tragedy of Africa's unexamined portrayal within Fuller's memoirs. The practical fact of the Fullers investing in Africa in post-colonial instability, a time in which there was increasing clamour for independence, means they experience severe loss (of their children and their land) and the trauma of living through a civil war. Fuller' memoirs also contain a discursive tragedy which arises in the form of the notion that Africa is a dramatic continent in which unfulfilled Europeans and North Americans can go to in order to become architects of their own meaning, which is in itself a colonial construct which Fuller does not sufficiently critique. Fuller's seeming lack of introspection means that she posits the idea that Africa happens to you but is unable to take this further or examine it as a colonial construct. Ironically, a lack of introspection is a characteristic Fuller deems "very white settler" as it is necessary for white supremacy to exist on the back of black subjugation. Fuller is unable to say that the very idea of Africa happening to you is part of a broader idea (or network of ideas) by which Europe and North America has made sense of Africa. Fuller is insightful but unable to take this further which proves to be a double tragedy. Fuller at different times in her memoirs portrays settler colonial discourse with a measure of distance as a way of dismissing the ideology and at other times she is seen to be performing settler colonial discourse when she perpetuates unexamined colonial ideals of Africa, such as concentrating on the idyllic quality of the African landscape while overlooking the brutality and history of violence that comes

with white supremacy in the context of settler colonialism. This measure of distance stems from Fuller's incapacity to critique herself and her own whiteness within her memoirs which proves to be her ultimate shortfall.

Settling in a new country invariably involves a comparison between where you have come from and where you are. In *Cocktail Hour Under the Tree of Forgetfulness*, there is an account of the differences between the world of the old colonial mainland and Africa. When the Fuller parents return back to live in mainland England where Fuller's father, Tim Fuller was raised (Nicola Fuller was born in Scotland) they acknowledge that you are forced to be the originator of your own drama, while in Africa, drama happens to you simply by virtue of you living there. Africa is therefore framed as dramatic in the way the Old World is not, it is an environment which *happens* to you. It is an environment in which one simply has to present oneself in order to become caught up in the drama and excitement. Africa is presented as an active place, an active entity and idea; in such an environment the self (and the family) will grow like a flower. This idea is reinforced in an earlier book – in *Scribbling the Cat* – in which Fuller, now resident in the United States, frames the United States as sterile and boring and feels the need to return to visceral, careless and dangerous Africa. The staid – perhaps fallen – developed world, is found lacking when contrasted to unpredictability and excitement of the developing world. These two quotes are suggestive of a productive inversion that runs through Fuller's memoirs: Africa is normally conceived of as passive, the passive victim on which colonialism plays itself out, while the continent's riches are mined, felled and exploited, but in Fuller's estimation, Africa is not only there to be 'raped' by Europe's colonial powers (and settled on by colonial families such as hers), it also acts positively on those Europeans who live in it.

Fuller's memoirs fall into the category Coetzee calls the "literature of…unsettled settlers" (4). Fuller is a vibrant and visceral writer. Her memoirs are full of sensual colour, humour and fun, however, she is also an avoidant writer because although the Fuller family are shown to settle in Africa; Fuller cannot settle on what she finally thinks about herself and her family as white settlers in Africa. Fuller's experience of trauma and loss at a young age combined with her white settler upbringing teaches her the value of treading the line between the political and apolitical while avoiding hard topics rather than reaching a satisfactory conclusion. Her inclination to avoid probing too far into her own psyche seems to be either a

protective mechanism (a generous assumption) or indicative of the characteristic tight-lipped white settler mentality (the less generous assumption). The memoir as a form is ideally suited to the elision or obfuscation contained in Fuller's memoirs because it is neither history nor novel and therefore is an ultimately unstable form of writing. The memoir's popularity in post-independence Zimbabwe and South Africa can be read as reflecting a time in history characterised by instability which is echoed in the nature of memoir writing. Finally, for all the sensory and descriptive nature of her writing, Fuller's memoirs *cannot settle*. In this respect Fuller's memoirs are exactly like the colonial project itself; a story of not being able to finally, physically, ideologically and existentially settle because you are always from elsewhere as white settlers, you are always from outside Africa itself.

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