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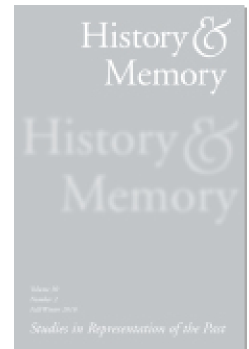

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Postcolonial Nostalgia

The Ambiguities of White Memoirs of Zimbabwe

ASTRID RASCH

This article introduces the concept of "postcolonial nostalgia" to discuss four memoirs by white expatriate Zimbabweans Alexandra Fuller and Peter Godwin. The authors borrow from colonial discourse, producing nostalgic accounts that may appeal to their Western audiences but which fail to challenge colonial mindsets in the way that their postcolonial self-image might lead us to expect. Written at a time of national crisis in Zimbabwe, the memoirs contrast a past of childhood innocence and settler contributions with a dystopic present. Even as the authors dissociate themselves from the white supremacist regime of the past, they present white settlers as benevolent and productive, and seem to lament the replacement of white order with nothing.

Keywords: postcolonial nostalgia; memoir; Zimbabwe; memory politics

INTRODUCTION

"Mum has made it clear that … I have no patience with nostalgia," notes Alexandra Fuller, who was raised as a white settler in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi and now lives in the United States but continues to write about Africa.[1] With this comment, she relegates colonial nostalgia to her mother and so assures her reader that her memoir is not, despite the exotic images she indulges in, a nostalgic enterprise. The difference between herself and her mother is summed up in their pronunciation of the mother's childhood home: "Mum pronounces the name of the country with a long colonial-era *e*—Keen-ya (/ki nja/), as if Britain still stains more than a quarter of the globe pink with its dominion. I, however, pronounce it with a short,

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postcolonial *e*—Kenya (k nja) [*sic*]."[2] Her mother may be caught up in the past, but Fuller, we understand, is postcolonial. But is her mother right? Or might it be the case that one can see the world through a postcolonial lens, yet still view the colonial order of the past with nostalgia?

In this article, I will use the work of Fuller and her fellow Zimbabwean expatriate Peter Godwin to argue that we need a more complex concept of nostalgia for the colonial era if we want to understand the ambiguity of contemporary Western memory practice: what I term "postcolonial nostalgia." Rather than simply rosy images of the past, we find many examples of texts that criticize empire on the surface, yet also perpetuate discourses from the colonial era and lament its passing in subtler ways. In personal memoirs like the ones examined here, the image of the past is further complicated by the authors' private investment in questions of guilt and responsibility. "I have tried not to be wise after the event," Godwin says in a preface, "but to describe things as they seemed at the time, even where that may have portrayed us unattractively."[3] Those words register his awareness of the shift of perspective from the time he grew up in white Rhodesia to the time of writing in the mid-1990s. Even if Godwin says he does not want to be wise after the event, the effort to expose actions that appear unflattering in hindsight is in itself part of a gesture toward his own changed, postcolonial perspective. His unexplained reference to a white "us," however, reveals that distinctions from the colonial era persist. Writing after decolonization for audiences who probably see themselves as having left the colonial order firmly behind, these authors engage with the past in ambiguous ways *because of* the postcolonial context, and accordingly I refer to this as a postcolonial nostalgia, rather than, say, an imperial(ist) or a colonial nostalgia.[4] Postcolonial nostalgia, then, may be understood as a memory practice that purports to have no patience with nostalgia, but at the same time still stages the allure of a lost colonial past.

THE AMBIGUITIES OF POSTCOLONIAL NOSTALGIA

In recent years, we have witnessed a wave of nostalgia. Produced for and by Westerners, a whole body of text and film is emerging about Africa, portraying an exotic continent made fertile by the presence of benevolent Europeans, its wildlife preserved by their conservation efforts, yet always

at the brink of despair because of the avarice of a corrupt black elite.[5] This surge of nostalgia includes both idealizing images of the past that straightforwardly celebrate colonial rule, and more ambiguous accounts. In the case of Fuller and Godwin, explicit condemnations of racism and colonial inequality coexist with stories of a prosperous past that has been supplanted by a poorer, more dangerous and more primitive present, to the detriment of the authors' families and the community at large.

As sociologist Fred Davis argues in his study of nostalgia, the sentiment fundamentally relies on a constructed contrast between a positively remembered past and a present that is found to be lacking in some sense. The "'good past/bad present' contrast" is so central that Davis calls it nostalgia's "distinctive rhetorical signature."[6] But as I demonstrate in the following, nostalgia can be more complex than this simple dichotomy would seem to imply. Indeed, criticism of the "dark side of empire" may be one way for postcolonial writers to establish a platform from which to indulge in colonial fantasies, and the confession of racist guilt may pave the way for self-redemption. The assumption that one has, as Fuller says, "'no patience with nostalgia" may help readers and writers of these postcolonial memoirs to see themselves as on the right side of history even as they perpetuate colonial language and compare the present negatively to a more ordered and more innocent settler past. This article thus argues that the profession of an empire-critical view may in itself be part of a rhetorical strategy enabling postcolonial nostalgia, now supposedly free of the moral taint of outright empire celebration.

To describe this contemporary form of nostalgia, I use the term "postcolonial nostalgia." By "postcolonial" I mean not simply a temporal marker indicating that it comes after colonialism, but also a moral marker, indicating that it is premised on a societal rejection of the colonial system. This rejection is far from complete—indeed, as I will show, language handed down from the colonial era persists even among those who seek to distance themselves from it—yet there is a qualitative difference between how empire is spoken about today and the time of high imperialism. Over the course of the twentieth century, there was a gradual "moral disarmament of empire."[7] Disparate pressures such as colonial nationalism, the Civil Rights movement and later the academic field of postcolonial studies combined to develop a postcolonial mainstream in which the racist and exploitative structures of the past were verbally rejected, if not sufficiently

expunged. This revision informs the narrative framework for stories about the colonial past in Western societies. But, as indicated, the postcolonial agenda has not meant the disappearance of nostalgic longing for the colonial past. My concept of "postcolonial nostalgia" is different from existing notions of nostalgia relating to colonialism in that I take the contemporary discursive distancing toward the colonial record as defining for the way the past is remembered. It is, in other words, a *nostalgia in spite of itself.*

Other scholars have developed related terms. Patricia Lorcin distinguishes between "imperial nostalgia" which "is associated with the loss of empire, that is to say the decline of national grandeur and the international power politics connected to economic and political hegemony," and "colonial nostalgia" which "is associated with the loss of sociocultural standing or, to be more precise, the colonial lifestyle."[8] Lorcin's two concepts, then, are used to describe that which is longed for rather than the moment of longing. In contrast, "postcolonial nostalgia" focuses our attention on the way in which contemporary recollections of empire orient themselves toward a postcolonial discourse in the present. Renato Rosaldo's concept of "imperialist nostalgia" similarly addresses what he calls the "ideological" function of nostalgia—not what is longed for, but the shape of that longing. Like postcolonial nostalgia, its imperialist cousin "revolves around a paradox." Here, "people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed.... [I]mperialist nostalgia uses a pose of 'innocent yearning' both to capture people's imagination and to conceal its complicity with often brutal domination."[9] Imperialist nostalgia is thus itself part of the imperialist process of transforming the society it nostalgically describes. In proposing that we add "postcolonial nostalgia" to our conceptual toolkit, I do not reject the work of Rosaldo and Lorcin. Indeed, postcolonial nostalgics can be imperialist in their blindness to their own complicity and may lament both loss of national grandeur and the colonial lifestyle. But to understand how contemporary nostalgia works, we need to see how it can apparently buy into a postcolonial worldview, yet also betray nostalgic tendencies of longing for past structures and values, and so perpetuate discourses and mindsets left over from the colonial period.

As expatriate Zimbabweans living in and writing for the West, Godwin and Fuller illustrate what postcolonial nostalgia can look like in the twenty-first century. Peter Godwin was born in 1957 in what was then Southern Rhodesia, and since leaving Zimbabwe in the early 1980s he has

lived intermittently in England, South Africa and the United States. He has published a number of autobiographical texts, two of which are examined here: *Mukiwa: A White Boy in Africa* (1996) and *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun: A Memoir of Africa* (2006). Alexandra Fuller was born in England in 1969, but her parents who had previously lived in Rhodesia moved back there when she was only a toddler. From there, her family moved to Malawi in 1982 and to Zambia the year after. In 1994, Fuller settled in the United States with her American husband. She, too, has published a number of autobiographical works, of which this article will treat *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood* (2002) and *Cocktail Hour under the Tree of Forgetfulness* (2011).

As will be detailed below, the country they grew up in has been ravaged by crisis for two decades now. The widespread corruption, human rights violations, poverty and hunger that have afflicted the country during Robert Mugabe's regime have sent several million citizens into exile.[10] Western media attention to Zimbabwe has tended to focus on the white farmers who were the victims of a brutal campaign of "fast-track land reforms" during which most of them were evicted from their lands. Accompanying this media interest, there has been an outpouring of memoirs by white Zimbabweans after the beginning of the land reforms. These texts often have a similar focus on white suffering, obscuring black victims.[11] In the process, the image that emerges of the settler colonial period and the long-term presence of whites in Zimbabwe tends to become positive to the extent of dehistoricizing the current moment and downplaying past and present inequalities.[12] Many of the new memoir writers are farmers who were directly affected by the reforms. But as Rory Pilossof suggests, the crisis has also created an opportunity for "more established writers, such as Peter Godwin and Alexandra Fuller, [who] have used the fast-track land reforms and the market they have created for white narratives from Zimbabwe, to produce their own works that piggyback on the rural landscape."[13] As I will argue, these two authors have produced memoirs that romanticize the settler colonial past and lament the deterioration of the country associated with majority rule, even if they do so in more subtle ways than some of their farmer colleagues.

Memoirs are an interesting source for studying the relationship between individual and collective memory. In this genre, we can observe the way in which people use their own life stories to position themselves

in relation to publicly circulating narratives. Thus, memoirs written after decolonization tend to signal the authors' attitude to the imperial past by either countering or corroborating the way that past is discussed in society at large.[14] Many of the memoirs written by white Zimbabweans after the land reforms are quite unashamedly proud of the era of white minority rule and explicitly contrast it with the present. The narrative community they address is first and foremost the globally dispersed diaspora of white "ex-Rhodesians" who use online media to lament the end of the white minority regime.[15] Such memoirs, however, have had limited commercial success, partly because they are written by amateur writers and often self-published, but partly also, I would argue, because they are likely to strike at least some Western readers as too unapologetic about the colonial past. Fuller and Godwin, by contrast, are professional writers, published by big publishing houses, reviewed in major newspapers and frequently cited as part of the canon of modern Zimbabwean writing. The narrative community they address is a much wider one, counting many readers who would consider themselves firm opponents of colonialism. They are able to appeal to this wider community because their books display, in addition to their literary qualities, a much more ambiguous stance toward the colonial past and the postcolonial present.

Godwin states in the preface to his first memoir that it is "not a work of forensic research," and that instead "I have written as I remember, with all the foibles and imperfections brought on by the passage of time."[16] Godwin and Fuller's books are written not with the aim of being objective analyses of a historical situation but of giving readers a sense of how the authors see and saw their lives, with open admissions of their subjective perspectives and flawed memory. My purpose in analyzing them is therefore not to judge whether they should have written differently or whether they should refrain from speaking altogether.[17] Rather, I want to demonstrate some internal tensions and inconsistencies in their texts, because these ambiguities illustrate a wider phenomenon of postcolonial nostalgia that characterizes much engagement with the colonial past today.

As suggested by Pilossof's remarks, in these and other nostalgic accounts of Africa, the continent as imagined in the West becomes a product for Western consumption: "stories of white adventure in Africa and the decay brought about by black (mis)rule fall upon an almost insatiable appetite."[18] Decolonization far from eradicated Western ideas about Africa,

so in the commodification of Africa for the West, colonial stereotypes are dusted off and updated to the tastes of a contemporary audience.[19] But in the postcolonial era, readers are assured that the stories they read are written by progressives, not nostalgic reactionaries. Indeed, so common is the tendency for writers to cite their liberal, postcolonial credentials that Binyavanga Wainaina includes it in his mock advice to an imagined author in his essay "How to Write about Africa": "Throughout the book, adopt a *sotto* voice, in conspiracy with the reader, and a sad *I-expected-so-much* tone. Establish early on that your liberalism is impeccable, and mention near the beginning how much you love Africa, how you fell in love with the place and can't live without her."[20] Once a postcolonial perspective is established, Wainaina implies that writers set themselves free to repeat any colonial stereotype imaginable. The two authors studied here continue that practice. In the following, I will trace how Fuller and Godwin represent themselves as "postcolonials," critical of colonial rule, only to undermine that image through a series of nostalgic gestures.

Limits of self-scrutiny

As indicated above, there is an ambiguity in Fuller's and Godwin's memoirs between their criticism of colonial rule and their nostalgia for the past. While this article will focus on detailing the nostalgic elements of the texts, it is useful to take a moment first to examine their criticism of settler colonialism. Part of the challenge in analyzing these texts is that the criticism is often not explicit but comes across through, say, an undertone of self-mockery or a matter-of-fact representation of violence. We see this in a scene from Fuller's childhood: "We cheer when we hear the faint, stomach-echoing thump of a mine detonating. Either an African or a baboon has been wounded and killed."[21] While there is no explicit condemnation of this cheering, we get the distinct sense that Fuller wants to communicate the absurdity of her childhood values and behavior to her contemporary audience. Through such implicit rejections, Fuller and Godwin distance themselves from the lack of respect for African people that they identify with the majority of settler Rhodesians. But just as it is possible to feel several things at once, so a text can fail to live up to its own standards. In the case of Fuller and Godwin, such internal inconsistencies

do not necessarily make the authors' postcolonial sentiments false, but they do reveal the limits of their self-scrutiny.

In all four memoirs, the writers condemn the crimes of colonialism, positioning themselves as progressives who harbor no dreams of bringing back white rule. However, in their first memoirs the two authors go to much further lengths to critically explore their *personal* participation in an unjust system than they do in their second memoirs. These first two narratives are thus much closer to seeking absolution through confession than are the later books, which project injustice as an exterior phenomenon.[22] And yet, even within these stories of personal blame, we find extenuating circumstances that seem to relieve the authors of real guilt.

Fuller's first memoir explicitly engages with her own and her family's racism. She frequently cites her parents' use of racist slurs like "kaffir," "*muntus*," "baboons" and "Affies" and speaks openly about her own participation in such racist attitudes, like when she quotes her eight-year-old self: "'When I grow up, I'll be in charge of *muntus* and show them how to farm properly,' I declare."[23] However, with her constant references to her parents' derogatory language, she locates responsibility for the racism with her upbringing, relinquishing any deep, personal culpability for what could only be a learnt response.

In her second memoir, her parents' vocabulary has been sanitized of racist epithets, and they generally enthusiastically exoticize black Africans rather than express disgust towards them. Whereas in Fuller's first memoir, she was told that certain behavior like "dancing hip-waggling to African music" must be avoided "[b]ecause it is something only *muntus* do," in her second, "Mum clapped along to the dancers, and cocked her hips this way and that."[24] While her mother still unabashedly exoticizes the black people she meets, she has become much less offensive to contemporary sensibilities. Instead of Fuller's parents, it is now imperial rule more broadly that comes in for critical scrutiny. In particular, the author cites Caroline Elkins's *Imperial Reckoning*, an indictment of Britain's violent repression of the Kikuyu during the Mau Mau uprising.[25] By detailing the atrocities committed by British soldiers, Fuller props up her liberal, anti-imperial credentials but moves blame further away from herself and her family and onto British actions, in a different colony more firmly part of the imperial system than Rhodesia after its Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965.

The difference between Godwin's two memoirs (published before and after the land reforms) is even starker. The first contains criticism of the casual racism that surrounded him in his youth, like his boss's "stream of racial joshing and taunting" of black colleagues which Godwin "did my best to ignore." Godwin uses his parents' record as "part of the old white liberal establishment" who "didn't support Smith and his Rhodesian Front Party, unlike most whites" to suggest that he, like his family, was always critical of the governing white supremacy.[26] At one point, as though in the ultimate distancing maneuver, he even describes fantasizing about killing the prime minister Ian Smith himself.[27] Godwin's critical take on white Rhodesia causes him to interrogate his own role in the civil war. As a police officer, he threatened a young black man with torture and death if he refused to tell the whereabouts of the guerrillas. He recalls seeing his own reflection in a window: "It was a terrifying face, coursed through with anger and despair. It was the face of someone who would kill an unarmed civilian for withholding information. It was my face."[28] And yet, even as Godwin cites his own brutality, he also makes himself a victim of the war that brought him to such actions, not only out of anger, but also "despair."

The second memoir has no such accounts of white supremacy or of Godwin's participation in it. Besides a few scattered references to the civil war, only one page is devoted to the history of (Southern) Rhodesia, mentioning briefly the injustice of "[r]acially based land tenure," but also the benefits of colonization: "the black population increased with their access to Western medicine, with people like my mother carrying out wide-scale vaccinations against killer diseases."[29] Thus, any investigation of the colonial record places responsibility with an anonymous system of European colonization and is tempered by his insistence on the contributions of settlers, who are much more closely associated with Godwin himself.[30] In general, rather than preoccupying itself much with the country's historical background, the book focuses squarely on the suffering of whites under Mugabe.

Despite the difference between their first and second memoirs, even in their first memoirs, Fuller and Godwin tend to provide justificatory context: Fuller's racism was a learnt response from growing up in a racist family and society; Godwin's human rights violations during the war were a result of the brutality that surrounded him, and anyway, his colleagues were far worse. This inbuilt legitimization renders their confessions hollow. Their

self-redemption is granted partly through the very act of narrating, which implies regret and a consequent right to forgiveness; and partly within the narrative, as the story itself reveals that they were never to blame in the first place. However, in terms of the progressive self-image of the authors and their audiences, these acts of confession, and in the second memoirs, the occasional criticism of empire, create a stage from which the settler past and the postcolonial present can be discussed without fear of immediate accusations of nostalgia. In other words, the acknowledgment and regret of past crimes can be used to undermine any meaningful challenge to the broader mindset that produced them.

Fuller and Godwin are following a familiar pattern of metropolitan remembrance when they present themselves as skeptical of the horrors of empire even as they fail to resist its legacies in their own texts. In the 1980s, Salman Rushdie and John McBratney criticized the wave of British "Raj nostalgia," focusing both on books and films that romanticized the colonial record in India and on more ambiguous representations.[31] They argue that despite the unflattering portrayal of empire in *The Raj Quartet*, the author Paul Scott "unconsciously undermines the force of his indictment of Empire," because of his longing for imperial values and his focus on British characters.[32] As Rushdie concludes, "[i]t is no defence to say that a work adopts, in its structure, the very ethic which, in its content and tone, it pretends to dislike. It is, in fact, the case for the prosecution."[33]

Fuller and Godwin are able to both condemn and romanticize the settler colonial past by relegating responsibility for its crimes to an anonymous system. Even in the case of her family's racism, Fuller suggests that, despite their colonial habits, people like her parents were and remain unaware of the implications of colonialism. She says that she has the impression that her mother "is speaking of a make-believe place forever trapped in the celluloid of another time, as if she were a third-person participant in a movie.... The violence and the injustices that came with colonialism seem—in my mother's version of events—to have happened in some other unwatched movie, to some other unwatched people. Which in a way, they were."[34] Fuller portrays her mother as simply caught up in an illusion rather than a complicit participant in colonial violence and expropriation. Similarly, while Godwin pits his family against the white supremacist regime, his conclusion that "most whites were still in the thrall

of the prime minister, Ian Smith" exonerates the spellbound majority from charges of deliberate racism.[35]

In the historical work about white Rhodesians that Godwin wrote together with Ian Hancock in 1993, they argue that "perhaps their worst collective fault was an almost infinite capacity for self-deception."[36] Like Hancock and Godwin, the memoirs represent white Rhodesians as essentially good people who were more interested in maintaining a comfortable way of life than in the "big issues," and whose racism and defense of colonialism stemmed from self-delusion rather than malice.[37] Indeed, Hancock and Godwin's argument that white Rhodesians "voted for heroes rather than policies" suggests, like Fuller's representation of her mother, that they failed to grasp the implication of their support for the repressive regime. Following Smith "lemming like … into the abyss," white Rhodesians were supposedly "easily led, and more easily deceived"—an analysis that essentially acquits ordinary citizens while condemning their leader.[38] Fuller seeks to make the reader understand the motivation and mindset that lay behind individual subscription to white rule as detached from its violent reality, of which she shows that she herself is aware. Her mother, then, is used to mark a distinction between Fuller and the colonial discourse of her parents' generation, but also to give that generation a sympathetic face.

In his discussion of *The Raj Quartet*, McBratney argues that Scott adhered to a "liberal ethos" of interracial "partnership" which his novels show to be bankrupt on the "large, public scale" but to triumph at the level of individuals.[39] So, too, Fuller and Godwin level their most severe charges of colonial injustice at the anonymous system of white rule, while exonerating individual white settlers like themselves and their families from real responsibility. Instead, they point to their contributions and sacrifices to Africa and to their own innocent relationships with individual black Zimbabweans.

Nostalgia for childhood innocence

Nostalgia is fundamentally about yearning for some other time or place.[40] In retrospect, nostalgic memories take on an Edenic quality in juxtaposition to a less magical, less innocent present. Fuller and Godwin might protest that their childhood memories are not very Edenic, that they have been at

pains to emphasize all the death and discrimination they witnessed growing up. Indeed, they do have quite mixed accounts of their childhoods which include stories of abuse, of losing siblings, of witnessing racist violence and of the brutalizing effects of the civil war. They describe the internalization of racist attitudes, as when Fuller's childhood self remarks that she "hope[d]" no "Affies" had used the cup she was drinking from, and the normalizing of racist violence, as when Godwin cites a boy who matter-of-factly remarks, "You know, my uncle shot a *kaffir* once.... But it was OK because he had a licence."[41] And yet, while the adult writers distance themselves from this climate and their own participation in racist practices, their childhood selves are also characterized by a personal innocence, an innocence that appeals to the audience's nostalgia. As the authors posit a contrast between that magical, innocent past and a disenchanted present, they confirm a Western audience's suspicion that Africa is "going to the dogs" without white governance. Importantly, the object of Fuller and Godwin's nostalgia is studiously vague. It is through the contrast to a grimmer present that we sense the authors' longing. Whether they yearn for the securities of a colonial order or for a brief period of post-independence racial harmony is hard to pin down. What is clear is that some unspecified kind of past emerges as happier and more prosperous than the present.

A way to overcome the dilemma between the authors' postcolonial self-image and their attachment to a time and lifestyle associated with white rule is, as Ashleigh Harris points out, to invoke the innocence of childhood. Referring to *Mukiwa*, she describes how Godwin uses "the child-subject's pre-political consciousness" which "puts him beyond reproach, and yet the broader political conditions are made clear to the reader."[42] Thus, Godwin's child protagonist has little awareness of racial conflict, as opposed to the adult protagonist. In a way, the child's perspective allows the narrator to adopt a position of naiveté as though the unawareness of political issues meant their disappearance. The fact that their childhoods coincide with white rule may make it difficult, for the authors as well as for their audience, to determine whether nostalgia relates to childhood as such or to white rule. As Tony Simoes da Silva notes, "[i]nsofar as childhood will always presuppose, indeed signify a degree of innocence from broader ideological elements, frequently it is through the voice of the small child that White South Africans seek to negotiate the past with an eye on the present."[43] Note that Fuller and Godwin speak to a larger

commemorative community some of whom recall white settler Africa with explicit nostalgia. A dehistoricized version of the past which paints over or naturalizes racial inequalities can be defended as a credible rendition of the child's experience, while at the same time working to provide ideologically useful firsthand evidence of happy racial relations under white rule.[44]

While Fuller, at least in her first memoir, stresses the racism of her childhood home, she and Godwin both describe their close relationship with one or more of the family's black servants, repeating a trope that one finds in a number of end of empire autobiographies. Both of them stress the physical closeness to their nanny, her smell and the look of her skin.[45] This is reminiscent of what Stoler and Strassler have observed about former Dutch colonizers' memoirs of Java, in which "stories of former servants are filled with tender anecdotes, demonstrations of affection, loyalty and mutual recognitions." This is not, they document, how the servants themselves recall relationships to their former employers, and yet in European nostalgia this is "a familiar story: the feminized, depoliticized home as the locus for a kinder, gentler colonialism."[46]

Interestingly, the closeness to the nanny is remembered as illicit: Fuller describes how she would stick her hand under the blouse of her nanny to feel her breast when she needed comforting. "I know, without knowing why, that Mum would smack me if she saw me doing this."[47] And Godwin describes having to keep his trips to the Apostolic church with his nanny secret because she was convinced his parents would not approve.[48] This suggests a special kind of intimate relationship that circumvented the otherwise restrictive race relations of the era, allowing Fuller and Godwin to project their postcolonial politics back in time onto an, at least occasionally, color-blind childhood self.

The idea of what Harris terms the "prelapsarian" idyll of childhood gains strength from the contrast to a fall, a loss of innocence or a disruption of the old order, and in the case of Zimbabwe this is provided by the history of the fast-track land reforms.[49] In the mid-1990s, Mugabe's regime became increasingly dictatorial. In response to popular demands for democratic change, it used white farmers as a scapegoat for the lack of economic progress. From 2000, a series of land reforms were launched, in which about four thousand farmer families were evicted and their lands distributed to so-called veterans of the independence war.[50] This brutal racialized violence was sanctioned by a state-sponsored narrative

representing whites as enemies of Zimbabwe who wanted to recolonize the country.[51] In addition to the white casualties, a much larger number of black farm workers were also attacked, killed, raped or displaced. Yet in Western media, the focus was overwhelmingly on the white victims of the conflict.[52] The crisis thus provided an occasion where postcolonial sensibilities could be pushed to the side to make room for sympathy with the evicted farmers. Paul Gilroy says that in Britain the response was an "anxiety over the fate of Britain's abandoned colonial kith and kin." He argues that the "repetition of tragic southern African themes" was "deployed to contest and then seize the position of victim."[53] As we will see, this is a gesture that also manifests itself in memoirs by white expatriate Zimbabweans.

Symptomatically, Godwin sketches the total descent into chaos as the moment when the servants turn on their employers. This comes out most strongly in the case of his parents' long-time housemaid Mavis who left them. Like the Dutch in Java, Godwin's parents are shown to have thought of their relationship to Mavis as something more intimate than an employer-employee relationship, but their trust was broken and the servant's loyalty was not to be counted on in the time of crisis. Under pressure from her "greedy" nieces, Mavis allowed the violence from outside to slip into the family home, in the shape of thugs demanding "retrenchment payment," causing Godwin's mother to ask, "'How *could* you Mavis?'" As though by divine punishment, Mavis died shortly after this episode, out of shame, so we gather, as she had stopped taking the pills with which Godwin's mother had supplied her.[54] Part of the catastrophe of the present is thus that it destroys a relationship otherwise represented as idyllic in its prelapsarian innocence.

Davis reminds us that nostalgia is occasioned by the present, not by that which is nostalgically remembered in itself.[55] So what is it then about the present that occasions nostalgic accounts of the colonial era in Africa? Much of the explanation must of course be found not in Africa but in those places where the accounts are consumed, namely, in the West. While the notions of a natural racial hierarchy and Western countries' right to colonize other countries have generally been sidelined from the mainstream, much of the discursive baggage of colonialism lingers on, making Britain and the United States especially fertile grounds for nostalgic reminiscence. Gilroy has argued that metropolitan Britain is still trapped in "postcolonial melancholia" because it has failed to face up to the grim

aspects of its imperial past. Calls for the British public to admit to those horrors are often met with a defensive response, in which empire is justified and the British themselves are made out to be its ultimate victims.[56] This may help to explain the persistent interest in romantic accounts of empire.[57] In the United States, there has long been a fascination with all things British, including the country's imperial past and the glamor and frontier heroism with which it is associated. Antoinette Burton argues that television programs for American audiences whitewash British history to allow people to project fantasies of conflict-free race relations onto Britain.[58] In the case of Fuller's and Godwin's memoirs, the texts let readers savor the contrast between a dystopic present where the country has descended into chaos and a comparatively happier past.

White victimhood and the violation of home

Besides the invocation of childhood innocence, nostalgia in the memoirs is not so much a case of simple idealizing images of the colonial past—the authors are too critical of the racism and repression of that past to celebrate it outright—but rather of contrasts with an even more dysfunctional present. Of course, criticizing contemporary violence and repression in Zimbabwe does not in itself pose a challenge to a postcolonial worldview. Indeed, Mugabe's misrule can rightly be seen as a betrayal of the ideals of equal rights, full democratic representation and protection against exploitation that informed the campaign against colonialism. As we will see, criticism of Mugabe is not the sole province of white writers either. But unlike their black Zimbabwean colleagues, Fuller's and Godwin's representation of a country in crisis revolves around white victimhood and nostalgic contrasts with the innocent past. The focal point of this contrast is the white family home.

The invasion of Godwin's family home by thugs signals a breakdown of order and a violation of the sanctity of the domestic. This speaks to a widespread theme of whiteness under siege in discourse at the end of empire. Wendy Webster argues that in the late colonial era, stories of settler societies at war with indigenous insurgents and of white British communities experiencing an influx of nonwhite migrants showed both kinds of communities as "beleaguered and vulnerable. Both converged

on a common theme: the violation of domestic sanctuaries." These stories "made domestic order central to Englishness, setting the idea of white homes against the incapacity of the colonized/immigrants for familial and community life."[59] In the memoirs of Fuller and Godwin, we find such imagery reproduced and refurbished for a decidedly postcolonial era. The breakdown of order marks the transition from a fondly remembered past to a dystopic present and is acted out on a family home that stands in for both the white body and the nation at large.

Fuller describes independence through two stories. The first, an account of the arrival of black children to her school and the departure of almost all the white pupils, props up Fuller's postcolonial credentials, as she mocks her childhood prejudice. The conclusion of this story is the realization that "I do not turn black" from sharing bathwater and sleeping areas with these new children, who surprise her with their civilized manners.[60] Yet in the second story of independence, it is the *un*civilized behavior of black Zimbabweans that is stressed. As in the late colonial stories described by Webster, the focal point of the story is "the violation of domestic sanctuaries." First, squatters moved onto the Fuller family farm, and later, soldiers arrived at their house "war-trigger-happy" and high on "*ganja*."[61]

Webster notes that in the stories of white domestic Englishness, particular attention was paid to "specific domestic boundary-markers—front doors, letter-boxes, windows."[62] The same is true of Fuller's account, where the soldiers violate the frail barriers that kept the white family safe. She describes her childhood self and her mother desperately trying to block the simple wooden door, but losing the struggle to the "three grown men" forcing their way in.[63] Elsewhere, her father berates another group of soldiers who complained that "You called us baboons": "You jumped into my bedroom window. That is not a civilized thing to do, that is a baboon thing to do."[64] In her father's commonsensical explanation for his use of an extremely racist epithet, it was the soldiers' violation of the domestic space and their "uncivilized" manner that earned them the label. The strength of this account relies on the disruption of family life and the threat to vulnerable children and a pregnant mother from soldiers who were not only armed but who also flouted expected norms, being intoxicated, careless with their weapons and violating the domestic space.

Together with the positive description of the introduction of multiracial schooling, this is Fuller's most direct engagement with the transition to majority rule. As one of the soldiers says, "This is Zimbabwe now. You can't just do as you please from now on. From now on it is we who are in charge."[65] Eventually, their land is "put up for mandatory auction under the new land distribution scheme."[66] This is certain to remind readers in the early 2000s of the ongoing land reforms, even if the immediate post-independence process was quite different.[67] Through the voice of her mother, Fuller directly links the experience of losing the farm to the loss of her baby brother: "Mum starts having problems with the pregnancy. She says her problems are caused by the stress of independence. Losing the war. Losing the farm."[68] While Fuller stresses her support for the transition to majority rule by celebrating it as a moment of racial justice and personal enlightenment, independence also comes to signify loss and the transgression of the sanctity of the family home. The transgressed boundaries of the home are metonymic of, on the one hand, the vulnerable body of the child and the pregnant mother and, on the other, of the nation at large, with independence marshaling in a time when intoxicated soldiers "are in charge."[69]

In Godwin's second memoir, it is not doors and windows but the bougainvillea that marks white domesticity. The flower reappears throughout the text as a symbol of the presence of white people and the order and fertility they bring with them. Consequently, its disappearance signals the disruption of order. Around Godwin's parents' home in Harare, referred to as "Fort Godwin," stood a tall hedge of bougainvillea, keeping out "the huddled masses outside."[70] At the time of the land reforms, the hedge was ignited by the fires of the hawkers who lived on the street outside. With the hedge gone, the family is "totally exposed; anyone can peer straight into our inner sanctum."[71] This stresses the idea of the family home as separate and sacred, but also as vulnerable and under siege. The national crisis is suddenly on their doorstep. It even feels like the Blitz, we are told:

> As we sit there, the mournful wail of the air-raid siren marks the first class of the day across the road at Oriel Boys School.
>
> "Always reminds me of being in London during the Blitz," says Mum. "Feels like it now too," she says, surveying the smoldering cinders of Fort Godwin's bougainvillea battlements.[72]

The Second World War acts as a central reference point in the memoir, so the comparison with the Blitz is hardly coincidental. Gilroy argues that the war has become "an ethnic myth" for white Britons, a "memory of the country at war against foes who are simply, tidily, and uncomplicatedly evil."[73] Arguably, it is not only in Britain that the Second World War serves such a purpose. In the United States, where later wars have been the subject of heated debate, the Second World War similarly allows people to imagine their country fighting an unambiguously righteous war. Writing for these Western audiences at the time of the land reforms, Godwin is keen to garner all the sympathy he can. He reminds readers of the record of white farmers who fought with the Allies during the war and compares white Zimbabweans, as here, with Britons under siege during the Blitz, and, as elsewhere, with Polish Jews during the Holocaust.[74]

The burning of the hedge is followed by a series of increasingly nightmarish visions that are rich in colonial imagery of the mysterious, primitive and dangerous "dark continent."[75] Godwin recalls: "In bed I lie listening to the hawkers quarrelling. The walls dance with the shadows caused by their fires, fires that now burn along the edge of our garden and seem to surround us."[76] And the night after,

> in my restless dreams, the Hindhead hawkers are barking and whooping like the Dande *ambuyas*, the grandmothers forced by their own children to imitate baboons. They are scampering up and down the foot of our garden. Their eyes reflect the flames of their fires. They are whooping and barking and waiting.[77]

Unlike Fuller's father, Godwin refrains from directly comparing the people outside to baboons by first placing the idea in a dream, then adding the simile that the hawkers are "like" the *ambuyas* who are in turn just made to "imitate" baboons. But the word is still there, in plain sight to be associated with the people outside his bedroom window. They become a menacing and inarticulate, even animal-like presence, not walking but "scampering," not speaking but "quarrelling … whooping and barking and waiting." This draws from a catalogue of Western imagery about "primitive Africa."[78] When Godwin depicts fires that make the walls "dance," he calls forth associations of ritual dancing around fires, an equally familiar exoticizing trope. All these images arise merely because the boundary that kept the family apart from the outside world has been burned, breaking

down the established order. The incineration of the hedge is a bad omen. Within a month, Godwin's ailing father dies. As in Fuller's memoir, the vulnerable white family is under siege and the violation of the marker of white domesticity is a portent of personal loss. Thus, the national tragedy is acted out on the white body through the violation of home, shoring up the symbolic triad body-home-nation.

Like the trope of violated domestic spheres, this adoption of a victim's position was a common feature of discourse in late imperial Britain. Bill Schwarz argues that in the 1950s, "[f]irst, whites were coming to imagine themselves as historic victims; and second—commensurably—blacks were believed to be acquiring a status of supremacy."[79] Instead of seeing the people who lived their lives without shelter on the street as the actual victims, Godwin makes his family out to be the victims because they were exposed to the gaze of those people outside. Similarly, Fuller's family are portrayed as at least as vulnerable as the hungry squatters who move onto their land. Taking "possession of [the] coveted role" of the victim, both authors draw from a panoply of siege narratives which hark back to the colonial era and which have already been adapted to make sense of the end of empire as a story of beleaguered white domesticity.[80]

Of course, Fuller and Godwin and their fellow white memoirists are not the only ones to have written critically about the Mugabe regime and its human rights violations. Indeed, the critical interrogation of the nation's past and present has been a central preoccupation of much of the literature written by black Zimbabwean authors over the past decades. In the novels and short stories of Yvonne Vera, Chenjerai Hove, Petina Gappah and Brian Chikwava, the violence and repression of the Mugabe era is insistently exposed and condemned. Interestingly, this literature is, for the overwhelming majority, written as fiction rather than memoirs. We can only speculate as to the reasons why so few black Zimbabwean authors have taken up the autobiographical genre. One suggestion would be that the consequences of writing nonfiction that is critical of the regime are more severe for black authors still resident in Zimbabwe than for white expatriates. Indeed, the few exceptions of black memoirs have been written from abroad. In *Homelessness Sweet Home*, Hove comments that it is precisely exile that allows his nonfictional engagement with contemporary affairs: "My advantage of being away from the loaded guns and furious soldiers and militia paid to get angry on behalf of the president enables

me to reflect on some of the ingredients of the new [constitution]."[81] Already in 1984, Mugabe's political opponent, independence leader Joshua Nkomo, wrote from his exile that "[t]he greatest irony of my life is that I have written this record of it in Britain, the country that for so many decades refused our people the freedom they fought for. But the right to publish my memoirs is one that I gratefully claim even from my former oppressors."[82]

There are, however, differences between the kind of dissent one finds in these texts and that of Fuller and Godwin. First, the focus in Fuller's and Godwin's texts is on the plight of whites, to the general neglect of black victims. In the works of Vera, Hove, Nkomo and others, the traumatic stories of black Zimbabweans take center stage. Second, while these black authors share the condemnation of contemporary violence, they do not posit a contrast between a more ordered past and a disordered present. Rather, the contrast is between different faces of authoritarian regimes.[83] It is precisely the continuity of repressive practices that Nkomo finds ironic. In his harsh criticism of censorship in Zimbabwe in 2010, Hove says that the 1973 law enabling it is "a burdensome relic from the colonial era where entertainment was viewed in terms of the colour of one's skin."[84] His criticism of the exclusion of displaced Zimbabweans from the political process also relies on a historical parallel: "The ballot box only appears to us in dreams, which border on nightmares, just as the Rhodesian times when strict and bizarre preconditions were imposed on Blacks before they could be allowed to vote."[85] While they present a devastating criticism of contemporary repression, these authors also have little nostalgia for the system that went before, pointing instead to tragic connections between past and present.

Illustrating their postcolonial politics, Fuller and Godwin also point out such continuities. Godwin describes how he was involved as a lawyer in a court case immediately after independence, defending one of Nkomo's allies from government attacks of treason. Despite winning the case, the defendant was "redetained under the Emergency Regulations, the draconian set of laws inherited from Ian Smith." He concludes that "in the new Zimbabwe, just as in the old Rhodesia, innocence was no guarantee of freedom."[86] Fuller's story of losing the family farm to "land redistribution" starts with a historical overview of the expropriation of native lands and the "policy of racial segregation."[87] The emotional focus, however,

is on the traumatic experience of her family. In Fuller's and Godwin's memoirs, these moments of criticism of the colonial past coexist with a nostalgic contrast between an innocent childhood of relative harmony and later moments of violated white domesticity.

Replaced by nothing

As we have seen, nostalgia in these texts is partly achieved through an attachment to childhood, which allows for romantic yet depoliticized accounts of the past. It is also conveyed in the representation of the takeover of "white spaces," which borrows from colonial stereotypes and focuses on white bodies under siege. Finally, Fuller's and Godwin's memoirs are nostalgic also in the way they portray the replacement of something with nothing, represented variously as life v. death, order v. chaos, agriculture v. nature, progress v. regression. As they contrast the past with the present, Fuller and Godwin stress how the past contributions of white people were bringing the country forward, while in the present, these efforts are being negated and the country is reverting to a more backward state.

In their representation of the Zimbabwean crisis, Western media also tended to enhance the tragedy by juxtaposing the terrifying present with a romanticized past. As Wendy Willems explains, "Journalists often used the metaphor of 'The Jewel of Africa' to describe how wonderful Zimbabwe had been before Mugabe had turned it into a nightmare. The narrative of the transition from 'food basket to basket case' was often invoked in order to stress that Zimbabwe was the tale of a success gone bad."[88] This contrast presented the country as regressing, rolling back the progress delivered by white settlers and briefly enjoyed in a period of relative harmony after independence in 1980.[89] The idea of regression itself harks back to the colonial era, expressed in 1938 by then Prime Minister of Rhodesia Godfrey Huggins, when he warned that without white influence the "leaven of civilization would be removed from the country, and the black man would inevitably revert to a barbarian worse than before."[90]

It is significant that the hedge that marks the boundaries of "Fort Godwin" is a bougainvillea, a flower that Godwin uses earlier in the memoir to represent whiteness. He describes flying over the "bursts of gaudy bougainvillea [which] mark the houses of white men. Bougainvillea is

exotic to Africa, just like the white man. It hails from the rain forests of the Amazon. From the air, you can trace the progress of the European by the bright scarlets, mauves, and pinks of bougainvillea."[91] That the "progress of the European" should be represented by something as innocent and colorful as a flower speaks volumes about the kind of history Godwin wants to tell. This is not a story of settlers disrupting communities and expropriating native lands, but of the spread of irrigation and fertility.[92]

Godwin continues the tradition of white settlers before him who justified their claims to the land through "the myth that their presence made something out of nothing, in terms of bringing out the unused potential of the African people and the unused potential of African land."[93] It is a myth that has long been challenged in the novels and memoirs of black Zimbabweans. Nkomo describes the pressures after the First World War on his family and others to move away from the "area of good farmland, with its regular rainfall and beautiful grass for cattle," because it "had been claimed by the white people for their own use."[94] Despite such dissent, the idea of Europeans bringing progress has endured. As Godwin interviews white farmers who have experienced or fear violent evictions, he constantly emphasizes their development of hitherto barren and neglected land. One young mother and widow whose husband has been killed by the squatters recalls: "We bought our farm from a black man in 1986. It was a run-down overgrown mess.... Now all the rivers flow." Another farmer suggests that the land was not even taken before: "This place was mostly unpopulated when we arrived," but today "[h]e employs 620 people" and runs a school and clinic for their families.[95] This repeats a trope identified by David McDermott Hughes, whereby "Rhodesian writers crafted a property claim and self-image around the figure of an absent native unworthy of his environment."[96] With the original inhabitants unable, unwilling and unavailable to cultivate the land, it was up to European settlers to save them from themselves. This is how Rhodesians in the past justified their presence, and this is how Godwin and the interviewees for whom he provides a platform continue to represent their history.

Through multiple repetitions, then, Godwin establishes the positive contributions and "progress" brought by white settlers.[97] One of his interviewees sums up the balance sheet: "The white people that came to Africa did a lot of things wrong.... But history has proved that the white farmer, the Zimbabwean farmer, is a producer. There's no way that anybody can

tell me that the white farmer in Africa hasn't benefited Africa."[98] As elsewhere in the memoirs, the past wrongs of colonialism are acknowledged only to be instantly put aside, diminished by comparison with a purportedly positive overall record. Allowing the farmers themselves to speak as authoritative firsthand witnesses, Godwin lends a certain authenticity to his story. At the same time, he is able to let his text utter things that he might be faulted for stating directly, like the above conclusion that Africa has benefited from white farmers. Godwin seems to imply that his postcolonial politics remain unaffected by his representation of the crisis, because he is merely describing what happened and lending a voice to the farmers' grievances. But, like Paul Scott before him, his indictment of the colonial record is attenuated by his (vicarious) insistence on positive achievements.

Godwin's romantic idea of past settler contributions gains strength from its contrast with the present. In addition to saying that they made something out of nothing, he suggests that the absence of settlers means the roll-back of that progress and the squandering of potential. "Irrigation has been destroyed, wells ruined, electricity cut off for non-payment of bills. Some have reverted to medieval agricultural methods on what were, just the year before, highly sophisticated, productive farms. Unsurprisingly, yields have plummeted." While earlier one could see the bougainvillea from the air, a later overflying, with the land reforms well under way, was much more bleak: "Even from the air, when we go up in a little Cessna to get some aerial shots, it is obvious that everything has been *jambanja*'d, turned upside down."[99] The contrast between these two aerial views suggests a temporal and civilizational regression and equates the presence of Europeans with fertility and progress. As with the hedge around "Fort Godwin," the disappearance of markers of white control over nature brings danger and primitiveness.

This image borrows from colonial discourses about Africa as centuries behind Europe, or as Hegel would have it, "Unhistorical … still involved in the *conditions of mere nature*."[100] Josiah Brownell explains how this purported temporal difference was used in post-UDI Rhodesia to argue for the benefits of colonization for the black population: "A fundamental tenet of white settler ideology was the beneficial catalytic effects that settlers had on largely static indigenous populations. Only through interactions with an advanced civilisation, it was held, could the static nature of indigenous society move forward through time."

For white Rhodesians, this civilizing role meant that not only was their presence legitimate but the continuation of white supremacy could also be justified because, it was argued, "racial advancement in Rhodesia had to evolve at its own pace within Rhodesia's unique context," in order for "Africans to adapt."[101] In spite of writing decades after decolonization, Godwin still gives voice to this kind of reasoning: "It is sometimes said that the worst thing to happen to Africa was the arrival of the white man. And the second worst was his departure." While not claiming ownership of the controversial statement, he does not seem to want to contradict it either, elaborating instead that: "Colonialism lasted just long enough to destroy much of Africa's indigenous cultures and traditions, but not long enough to leave behind a durable replacement."[102] Even as he confirms his postcolonial self-image by acknowledging the traumatic impact of European settlement, Godwin echoes the Rhodesian argument that settlers ought to have been given time to work out a stable alternative. Crucially, the ambivalent celebration of white contributions is placed in the mouth of others ("It is sometimes said") but also still included in Godwin's account: this simultaneous distancing from and restatement of a retrospective idealization of colonial rule is emblematic of what I wish to term "postcolonial nostalgia."

Fuller and Godwin perpetuate the image of white settlers as a boon to the black population by stressing the good deeds not least of their own families to their black neighboring communities and by positing a contrast with the regression to a primitive state of disorder that followed from the removal of white authority. Fuller describes her family's positive contributions to the local community and how these were abruptly brought to an end by independence. Her mother used to run a school and a clinic, both of which she closed out of spite and anger at losing the war:

> Now she says, "Don't they have your *comrades* at the hospital? We're all lovely socialists together now, didn't you know? If you go to the hospital, your *comrades* will treat you there."
>
> "But, madam…"
>
> "Don't 'But, madam' me. I'm not 'madam' anymore. I'm 'comrade'."
>
> "You are my mother…"
>
> "I'm not your bloody mother."

> "We're seeking health."
>
> "You should have thought of that in the first place."
>
> The sick, the swollen-bellied, the bleeding, the malarial all sit … and wait for a lift into town, where they will wait hours, maybe days, for the suddenly flooded, socialized health care system to take care of them.[103]

The school Fuller's mother had provided was also "replaced by nothing," because "there is no transport for the children."[104] The mother's embittered withdrawal of help is one of many examples of Fuller pointing out her family's failings. At the same time, though, she portrays her mother and people like her as indispensable to the black community and emphasizes the cries for help coming from "ordinary people." Interestingly, we have not heard of the school and clinic before this moment, when they are mentioned to create a contrast where independence means the overnight disappearance of the order, health and education hitherto secured by settler families. Despite Fuller's and Godwin's overt rejection of colonial values, they perpetuate colonial stereotypes about Africans being in need of Europeans. With the Europeans gone, what they leave behind is not, say, the complex legacies of colonialism or the continuities of political repression exposed by black Zimbabwean writers, but a disorderly, helpless, premodern anarchy. Whiteness is replaced by nothing.

Conclusion

Fuller insists that unlike her mother, she has "no patience with nostalgia." Her mother may not have "woken up" to the violence of the colonial past, but Fuller is fully aware of it. She is postcolonial. However, despite the efforts of Fuller and Godwin to position themselves as postcolonials, their memoirs convey a powerful nostalgia toward a lost era. The effect is achieved through the juxtaposition of past and present and the repetition of tropes about primitive black Africans and benevolent Europeans that are all too familiar from settler colonial discourses of the past. As they contrast romantic accounts of their childhoods with dystopic descriptions of the violation of domestic spaces, Fuller and Godwin construct an atmosphere of nostalgia for the colonial order that breaks through the varnish of condemnation of white supremacy.

As they conjure up images of a comparatively happy past and contrast it to a dystopic present, they cater to audience demands for nostalgic stories of Africa. For Fuller and Godwin, as well as for their audiences, a vocabulary and a mindset cultivated in the colonial era seem to endure side by side with a societal condemnation of the imperial record. As Schwarz has argued, "the internal mental structures of colonial power outlive their epoch," causing in particular "putatively racial truths to hold their ground in the metropolitan civilizations."[105] As firsthand accounts, these memoirs allow Western readers to confirm their unspoken suspicions that everybody was better off with white people in charge. At the same time, their repeated gestures toward a postcolonial, empire-critical view of history permit those same readers to perceive their own indulgence in colonial fantasies as enlightened and fundamentally innocent of racial nostalgia. While citing imperial injustices, the authors also downplay their own and their families' personal role in inequalities past and present, stressing instead the positive contributions of white settlers and how these have since been squandered. Fuller and Godwin cast themselves and other white settlers as both flawed heroes and vulnerable victims. The underlying message of this postcolonial nostalgia seems to be that white rule might not have been perfect, but at least it offered something where now there is nothing.

Fuller and Godwin manage to celebrate the contributions of the white minority in Zimbabwe while condemning the colonial system and individual acts of racism. Although the idea of a benevolent imperialism has a long prehistory, this ambivalently nostalgic version of it is a peculiarly postcolonial phenomenon. It is a response to the postcolonial condition, in which the empire is seen as morally defunct, while many of the psychological and discursive structures that underpinned it persist, and so must find new forms. One of these forms, I have argued, is an ambiguous postcolonial nostalgia.

Notes

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1. Alexandra Fuller, *Cocktail Hour under the Tree of Forgetfulness* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 16.

2. Ibid., 92.

3. Peter Godwin, *Mukiwa: A White Boy in Africa* (London: Picador, 2007), Preface.

4. Patricia M. E. Lorcin, "Imperial Nostalgia; Colonial Nostalgia: Differences of Theory, Similarities of Practice?," *Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historiques* 39, no. 3 (2013): 97–111; Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 107–22.

5. Frances Harding, "Africa and the Moving Image: Television, Film and Video," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 16, no. 1 (2003): 72–76; Ashleigh Harris, "Facing/Defacing Robert Mugabe: Land Reclamation, Race and the End of Colonial Accountability," in Anna Bernard, Ziad Elmarsafy, and Stuart Murray, eds., *What Postcolonial Theory Doesn't Say* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 105–20; Patricia M. E. Lorcin, *Historicizing Colonial Nostalgia: European Women's Narratives of Algeria and Kenya, 1900–Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 187–91; Rory Pilossof, "The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Land, Race and Belonging in the Memoirs of White Zimbabweans," *South African Historical Journal* 61, no. 3 (2009): 621–38.

6. Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 16.

7. Ronald Robinson, "The Moral Disarmament of African Empire, 1919–1947," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 8, no. 1 (1979): 86–104.

8. Lorcin, "Imperial Nostalgia; Colonial Nostalgia," 97.

9. Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," 120, 108.

10. JoAnn McGregor and Ranka Primorac, eds., *Zimbabwe's New Diaspora: Displacement and the Cultural Politics of Survival* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

11. Astrid Rasch, "Autobiography after Empire: Individual and Collective Memory in Dialogue" (PhD diss., University of Copenhagen, 2016), 184–204.

12. Ashleigh Harris, "Writing Home: Inscriptions of Whiteness/Descriptions of Belonging in White Zimbabwean Memoir/Autobiography," in Robert Muponde and Ranka Primorac, eds., *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2005), 103–17. 106. For historical background on racialized dispossession of land in the past and the contemporary politics of place, see Jocelyn Alexander, *The Unsettled Land: State-Making and the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe, 1893–2003* (Oxford: James Currey, 2006); Donald S Moore, *Suffering for Territory: Race, Place, and Power in Zimbabwe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

13. Rory Pilossof, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Farmers Voices from Zimbabwe* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2012), 130.

14. Rasch, "Autobiography after Empire."

15. Donal Lowry, "Rhodesia 1890–1980," in Robert Bickers, ed., *Settlers and Expatriates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 148; Katja Uusihakala, "Memory Meanders: Place, Home and Commemoration in an Ex-Rhodesian Diaspora Community" (PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2008).

16. Godwin, *Mukiwa*, Preface.

17. Samantha Vice recommends that whites in South Africa consign themselves to humility and silence to avoid doing more harm. While the suggestion is interesting, it is not my business here to decide whether or not Fuller and Godwin ought not to have written their memoirs in the first place. See Samantha Vice, "'How Do I Live in This Strange Place?,'" *Journal of Social Philosophy* 41, no. 3 (2010): 335–38, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9833.2010.01496.x.

18. Pilossof, "Land, Race and Belonging," 631.

19. Will Jackson, "White Man's Country: Kenya Colony and the Making of a Myth," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 5, no. 2 (2011): 344–68; Pilossof, "Land, Race and Belonging," 621; Florence Ayisi and Catalin Brylla, "The Politics of Representation and Audience Reception: Alternative Visions of Africa," *Research in African Literatures* 44, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 126. On the appeal to colonial nostalgia in marketing, see also Maurizio Peleggi, "Consuming Colonial Nostalgia: The Monumentalisation of Historic Hotels in Urban South-East Asia," *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 46, no. 3 (Dec. 2005): 255–65.

20. Binyavanga Wainaina, "How to Write about Africa," *Granta*, January 19, 2006. Compare da Silva's remarks about white South African author Breyten Breytenbach who writes for "a German publisher whose readership likes the story of Africa best when told through the eyes and pen of a White man; that in this case the story bears all the hallmarks of the White man's genuine devotion to Africa and Africans, and of his authentic suffering, all the better." Tony Simoes da Silva, "Redeeming Self: The Business of Whiteness in Post-Apartheid South African Writing," in Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Maryrose Casey and Fiona Nicoll, eds., *Transnational Whiteness Matters* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 11.

21. Alexandra Fuller, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood* (New York: Picador, 2015), 55.

22. On the notion of granting oneself absolution through confession of past racism, see Harris, "Writing Home," 104–5; Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee, "Introduction," in Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee, eds., *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2–3, 6; da Silva, "Redeeming Self."

23. Fuller, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, 52, 65, 125, 159, 161, 105.

24. Ibid., 42; Fuller, *Cocktail Hour*, 72.

25 Fuller, *Cocktail Hour*, 96.

26. Godwin, *Mukiwa*, 192, 58, 208. However, as several researchers have pointed out, white Rhodesian "liberals" did not necessarily challenge the colonial order. Indeed, they have been accused of carrying out their politics within a system of white supremacy rather than offering a radical alternative. See David McDermott Hughes, "To Lump or to Split: Perils of Portraying Zimbabwe's Whites," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 33, no. 2 (3 April 2015): 300–304; Ian Hancock, *White Liberals, Moderates and Radicals in Rhodesia 1953–1980* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 6–7; Dane Kennedy, "An Education in Empire," in Antoinette Burton and Dane Kennedy, eds., *How Empire Shaped Us* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 101.

27. Godwin, *Mukiwa*, 263.

28. Ibid., 292–93.

29. Peter Godwin, *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun: A Memoir of Africa* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2006), 57.

30. See also ibid., 155–60.

31. John McBratney, "The Raj Is All the Rage: Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet* and Colonial Nostalgia," *North Dakota Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (Summer 1987): 204–9; Salman Rushdie, "Outside the Whale," in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991* (London: Granta Books, 1991), 87–101. See also Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," 107.

32. McBratney, "The Raj Is All the Rage," 205; Rushdie, "Outside the Whale," 90. For an even earlier version of the same pattern in the case of Joseph Conrad, see Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," *Massachusetts Review* 57, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 20.

33. Rushdie, "Outside the Whale," 90; I examine the widespread phenomenon of acknowledgment of imperial wrongs in contemporary postcolonial nostalgia in Britain in Astrid Rasch, "'Keep the Balance': The Politics of Remembering Empire in Post-Colonial Britain," *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies* (forthcoming, Spring 2019).

34. Fuller, *Cocktail Hour*, 92–93.

35. Godwin, *Mukiwa*, 197.

36. Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die: The Impact of War and Political Change on White Rhodesia, c.1970–1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 11.

37. Ibid., 9.

38. Ibid.

39. McBratney, "The Raj Is All the Rage," 205.

40. Dennis Walder, *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation, and Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 9. See also Aleida Assmann, "Memories of Post-Imperial Nations," in Dietmar Rothermund, ed., *Memories of Post-Imperial Nations: The Aftermath of Decolonization, 1945–2013* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 174; Sarah De Mul, "Nostalgia for Empire: 'Tempo Doeloe' in Contemporary Dutch Literature," *Memory Studies* 3, no. 4 (2010): 413–28; Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*; Janelle L. Wilson, *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005), 22–23.

41. Fuller, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, 65; Godwin, *Mukiwa*, 18.

42. Harris, "Writing Home," 109.

43. Da Silva, "Redeeming Self," 12. For a Kenyan case, see Lorcin, *Historicizing Colonial Nostalgia*, 184.

44. Compare Sarah De Mul's analysis of Dutch colonial memoirs: "The focus on the personal and the sentimental in these childhood reminiscences softens colonial hierarchies, and diverts attention from the harsh living conditions of the local population which provided the foundations on which a privileged childhood rested." De Mul, "Nostalgia for Empire," 424.

45. Fuller, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, 141; Godwin, *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun*, 24. Cf. Fay King Chung, *Re-Living the Second Chimurenga: Memories from Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle*, ed. Preben Kaarsholm (Stockholm: Nordic Africa Institute in cooperation with Weaver Press, 2006); Edgar Mittelhölzer, *A Swarthy Boy* (London: Putnam, 1963); Bart Moore-Gilbert, *The Setting Sun: A Memoir of Empire and Family Secrets* (London: Verso, 2014).

46. Ann Laura Stoler and Karen Strassler, "Castings for the Colonial: Memory Work in 'New Order' Java," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 1 (Jan. 2000): 9–10. See also Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," 108.

47. Fuller, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, 141.

48. Godwin, *Mukiwa*, 27. As a youth, he would "sneak down" to hang out at the bar for black workers as "the only white person" (189).

49. Harris, "Writing Home," 108; Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 16.

50. Many of whom were Mugabe's allies or young urban poor rather than veterans. See David McDermott Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, Landscape, and the Problem of Belonging* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), xi; Moore, *Suffering for Territory*, xi.

51. Alois S. Mlambo, "'This Is Our Land' The Racialization of Land in the Context of the Current Zimbabwe Crisis," *Journal of Developing Societies* 26, no. 1 (2010): 43; Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Wendy Willems, "Making Sense of Cultural Nationalism and the Politics of Commemoration under the Third Chimurenga in Zimbabwe," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 4 (2009): 954; Brian Raftopoulos, "Nation, Race and History in Zimbabwean Politics,"

in Brian Raftopoulos and Tyrone Savage, eds., *Zimbabwe: Injustice and Political Reconciliation* (Cape Town: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2004), 101.

52. Ann Hellman, "Zimbabwe: One Million Casualties of Land Reform," *Inter Press Service*, January 25, 2010, http://www.ipsnews.net/2010/01/zimbabwe-one-million-casualties-of-land-reform/. See also Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe*, xi, xiv; Moore, *Suffering for Territory*, x; Nkosi Ndlela, "The African Paradigm: The Coverage of the Zimbabwean Crisis in the Norwegian Media," *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 2 (2005): 83, doi: http://doi.org/10.16997/wpcc.43; Human Rights Watch, "Fast Track Land Reform In Zimbabwe," March 2002, 19, https://www.hrw.org/report/2002/03/08/fast-track-land-reform-zimbabwe; Wendy Willems, "Remnants of Empire? British Media Reporting on Zimbabwe," *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 2 (2005): 95, 98–99, http://doi.org/10.16997/wpcc.44.

53. Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 105.

54. Godwin, *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun*, 171–73, 181 (emphasis in the original).

55. Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 9–13.

56. Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*, 94.

57. Elizabeth Buettner, *Europe after Empire: Decolonization, Society, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 440–48; Elizabeth Buettner, "Cemeteries, Public Memory and Raj Nostalgia in Postcolonial Britain and India," *History & Memory* 18, no. 1 (2006): 5–42; Paul Gilroy, "Why Harry's Disoriented about Empire," *Guardian*, January 18, 2005; Stuart Jeffries, "The Best Exotic Nostalgia Boom: Why Colonial Style is Back," *Guardian*, March 19, 2015; Amrou Al-Kadhi, "Victoria and Abdul Is Another Dangerous Example of British Film-makers Whitewashing Colonialism," *Independent*, September 16, 2017; Rasch, "Keep the Balance."

58. Antoinette Burton, "When Was Britain? Nostalgia for the Nation at the End of the 'American Century,'" *Journal of Modern History* 75, no. 2 (2003): 359–74.

59. Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939–1965* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 152.

60. Fuller, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, 148–52.

61. Ibid., 162–63.

62. Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, 166.

63. Fuller, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, 161.

64. Ibid., 163.

65. Ibid., 164.

66. Ibid., 165.

67. Ranka Primorac, "Rhodesians Never Die? The Zimbabwean Crisis and the Revival of Rhodesian Discourse," in JoAnn McGregor and Ranka Primorac, eds., *Zimbabwe's New Diaspora: Displacement and the Cultural Politics of Survival* (Harare: Berghahn Books, 2010), 212.

68. Fuller, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, 173.

69. Noting a similar slippage between body and nation, Sara Ahmed has demonstrated how the far more extreme narrative of the British National Front "equates the vulnerability of the white nation with the vulnerability of the white body." Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 2.

70. Godwin, *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun*, 279.

71. Ibid., 280.

72. Ibid., 279.

73. Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*, 89.

74. Godwin, *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun*, 66; 169–70; 176. Godwin is not the only white Zimbabwean to have made the analogy to the persecution of Jews. See for instance Catherine Buckle, *Beyond Tears: Zimbabwe's Tragedy* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2002), 2; Harris, "Facing/Defacing Robert Mugabe."

75. Patrick Brantlinger, "Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (Autumn 1985): 166–203.

76. Godwin, *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun*, 284.

77. Ibid., 287–88.

78. Brantlinger, "Victorians and Africans," 176.

79. Bill Schwarz, "'The Only White Man in There': The Re-Racialisation of England, 1956–1968," *Race and Class* 38, no. 1 (1996): 73.

80. Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*, 105; Marilyn Lake, "The White Man under Siege: New Histories of Race in the Nineteenth Century and the Advent of White Australia," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 58 (2004): 41–62.

81. Chenjerai Hove, *Homeless Sweet Home: A Memoir of Miami* (Lebanon, NJ: B & B Press, 2011), 68.

82. Joshua Nkomo, *Nkomo: The Story of My Life* (London: Methuen, 1984), xiv.

83. Ranka Primorac, *The Place of Tears: The Novel and Politics in Modern Zimbabwe* (I.B. Tauris, 2006), 2.

84. Hove, *Homeless Sweet Home*, 74.

85. Ibid., 68.

86. Godwin, *Mukiwa*, 338.

87. Fuller, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, 154.

88. Willems, "Remnants of Empire?," 100. Incidentally, the "food basket to basket case" catchphrase has been rehearsed again in coverage of the recent oust-

ing of Mugabe by the military. See Simon Tisdall, "How Mugabe's Reign over Zimbabwe Became a Byword for Misrule," *Guardian*, November 15, 2017.

89. A story that in itself paints over the estimated 20,000 deaths in the Matabeleland massacre of the 1980s. Willems, "Remnants of Empire?," 94–95. On the narrative of settlers delivering progress, see Josiah Brownell, "Out of Time: Global Settlerism, Nostalgia, and the Selling of the Rhodesian Rebellion Overseas," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43, no. 4 (2017): 811; Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe*, 75; "Zero Hour for Zimbabwe's Land Snatchers," *Telegraph*, June 21, 2002.

90. *Bulawayo Chronicle*, March 31, 1938: 15, quoted in Mlambo, "The Racialization of Land," 47.

91. Godwin, *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun*, 65.

92. Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe*, 21–23.

93. Brownell, "Out of Time," 811. As Pilossof argues, this is a narrative that obscures the substantial subsidies given to white farmers before and after independence. Pilossof, "Land, Race and Belonging," 627–28.

94. Nkomo, *Nkomo: The Story of My Life*, 16.

95. Godwin, *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun*, 64, 67, 68.

96. Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe*, 7. See also Pilossof, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being*, 168.

97. For more examples, see Godwin, *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun*, 88, 92, 163, 170, 178 and 180. The trope is familiar in other post-2000 memoirs by white Zimbabweans; see for instance Buckle, *Beyond Tears*, 13–15.

98. Godwin, *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun*, 163.

99. Ibid, 183. "Jambanja" is slang for "chaos" or "violence" used to refer to the land occupations. James Muzondidya, "Jambanja: Ideological Ambiguities in the Politics of Land and Resource Ownership in Zimbabwe," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33, no. 2 (2007): 325.

100. G. W. F. Hegel's Introduction to *The Philosophy of History* quoted by George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1992), 32 (emphasis in Lamming). See also Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995; New York: Routledge, 2013), 40–41; Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 3. On the idea of "history ... running in reverse," see James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 13.

101. Brownell, "Out of Time," 811.

102. Godwin, *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun*, 155.

103. Fuller, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, 157.

104. Ibid.

105. Bill Schwarz, "Actually Existing Postcolonialism," *Radical Philosophy*, no. 104 (2000): 16.

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