

Confidential bonds in  
don't let's go to the  
dogs tonight



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*Don't Let's Go To The Dogs Tonight* by Alexandria Fuller recounts the struggles of her war-torn childhood stories and major events in her life.

These events include losing three siblings, sexual assault, mental illness and political corruption. An analysis of Fuller's coming-of-age memoir reveals the continbond a person can have to their homeland, and how that bond shapes them to become the person they are today.

Throughout the book, Fuller consistently defines her identity as fully African despite her European heritage which was passed down from her parents.

While discussing her family's departure from England to Rhodesia she states

““ I say I'm African” but not born black. And I say “ I was born in England,” by mistake”( Fuller 10). Identity in one's self brings security and comfort,

they know who they are and how they fit into the world. Identifying as

African, she fits more into the culture around her, and can experience of

having a place where she belongs. Fuller emphasizes her statements by

using anaphora, repeating “ I say” to give the statements a more prominent

focus and more of a powerful emotional impact. When in African culture,

Fuller believes “ This is the African manner we must follow the ritual.” (Fuller

273). Even though racially, she is European, Fuller fully jumps in to any bit of

African culture in her country Zimbabwe, since she considers herself one of

the Africans. By connecting to her identity, Fuller is able to feel like the is in

the place where she belongs; she can have a place where she can do what

she wants and not be judged.

While many tragedies occur in Fuller's childhood, she never has the urge to

flee Africa, since she feels a profound connection to her homeland. After

becoming sick and sleeping outside, her “ bones are so sharp and thin...

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cover (her) hip bones with (her) hands. (She) makes a vow never to leave Africa.”(Fuller 179). Even while displaying negative occurrences counting on in her life, she has no desire to go to another country or continent, content to stay. Africa has been with her for almost her whole childhood and she connects strongly to the continent. Via creating an ironic setting, Fuller is able to contrast her positive feelings for Africa to the tragedies that have happened. She does eventually leave Zimbabwe, but when she is able to return the “ incongruous, lawless, joyful, violent, upside down, illogical certainty of Africa comes at (her) like a rolling rainstorm until (she) is drenching in relief” ( Fuller 287) . The simile of a rainstorm creates a strong sense of imagery, and connects with the word “ drenched” to explain how she is overcome with the feelings of coming back home. However, ironically she uses different vocabulary with negative connotations to discuss how positive she feels about returning to Africa; words such as “ violent”, “ illogical”, and “ incongruous” are written. Similarly, Africa’s smell as she returns is “ that sweet, raw-onion, wood-smoke, acrid smell of Africa”(Fuller 287) and “ rushes in to (her) face (she) wants to weep for joy.”(Fuller 287) Raw onions, which are full of odor-causing bacteria, are not known to bring joy to a person, and neither is any acrid smell such as vinegar. Using unpleasant smells to contrast with Fuller’s joy of Africa, Fuller is able to bring home the point of how strong her connection to Africa is; she loves Africa and has a close bond with her continent.

Fuller constantly references Africa as an entity, moving and alive. After returning from Africa, Fuller admits that “ What (she) can’t now about Africa as a child ...is her smell; hot, sweet” (Fuller 130). By referring to Africa as a

her, Fuller is able to make something inanimate, that no one can relate to, into a resonating being that people can better connect to and understand more of. Classifying Africa's smell as "sweet" and "hot" Fuller uses human's nature to anthropomorphize to make relatable metaphors to connect with. Africa is also able to affect humans and see their plights. But Fuller as a young child knew "The land itself, of course, was careless of its name... still unblinking under the African sky"(Fuller 26). Referencing the land not caring about its name, gives it a human twist, personifying it and helps clear the message Fuller is trying to share. This makes more of the context of fighting of a piece of land, and Fuller's thoughts on it apparent, since the war is only for human gain and power, the land has no stake in what is going on, Africa also can affect human affairs if it wishes too. According to Fuller, Africa "drytracks, swallowing footpaths and demonstrating how quickly this part of Africa would reclaim its wild lands." By personifying Africa as rescuing its lands from the settled people living there, Fuller is able to demonstrate how wild Africa truly is, in a way that most humans can better connect with and give the sentence more depth and structure, overall making it more interesting to read and comprehend.

Africa is the one place where Fuller feels calm, and free to just be who she is. While "drinkin carelessly under a huge African sky. So happy to be home (she) feel(s) as if (she's) swimming in syrup"(Fuller 23) , Fuller is able to relax, one of the only times we see in the memoir where she is content with herself and everything around her, just soaking up Africa and its presence in her life. Making the implied connection that everyone knows what syrup feels like and how it tastes, Fuller is able to create a comparison of something

people know, and something only she is experiencing in the moment which helps understanding of her feelings in the passage. By pairing this with the imagery of swimming in syrup, she paints a picture of what she feels like: gooey, soft, and probably relaxing.

Fuller is under the belief that Africa is very inconsistent and vastly different from the rest of the world. This is best exemplified in “ But this is Africa, so hardly anything is normal.”(Fuller 221) Separating Africa from the “ norm”, Fuller implies that the rest of the world is normal while Africa is an exception. Her tone is bordering on exasperated; given all she has gone through-this would not be a surprise. Implementing her ideas through tone, Fuller is able to express how she feels about this topic, and convey that in a comprehensive way. She also compares Africa to her time in the U. S., saying “ The other thing I can't know about Africa until I have left is her noise.” (Fuller 130). By comparing and contrasting the world with Africa in difference of what sound each makes, she uses personification to highlight her special connection to Africa. By implying that Africa has a gender and is a her, and that she makes different sounds, Fuller creates more of a relatable imagery for others to connect and experience with.

Over all, this memoir goes very deep and detailed into the struggles and life of Alexandria Fuller, Vanessa Fuller, and the rest of their family, which gives more insight into African culture to those who read it. Fuller's upbringing in relation to Don't Let's Go To The Dogs Tonight illustrates the deep emotional impression a continent such as Africa can have on the people who grew up there.

Bibliography

- Fuller, Alexandra. *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: an African Childhood* . Picador, 2015.