

Abstract

In this dissertation I explore how the self is constructed and expressed in the semi/autobiographical texts, *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight* (2002) by Alexandra Fuller, Lauren Liebenberg's *The Voluptuous Delights of Peanut Butter and Jam* (2008), and Dominique Botha's *False River* (2013). I examine the construction of self through the authors' representation of the African landscape, and childhood. These tropes are compared, respectively, to a tradition of white writing about Africa, and the re-presentation of this tradition in contemporary Zimbabwean and South African texts, and to a tradition of representing childhood, and what I refer to as conventional representations of the child in Zimbabwean and South African literature.

I argue that Fuller interacts with the tradition of writing the land in defence of her self, lamenting victimisation as the child who has been displaced from its home; that Liebenberg's creation of an alternative landscape is equally self-serving in its imagination as traditional writings of Africa, and that the child's fall from this idyll is incompletely realised; and that Botha is the most subversive of the three authors in her exposure of the idyll of white Africa and innocent childhood. I suggest that differences in the authors' representation can be related to the national context, where Fuller and Liebenberg conserve the traditional story of the self in the face of displacement from Zimbabwe, whereas Botha challenges tradition and convention in integrating South Africa's transition into her developing selfhood.