



universität  
wien

## MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

**„A Lifelong Affair with Africa: Nostalgia in Selected Autobiographical Novels by  
Karen Blixen, Elspeth Huxley and Kuki Gallmann”**

verfasst von / submitted by  
**Dariana Todorova, BA**

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
**Master of Arts (MA)**

Wien, 2017 / Vienna 2017

Studienkennzahl It. Studienblatt /  
degree programme code as it appears on  
the student record sheet:

A 066 844

Studienrichtung It. Studienblatt/  
degree programme as it appears on  
the student record sheet:

“Masterstudium Anglophone Literatures and Cultures”

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Ewald Mengel



## **DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY**

I confirm to have conceived and written this Master thesis in English all by myself.

Quotations from other authors and any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors are all clearly marked within the text or in the footnotes and acknowledged in the bibliographical references.

Wien, 2017

Signature:



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

*Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, those transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world. (John Milton)*

The thesis has taken longer than I had ever anticipated. I am therefore indebted to Prof. Ewald Mengel for his patience, toughness and valuable critique in pointing out the manuscript's weaknesses. I wish to record my sincere gratitude to Fiona Abel for her frequent encouragement in overcoming my most terrible writer's block moments. Her assistance helped me to strengthen my focus without letting me lose my motivation.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my family, to my grandmother, and to my partner Alexander Michalik, who all accompanied me along the way and encouraged me to bring it to an end.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Why Kenya?</i>	1
<i>Research statement and objectives</i>	3
<i>Structural layout</i>	5
<b>I. THE RISE OF NOSTALGIA THEORY</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1. Historical survey	7
1.2. Objects of nostalgia	13
1.2.1. Home	14
1.2.2. Time	16
1.3. Social and cultural variations of nostalgia	18
1.3.1. Personal and historical nostalgia	19
1.3.2. Restorative and reflective nostalgia	20
1.3.3. Imperialist nostalgia	22
1.3.4. Colonial nostalgia	23
1.3.5. Postcolonial nostalgia	26
<b>II. NOSTALGIA IN SELECTED AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVELS BY KAREN BLIXEN <i>OUT OF AFRICA</i>, ELSPETH HUXLEY <i>THE FLAME TREES OF THIKA</i>, AND KUKI GALLMANN <i>I DREAMED OF AFRICA</i></b>	<b>28</b>
1. Karen Blixen alias Isak Dinesen (1885-1962)	28
1.1. Visions of Africa	29
1.2. <i>Out of Africa</i> (1937)	34
2. Elspeth Huxley (1907-1997)	46
2.1. Visions of Africa	49
2.2. <i>The Flame Trees of Thika</i> (1959)	57

3. Kuki Gallmann (1943)	65
3.1. Visions of Africa	68
3.2. <i>I Dreamed of Africa</i> (1991)	74
3.2.1. Home	75
3.2.3. Time	79
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>88</b>
<i>Primary sources</i>	88
<i>Secondary sources</i>	88
<i>Electronic sources</i>	93
<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>94</b>
<i>E-mail correspondence with Kuki Gallmann</i>	94
<i>Abstract in English</i>	96
<i>Abstract in German</i>	97





## INTRODUCTION

### *Why Kenya?*

All I wanted to do now was get back to Africa. We had not left it, yet, but when I would wake in the night I would lie, listening, homesick for it already. [...] I loved the country so that I was happy as you are after you have been with a woman that you really love, when empty, you feel it welling up again and there it is and you can never have it all and yet what there is, now, you can have, and you want more and more, to have, and be, and live in, [...].

(Ernest Hemingway, *Green Hills of Africa* (1935), 1987: 72-73)

Nestled on the eastern coast of the African continent, the Republic of Kenya covers a surface area of 581,309 km<sup>2</sup> and stretches roughly from Lake Victoria to Lake Turkana and further southeast to the Indian Ocean. Named after its highest alp called Mount Kenya, the country has intrigued adventurous spirits with its topographic, cultural as well as ethnic diversity, for a long time. Its Arab caravans had been traveling to and fro across the continent even before the explorers Richard Francis Burton and David Livingstone. Its vast terrain enthalls with stunning panoramic views and eye-capturing gold sand deserts situated east of Lake Turkana and Lake Magadi, savannah grasslands near the capital city of Nairobi, and snow-covered mountains Mount Kenya and Mount Elgon. The *cradle of mankind*<sup>1</sup> has sheltered a diverse range of rare species among which are the so-called “Big Five” - one of the tourist attractions en route on a safari. Within this large area approximately forty-two ethnic groups reside, each with its own distinct language and customs. The major ethnic groups include pastoral communities and tribes such as Kikuyu, Luhya, Luo, Kalenjin, Masai, Kamba, Kisii, and Meru. The best-known Africa’s game reserves include Nairobi National Park, Amboseli National Park, and Maasai Mara National Reserve, whose savanna zone is primarily given over to wildlife.

Before any historical documentation was recorded, very little was known about Kenya. It was a peaceful place, untouched by economic systems like Capitalism or philosophical theories like Marxism or Darwinism. Yet the West, strong and powerful in its political and economic persuasions, had an eye on the exotic and virgin continent. Westerners very quickly spread their

---

<sup>1</sup> In terms of historiographical issues, there is an amount of evidence available which indicates that on the territory of Kenya had been found “[...] the oldest human remains going back to 7 million year old from Turgen Hills, [...]” (cf. <https://www.quora.com/Why-is-Kenya-more-famous-than-most-other-African-countries>).

tentacles to build up a phenomenon, nowadays known as colonization. Unfortunately, their view of that place did not rest on developmental or humanitarian motives, but on a belief in Africa's darkness (cf. Gatheru, 2005: 5) and the primitive and uncivilized nature of its pastoralists' attitudes and frugal lifestyle. Leaders like Leopold II of the Belgians took advantage of Africans' divisiveness, inexperience and inability to defend themselves to encourage the superiority of the Europeans. The late nineteenth century witnessed the so-called 'scramble for Africa' and dominant European powers among them, Belgium, France, Germany and Great Britain, all parceled the land and colonized it under the motto of "the white man's burden" or the noble enterprise which would implement progressive measures by improving the trade, the economy and the politics of the colonies whilst, at the same time, suppressing even the slightest hint of slave trade or racism. After the Anglo-German agreement of 1890, the British Protectorate was proclaimed over Uganda. Five years later, Kenya also fell under the British Protectorate and became known as the East Africa Protectorate. The country was under British rule for seventy years. After a series of unsuccessful and headstrong contests between the British Empire and Kenyan anti-colonial insurgents, the final rebellion, known as the Mau Mau War of 1952, eventually solidified Kenya's independence on December 12th, 1963.

The history of Kenya is thought to date back to the Old Stone Age, but during the time of historical record keeping — more specifically during colonization — it had to experience the Western ideological hallmarks of racism, slavery, subjugation, innocent victims, and cultural clashes, among many others. Although the mainstream constituency of Western people very easily adopted this role of the superior over the inferior, there were also those who rejected it as wrong and withdrew.

The immigrant writers which have been selected and are going to be analyzed within the scope of this case study are Karen Blixen, *Out of Africa* (1937), Elspeth Huxley, *The Flame Trees of Thika* (1959), and Kuki Gallmann, *I Dreamed of Africa* (1991). These white female immigrants of various nationalities lament leaving Kenya, yearn to restore its nature and culture, passionately record their life experiences engulfed by vivid memories, and ultimately proceed to create their own history of the country, publishing it in the form of autobiographical reviews. The recollection of their inaugural life experiences in Kenya, hand in hand with the private struggles and vocations, make their revelations even more admittance, more personal, more truthful and even deeper in essence. Yet paradoxically enough, these women express a longing which has nothing to do with their origins. Instead, they latch themselves onto the 'host motherland' in a lifelong affair. This leads to a number of inquiries such as the following: What made these settlers choose Kenya? What were their visions of Kenya? What made them agitated and at the same time emotionally attached and fascinated by a

place which is not their place of birth? The keyword, which this thesis seeks to research in order to answer these questions, is nostalgia. It is also referred to nostalgia for the provisional home, for nature and for landscapes. It is nostalgia for the lost empire and for bygone times. It is likewise nostalgia as a kind of an apology for evil western megalomania and barbarism. It is nostalgia as a means of forgiveness, and nostalgia as an attempt to save the African culture and nature from vanishing. Most of all, it is nostalgia engendered by a certain discomfort, anxiety or even frustration in the present which has led to an outpouring of their memories most smoothly and eloquently. What is immediately apparent here is that this present platform on which the three writers stand to reminisce and explore their nostalgia covers different temporal dimensions. Karen Blixen, for instance, writes her autobiography after she returned to Denmark. Whereas Elspeth Huxley recollects her childhood memories and publishes them at the age of fifty-two, Kuki Gallmann's present platform is 1991, which is approximately ten years after losing her husband and son. This observation is essential for two reasons. The first one emphasizes the fact that dealing with nostalgia equals dealing with life experiences. A person should have at least reached maturity in order to be able to recollect and reflect on his/her life balance adequately.

The second reason, reflective of what the American sociologist Fred Davis claims about the phenomenon of nostalgia, has already been alluded to in the sentences above. In addition to his awareness "[...] the nostalgia evocation of some past state of affairs always occurs in the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties, and uncertainties [...]" (1979: 34-5). Hence, here the discourse of time plays an important role in expressing present realities built on past experiences and encounters.

### *Research statement and objectives*

The main argument this thesis intends to prove is that the three case studies of Karen Blixen, Elspeth Huxley and Kuki Gallmann revise the notion of nostalgia during a process of home-making and show that even Third World countries may enrich life experiences, and may enhance individual growth psychologically and sociologically. This statement is based on a range of factors. First, three white settlers' experiences in Kenya are portrayed by passionate storytelling. Second, the philanthropic attitude toward a colonized country begs for revision. The lambent memories furthermore carry heavy sentimental whiffs steaming from the pages, as though imploring one to

take careful stock of a country's cultural, ethnical and environmental treasures, and in doing so, maybe even reconsider the western colonialist's conceptualization of the world order in terms of racial and cultural hierarchy. Third, despite these writers' portrayals, the colonialist's understanding of this place remains largely undisturbed even today, so that a careful examination of their observations and yearnings may help us on a global level to repaint Africa for the cultural richness and value which it deserves.

The primary aim of this paper is to analyze nostalgia as a private emotion, brought about by the process of home-making in Kenya. The analysis will also scrutinise the extent to which nostalgia as a private emotion develops into a social emotion, which further deconstructs the vision of Kenya as the dark continent. Yet, further minor aspects this paper is going to deal with are:

- a) to observe how nostalgia is reflected on the story level, i.e. how it affects the female settlers under discussion, their lives and visions of Kenya, and how nostalgia is reflected on the discourse level, i.e. how it appears in narratives' structures (on symbolic, metaphoric, allegoric, etc.);
- b) to provide more insight on Kenya's political situation, culture, tradition, and nature;
- c) to discuss the role, position and identity of white women settlers in the colony during the process of diaspora-making;
- d) to evaluate the position of women after Kenya's Independence in 1963;
- e) to explore how and what caused these settlers to revisit their nostalgic sentiment, and why and what makes them cringe in grief with their agitation for a country which is supposed to be conquered and not missed?;
- f) to emphasize the following two issues: first, that colour should not dominate or frame the whole discussion, and second, that not all European settlers should be reduced to the same denominator as stigmatized oppressors, but rather, as victims who try to contribute to the general welfare in the colony and likewise suffer under the rules of the 'White Mischief' (cf. Ferguson, 2003: xiv);
- g) to argue that, although the past and the present are interdependent and coalesce with each other, the present platform, from which each author chronicles her nostalgia, is much more important than the past experience as such.

To be able to accomplish the above listed objectives, this case study will adopt and utilize relevant interdisciplinary theories and approaches, such as psychoanalysis, narrative theory, literary criticism, feminist theory, ontology, among many others, and apply them in the practical part of the discussion.

### *Structural layout*

The thesis is divided into two broad parts. Part I, “The Rise of Nostalgia Theory” sheds light upon the etymological, historical, theoretical foundation, and cultural appropriation of ‘nostalgia’ as a word and as an emotion. The first chapter, titled “Historical survey”, follows the development of the word as a concept and a human condition from ancient times to the present. Moreover, it will explain how and under which circumstances the neologism has replaced the common term of homesickness by negotiating with historical as well as interdisciplinary theories and approaches. Nostalgia, however, is not bound to only personal histories. Rather:

[i]t is also a phenomenon arising at moments of public crisis [...], since it goes beyond individual psychology, permeating both popular and elite cultures on a global scale, and affecting the way people identify themselves as members of a group, community, nation, or state. (Walder, 2011: 49-50)

As such, it is influenced and fostered by a variety of socio-cultural, political and psychological factors, which will be closely elaborated in chapters 1.2, “Objects of nostalgia” and 1.3, “Social and cultural variations of nostalgia”.

Part II, or “Nostalgia in selected novels by Karen Blixen, Elspeth Huxley, and Kuki Gallmann”, is the main body of the diploma thesis. It is divided into three chapters, referring to the three case studies. Following a model of a tripartite structure, each of the chapters begins with a biographical survey, which further opens a horizon of divergent perspectives, visions, and attitudes of the authors towards the land and its people. The subchapter titled “Visions of Kenya” will illustrate the manner in which each of the selected settlers approaches, pictures and locates herself in the country at a pivotal moment of its history. As already mentioned above, Karen Blixen depicts Kenya during colonial times where the British Empire was at its zenith. Elspeth Huxley records her childhood memories during a period of decline of British colonial rule. Kuki Gallmann presents her life experiences after the period of decolonization. Despite the temporal dimension between the novels’ publication date, it is intriguingly conspicuous that the authors express their kinship with Kenya - a vision, which is radically different from that of the majority of European settlers, who share a deep and patriotic sense of loyalty and affinity to their land, race and class.

The main point of the last subchapter focuses on the investigation of each author’s nostalgic responses toward Kenya. Here, it will be particularly looked at the manoeuvres in time and memory, which are essential for determining the focus and fashion of representations of nostalgia in

autobiographical narration, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, for observing the identity development of the settlers under discussion. It will be shown that each of them follows dissimilar vocations, have distinct priorities and have the courage to express one's own persuasions. The concluding chapter will answer the question of "How the case studies of Karen Blixen, Elspeth Huxley and Kuki Gallmann revise the notion of nostalgia during a process of domestication in Kenya and to what extent their nostalgia for a country from the Third World enhances their individual growth psychologically and sociologically?"

## I. THE RISE OF NOSTALGIA THEORY

### 1.1. Historical survey

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept  
 when we remembered Zion.  
 There on the poplars we hung our harps,  
 for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said,  
 "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" (Psalm 137, *New International Version*)

The queenly nymph sought out the great Odysseus [...]  
 And found him there on the headland, [...]  
 Weeping, his eyes never dry, his sweet life flowing away  
 With the tears he wept for his foiled journey home,  
 Since the nymph no longer pleased. (Homer, *Odyssey*, 5.165-170)

The two narratives are among the first literary examples of suffering induced by mourning to return to one's birthplace after a long and treacherous journey. Both, the psalmists from Jerusalem and Odysseus from Ithaca experience physical and emotional upheaval and displacement caused by haunting memories of the lost home. The wistful looking-back motif featuring the lost home and missed family and friends is also apparent in Ovid's *Tristia*. Much like the eponymic hero Odysseus, Ovid was sent into exile. He was expelled from his beloved Rome by Augustus, who cast him away in the remote Black Sea province Tomis.

Apart from such a patriotic longing to return home, the records from the medieval literature show another implication of yearning, namely the yearning for someone or something left behind or lost forever. Homer's Penelope, for instance, suffers the almost twenty-year absence of her beloved husband Odysseus. Every atom of her being calls for the strong shoulder of her husband whilst the reminders of his absence and the doubts about his survival overexcite her spirits, filling her with fear and despair. Yet as Penelope's loss is bilateral, so is her mourning face. At the same time as she loses her husband, she also loses her social reputation and nobleness. Only Odysseus's return to Ithaca can release her from this melancholy and from the unpleasant situation she has found herself in.

The lyrical 'I' in William Shakespeare's *Sonnet 30* grieves over the loss of his close friend. This is evident in the following lyrical lines:



[...] When to the sessions of sweet silent thought  
 I summon up remembrance of things past,  
 I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,  
 And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste.  
 [...] (In Wells, 1985: 44)

Such manifestations of prolific sadness either for someone, something lost or longing to return home, indicate that the feelings of physical and emotional upheaval existed long before the word nostalgia enters the *Webster's* dictionary. Since the time before Christ, the word has undergone drastic semantic changes and its spectrum of interpretations has been hugely enriched.

This historical survey will proceed from the birth of nostalgia as a word. It will further follow its withdrawal from the notion of homesickness and will end with its contemporary reception and interpretation as a concept which incorporates both positive and negative emotions determining certain human conditions.

In a particular medical dissertation entitled “Dissertatio Medica de Nostalgia” from the year 1688, Johannes Hofer conceptualizes a specific human emotion for the first time. He introduces the word nostalgia and his investigations were conducted on the physical and mental condition of the Swiss soldiers who had fought far away from home. His research leads to a professional observation that the soldiers were suffering from a lethal severe homesickness. More specifically, the focus of his analysis is centered on the changes that penetrate human emotional vulnerability and lead to physical disorders marked by symptoms such as anorexia, insomnia, bouts of weeping, suicidal attempts, despondency and phobias in general (McCann 1941, Sedikides, Wildschut&Baden 2004). These symptoms are thought to be induced by the absence from the homeland and the patients became exasperated by smells, sounds, tastes, landscapes, or by “the minutiae and trivia of the lost paradise that those who remained home never noticed.” (Boym, 2001: 4)

Johannes Hofer sees the emergence to introduce a formal concept that would explain his medical-pathological theory of severe homesickness. Hence, he combines the Greek word roots νόστος (*nóstos*), meaning “homecoming” and ἄλγος (*álgos*), meaning “pain, ache” into the word nostalgia. On the occasion of its inaugural description, Hofer defines it as “a cerebral disease of essentially demonic cause” (1688: 384). He utilizes the classic notion of the *imaginatio laesa*, meaning that the definition of nostalgia was related to the psychosomatic medicine of the Greco-Roman tradition (Starobinski, 1966: 87) His argument mainly accentuates that:

[N]ostalgia is born from a disorder of the imagination, from which it follows that the nervous sap always takes the very same direction in the brain and, as a result, excites

the very same idea, the desire to return to one's native land [...]. The nostalgic are affected by but few external objects, and nothing surpasses the impress on which the desire to return makes on them: while in a normal state the soul can become equally interested in all objects, in nostalgia its attention is diminished; [...]. (*Ibid.*)

Johannes Hofer's neologism becomes firmly embedded in the medical discourse of the seventeenth century as a neurological disease. The only contemporary of Hofer who questions the causes of nostalgia is the German-Swiss physician Johann Jakob Scheuchzer. He maintains the assertion that the feeling of nostalgia comes due to "[...] a sharp differential in atmospheric pressure causing excessive body pressurization, which in turn drove blood from the heart to the brain, thereby producing the observed affliction of sentiment." (qtd. in Davis, 1979: 2) This sets off a sensation in creating the most bizarre explanations of nostalgia, including some preposterous assumptions among military physicians. Among such speculations appears the claim that nostalgia resulted from "[...] the unremitting clanging of cowbells in the Alp, which inflicted damage to the eardrum and brain cells!" (qtd. in Davis, 1979: 140)

The apprehension of nostalgia as a neurological affliction persists from the eighteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. The term is no longer attributed only to the Swiss, since similar symptoms have also been detected in the physical condition of soldiers who had fought in the French armies or those who had participated in the American Civil War. (Rosen, 1975)

In his work *Vom Heimweh*, Fritz Ernst makes the observation that, the concept of nostalgia spreads widely and occupies space in medical taxonomies across the world. (qtd. in Thomas Lange & Harald Neumeier, 2000:90). Its medical explanation also shifts from 'neurological disorder' to 'psychiatric disorder'. (MacCann 1941; Rosen 1975; Sedikides, et al, 2004: 201)

From the Romantic period onwards, nostalgia is regarded as an incurable illness. This is due to the fact that people could feel sorrow over a place they can revisit, but the senseless longing for the lost childhood or youth cannot be alleviated. Nostalgia is assumed to be temporal in form, disparate from its pathological characteristics. The Swiss doctor and literary critic Jean Isaac Starobinski analyses the concept from a philosophical rather than medical angle and explains that "[...] as long as the patient does not think of summoning the aid of the doctor, as long as medical terminology does not possess any term with which to designate it, the disease does not exist." (1966: 85) He continues furthermore that "[...] a nostalgic is not straining toward something which he can repossess, but toward an age which is forever beyond his reach"— ultimately thus underlining a move toward analysing nostalgia in purely mental terms. (1966: 94)

The Romantics are preoccupied with a realm of unlimited possibilities and immortality all associated with childhood. Edward Casey (1987) notes that since Romanticism, nostalgia becomes a much more personal matter. Nostalgia has been verily depicted indeed as “a romance with one’s own fantasy” (Boym, 2001: xiii) and a rejuvenation of the youthful vigor, underlining its temporal rather than its geographic dimensions. Linda Hutcheon also emphasized the temporal rather than the topological context, remarking that nostalgia came to “depend precisely on the irrecoverable nature of the past for its emotional impact and appeal.” [original emphasis] (qtd. in Clewell, 2013: 5)

It is noticeable how people start to express nostalgic feelings for the lost youth or the lost childhood, and bit by bit the motif of homesickness slowly withdraws to give way to a more internalized grief arising from the subconscious longing to return to one’s fetal state. (Davis, 1979)

The Romantic poets embrace nostalgia as a welcome phenomenon, for they believe that only throughout its dimensions can people begin to recapture the past. First-generation poets like William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge look back into the age of youth and childhood and tie it in with the beauty of nature. They both recollect those moments of epiphany with tenderness as an attempt to seek “reassurance of a ruder, but simpler, less complicated way of life than that which the present offered or the future promised.” (Haghighi, 1993: 44) This sentiment is illustrated in the following poem:

With unclos’d lids, already had I dreamt  
Of my sweet birthplace, and the old church-tower,  
Whose bells, the poor man’s only music, rang  
From morn to evening, all the hot fair-day,  
So sweetly, that they stirr’d and haunted me  
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear [...] (S. T. Coleridge “Frost at  
Midnight” [2004] 121: 27-36)

The concept of nostalgia catches the literary attention of the Victorian period as well. Nostalgia is regarded as something that is absent and therefore evoked either through forgetting or through remembrance. Such evidence lies in the novel by Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* (1857). Amy Dorrit represents a dual nostalgia. On the one hand, she yearns for home and regrets the past. On the other hand, she longs to forget the past and to move forward with her life. “[...] I must now confess to you [Mr. Clennam] that I suffer from homesickness”, she reveals and continues “- that I long so ardently and earnestly for home, as sometimes, when no one sees me, to pine for it.” (2009: 575) While nostalgia as a mental disease continues to occupy the realm of psychiatric disorders up to the beginning of the twentieth century, its pathological aspect slowly fades away. A noticeable fact is

that the word nostalgia slowly withdraws from its original attachment to ‘home’ and ‘homesickness’ (Clewell, 2013: 5). By the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the concept becomes thoroughly delegitimized as a disorder and is diagnosed as a valid state of mind “[...] without attachment to the particularity of place and without specific bodily symptoms of the sort that first drew Hofer's attention in 1688.” (Casey, 1987: 371) This is the reason why the concept then has been cast away from the psychiatric realm and disappears from the range of nineteenth-century medical vocabulary.

Interestingly enough, approximately around the middle of the twentieth century, the interest in exploring the concept has been slowly restored and tended to prompt the attention of the academics again. More and more sociologists, historians, literary critics and academics launch into explanations and speculations of its numerous iterations. The British doctor Isaac Frost describes nostalgia as an ‘immigrant psychosis’ (1938: 801). Others depict it as a ‘monomaniacal obsessive mental state causing intense unhappiness’ (Fodor, 1950: 25). In his article “The Idea of Nostalgia”, Jean Starobinski claims that nostalgia is no longer a disease but a reaction by people who are unable to adapt to current circumstances or social environment conditions. He focuses on the pejorative connotation of nostalgia, denoting that “[...] the word implies the useless yearning for a world or for a way of life from which one has been irrevocably severed.” (1966: 101) This stance displays the concept as something frivolous which a person could simply snap out of, should he/she be sufficiently sensible.

Fred Davis argues that by the middle of the twentieth century, the common knowledge about nostalgia’s medical and neurological origins vanishes. Yet as one of the first sociologists of the twentieth century, he sets about approaching nostalgia from its sociological aspect. In his book *Yearning for Yesterday* (1979), Davis analyzes nostalgia as a social syndrome. According to him “[T]he nostalgia wave of the seventies is intimately related [...] to the massive identity dislocations of the sixties.” (105) He goes on to explain that the human essence turned to nostalgia as a kind of psychological defense from the turbulence of the sixties.

While Davis demands the careful use of nostalgia and insists on applying it only “to lived experiences” ( qtd. in Panelas, 1982: 1426), Svetlana Boym declares that, “[t]he twentieth century began with utopia and ended with nostalgia.” (qtd. in John Su, 2005: 173) She claims that nostalgia has a utopian dimension which is neither directed toward the past, nor toward the future, but rather sideways. (*Ibid.* 173) These nuances clearly show a preoccupation with the senselessness of nostalgia as an incurable psychosomatic disease.

By the end of the twenty-century the concept of nostalgia is completely stripped of its medical connotations and slowly gains more pejorative associations. It is defined as mourning for a lost time (Stewart 1993, Hutcheon 1998, Boym 2001, Su 2005, etc.), “[...] an abdication of personal responsibility, a guilt-free homecoming, an ethical and aesthetic failure” (Boym, 2001: xiv), a “disease of the modern time” (Boym, 2001:7), “an exile from the present” (Hutcheon, 1998). This tone is considerably less sympathetic to the afflictions of nostalgia than those exemplified at the beginning. While Charles Maier makes the psychological statement that “nostalgia is to memory as kitsch is to art” (qtd. in Boym, 2001: xiv), Susan Stewart defines it from its social perspective, labelling it as “a social disease” (1993: 23). Svetlana Boym is, however, not interested in the social implications of nostalgia. She approaches the concept as “[...] a symptom of our age, a historical emotion”, because nostalgia, she reassures us, “[...] goes beyond individual psychology.” (2001: xv-xvi). For Boym, nostalgia revolves around the self in a historical context. The focus does not underlie the individual or collective emotionality as such, but rather, it questions how concepts like home/place and longing for a past time affect people’s nostalgia in the historical spectrum.

The beginning of the twenty-first century shows mixed feelings toward nostalgia. With the turn of the century, a new psychological tendency expressed in the quest for meaning-searching occurs. People, in the era of modernization, might be categorized as meaning-making machines, and at the same time, as easily manipulable objects. Many scholars continue to emphasize its negative aspect and they have the perfect reason to do that, yet a newfound utility in making reference to the condition is found in money-making pursuits. Janelle Wilson says it flatly: “nostalgia sells” (qtd. in Lorcin, 2012: 10).

Apart from those academicians who claim nostalgia to be commercial or a modern kitsch, there are other experts who insist on nostalgia’s positive perception. Sedikides, Wildschut&Baden (2004) represent a few among many other scholars who conceptualize nostalgia as a meaning-making device referring to one’s own life experiences which serves to bolster self-esteem and elevate one’s mood. Concisely, the sociologists and all the academic eminent authorities are divided into two camps, namely the optimists and the pessimists. Those who see the potentials of nostalgia made more reference to its psychological aspect, emphasizing its causalities such as identity growth, self-esteem, philanthropic ambitions. While those who try to show its dirty lines, see it as a more cultural and economic disillusion and catastrophe, smearing the eye with historical untruthfulness. This historical trajectory has illustrated that the notoriously slippery concept of nostalgia travels into time, space, cultures and affects individuals mostly psychically rather than somatically. It has also been shown that the concept unofficially starts its career from the Greek mythologies. Later on,

it is officially used by Johannes Hofer to denote homesickness as an incurable disease of the body that emanates from the afflicted imagination (Hofer, 381). Throughout the centuries, nostalgia's equivalents have been melancholia, amnesia, pathological incurable disease and romance with one's own fantasy. Nowadays, in the age of digital technology, virtual reality, supersonic travel, iPhones and Facebook, nostalgia has been stripped entirely of its medical diagnosis; it has gone modern. As Boym says, nostalgia turns from "[A] provincial ailment, a *maladie du pays*, [...] into a disease of the modern age, a *mal du siècle*." (2001: 7) In comparison to the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, its perception projects mixed feelings. Some claim it as a frustration and disappointment from modern life standards, others see its bright side. Yet, nostalgia whether of positive or negative connotation, still continues to titillate academia's interest and pull the strings of their curiosity even more than ever.

The sub-chapter which follows intends to oppose Susan Stewart's statement that nostalgia is "a sadness *without an object*" [emphasis added] (1993: 23) by proposing 'home' and 'time' as potential objects for the discussion.

## 1.2. Objects of nostalgia

The alluring object of nostalgia is notoriously elusive. (Boym, 2001: xiv)

In her book *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym affirms that, "[T]he study of nostalgia does not belong to any specific discipline: [...]", hence it "[...] tantalizes us with its fundamental ambivalence; it is about the repetition of the unrepeatable, materialization of the immaterial." (2001: xvii) In this train of thought, everything in connection to the nostalgic emotions is hard to discern. De facto every item, glimpse, cultural artifact, olfactory sensation might become a potential stimulus of nostalgic reverie. Every lived and even imagined experience, every sensory input, social interaction, simple gesture, among many more things, may commonly inspire impulses of nostalgia. Practically speaking, all tangible and intangible objects might provoke nostalgia. Cognizant of the innumerable academic researches, arguments, speculations and approaches to nostalgia theory, it is hardly possible to provide a full list of all of them. Yet, due to the fact that this thesis deals with the analysis of white women's immigrant nostalgia, the research will limit them to the two broad objects of 'home' and 'time'.

### 1.2.1. Home

The historical synopsis has shown that Hofer emphasizes the importance of ‘home’ - the place of origin, family stability and privacy - as the leitmotif of the soldiers’ psychical and physical collapse, using it as the one of the two compounds to form the word ‘nostalgia’. In short, nostalgia, in Hofer’s approach is a synonym for homesickness. The notion of homesickness followed until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Yet while the ambitious student stresses that the patients diagnosed with nostalgia yearn for the natal home to which they are emotionally attached, at the threshold of the fin de siècle, things have changed. The usage of the concept of ‘home’ has changed. Contrary to the medieval perception, the sociologists Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw notice that, “[T]he home we miss is no longer a geographically defined place but rather a state of mind.” (1989: 1) This statement emphasizes that the notion ‘home’ has obtained an abstract quality. This means that, ‘home’, in contrast to Hofer’s observations, is not restricted to a specific geographical area, but acquires more universal utility. It might refer to any place in the world wherein people collect memories and accumulate and exchange experiences. In other words, the notion of home has shifted from the place where one is born and has grown up to the place of “where the heart is”, or “where a man feels at home.” (Hemingway, 1935)

In the book *Homelessness: A Documentary and Reference Guide* (2012), Neil Shumsky investigates the word ‘homelessness’ basing his arguments on the various definitions of the word ‘home’. In his observations the notion tip-toes beyond its common perception to denote a place which the person not only identifies with, but enjoys emotional attachment and affection.

The crux of the matter this subchapter focuses on, is not restricted to a mere analysis of how the notion of ‘home’ travels and shifts through time. Instead, it stretches further to indicate and investigate its relationship with the discourse of diaspora and the consequences the immigrants have to face.

The matter of ‘home’ might be liberally appropriated in modern terms as a place where the soul feels free, but the concept of diaspora tackles issues of a more serious character. In order to be able to detach these characteristic features, let us start with the etymological elucidation of the concept. ‘Diaspora’ is an ancient word deriving from the Greek preposition *διά* (*dia*), “between, through, across, over” and the verb *σπείρω* (*speirō*), “to sow, to scatter” (cf. Liddell&Scott, 1996) This term has an ancient vintage and is exclusively used in reference to the dispersion of the Jews, the Greeks and the Armenians. Diasporas, in old usage were also frequently described as “[...] melancholy places of exile and oppression that restricted social and cultural fruition; in the words of the

Armenian poet Sylva Gaboudikian, [...] diaspora is a place where the homeland [...] spills its blessed fruit to “nourish foreign soils.”” (Levy&Weingrod, 2005: 5)

In the recent few centuries, the question “Where are you from?” more or less defines the essence of diaspora comprehension. Entering the vocabulary of the present age, the concept has changed considerably depending on the diversity of global trends which shape the modern world. In her contemporary article “Diaspora and Cultural Memory”, Anh Hua provides a meta-critical rubric generalising diaspora as:

[...] a historical term used to refer to communities that have been dispersed reluctantly, dislocated by slavery, pogroms, genocide, coercion and expulsion, war in conflict zones, indentured labour, economic migration, political exile, or refugee exodus. (qtd. in Agnew, 2005: 193)

This current view shows diaspora as a place where multicultural treasures melt upon economic and political powers to produce new ‘hybrid’<sup>2</sup> identities who are further categorized by the already well-suffered world-hierarchy schema of gender, class and race status. More often than not, these migrant populations are a product of war, environmental calamities or ethnic dispersion. Either voluntary or involuntary they often face and struggle with questions of displacement, non-belonging, racial, ethnic, and cultural clashes, hostility and even xenophobia. The discourse of diaspora does not privilege the immigrants with this sort of romanticized understanding of home which they preserve in memory. The diaspora is and will be a host land where the immigrants and their offspring do not entirely belong, and where they have to handle with potentially conflicting interests regarding questions of political power, national identity, racial and class inequality. The first observation, researching home and diaspora separately, shows that both discourses seem to share many similarities. But investigating them beyond the surface of generalization, it becomes clear that each of the two sets its own essential agenda of questions, processes, causes and consequences. It is worthless, of course, to mention that in common parlance people tend to connect the notion of ‘home’ to the natal place and that of ‘diaspora’ to the provisional place of sojourn. The anthropologists Dr Susan Pattie goes on to differentiate between the two in the following explanation:

[T]he concept of “home” for many is mobile and nomadic, more synonymous with family than with a particular place. The experience of place, whether present or

---

<sup>2</sup> Homi Bhabha identifies hybrid identities by claiming that they emerge through constant change and adaptation to the host country which marginalizes the individuals. (see Agnew, 2005: 12)



unknown through memory, is always about people and their relationships, as well as about the physical surroundings. Diaspora is “place” on a large scale, encompassing a wider range of relationships, a grander network of known and possibly knowable people. (Levy&Weingrod, 2005: 55)

The common feature that both of them share with certainty is that they reshape history, memory and identity. But this would not be possible without the discourse of ‘time’.

### 1.2.2. Time

[...] “The past is a foreign country,” goes the famous opening sentence of L. P. Hartley’s novel *The Go-Between*, “they do things differently there.” But the photograph tells me to invert this idea; it reminds me that it’s my present that is foreign, and that the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time.

(Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, 1991: 9)

Apart from the notion of ‘home’, the dynamics of ‘time’ is also central to nostalgia, or in the words of Trigg, “[...] the attraction of nostalgia structurally depends on an image of the past that is fixed in the present.” (2006: 56)

Centuries ago, Immanuel Kant argued that the aspect of temporality lies at the core of nostalgia formation. He analyzed the Swiss conception of nostalgia by emphasizing that the role of ‘time’ is central to the aspect of place:

[T]he *homesickness* of the Swiss [...] is the result of a longing for the places where they enjoyed the very simple pleasures of life - [...]. To be sure, they think that this is because everything there has changed a great deal, but in fact it is because they cannot bring back their youth there. everything has drastically changed, but it is that they cannot bring back their youth. [original emphasis] (2006: 71)

He also argued that the people who returned home are often disappointed. They were able to recall how the place had looked in a past time, but they also realized that time, unlike space, cannot be reconstructed, because ‘time’ is irreversible. In this case, nostalgia is an emotional reaction referring to the sad fact of bygone youth. Illustrating this claim, one might recall the nostalgia of Odysseus who was in search of his lost home, and compare it to the nostalgia of Proust who was in search of the lost time. What we can witness in the notion of nostalgia, then, is a transition from a longing to return to home, which might actually be anywhere, to a yearning to reenter a certain time in the

past. The questions, which arise as a result, are: When are we nostalgic?, What drives us to be nostalgic?, And can nostalgia, indeed, frame or measure time intervals?

In his article “Revenge and Nostalgia: Reconciling Nietzsche and Heidegger on the Question of Coming to Terms with the Past” (2012), Bryan Bradley offers that:

[...] nostalgia [...] often characterizes the longing to overcome present circumstances [...]. And as nostalgic longing crystallises into a plan for present action and reform, the character of nostalgia discloses itself as tinged with revenge – of finding present circumstances poor and horrid and in need of redemptive, reformatory, or emancipatory action (26-7).

According to Fred Davis (1979), people are most nostalgic when they experience difficulties in present situations. Specifically:

[...] individuals look with nostalgia towards their youth due to the difficulties and major changes which they have to face as adults. While their nostalgia has an episodic character meant to help them face problematic situations, for part of the elderly population, it is an integral part of an ongoing process of remembering and re-evaluating their entire existence, inevitably at a final threshold. (qtd. in Marin, 2013: 5).

Staying on the same interpretative discussion on nostalgia in relation to the dynamics of time, Svetlana Boym stresses that nostalgia is:

[...] a yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams. In a broader sense, nostalgia is rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress. (2001: xv).

Developing the same thought further, we experience nostalgia for bygone times because we feel either safer or happier in the realm of the ‘Good old days’, which essentially points to a disappointment with the current domestic, political, economical or cultural situations. In addition, one might conclude that yearning for the past is evoked by the present. On an emotional level, the argument is further discussed by Linda Hutcheon (1998, 2000) whose premise states that “[...] denying or at least degrading the present as it is lived, nostalgia makes the idealized [and therefore always absent] past into the site of immediacy, presence, and authenticity”. The past is hence imagined and “idealized through memory and desires”. This leads Hutcheon to bring forth the hypothesis that:

[...] nostalgia is less about the past than about the present. It operates through what Mikhail Bakhtin called an “historical inversion”: the ideal that is *not* being lived now is projected into the past. [original emphasis] (*Ibid.*)

Svetlana Boym also stresses the present as a basic provocateur of past nostalgic impulses. According to her, the past is recalled due to some dissatisfaction with the present or rebellion against the modern as already stated above. She builds this argument around the claim that the “[...] fantasies of the past determined by needs of the present have a direct impact on realities of the future.” (2001: xvi). This constant voyage back and forth to the past and future, whilst being nostalgic in the present, is also one way to understand oneself better and to gain more meaning of life. People often tend to compare the past with the present. People also often find a refuge in the past. During the process of one’s maturation, one looks back to see what has been accomplished in life so far. We often look back in an attempt to make a balance of what we have achieved, to coordinate present goals and moves, to let down the guard and simply forget, to try to recall certain experiences, or alternatively, to speculate how all this would reflect on our future.

### 1.3. Social and cultural variations of nostalgia

While the previous subchapter scrutinized the objects of nostalgia, which are an essential part of the discussion of the identity (re)formation in the three case studies, this subchapter will list some essential social and cultural variations of nostalgia. Taking the point of departure, the idea that nostalgia is a personal experience generated by recollections of the past to serve demands of the present, from the outset, this chapter will distinguish between personal and historical (Holak&Havlena 1992, 1998; Stern 1992), and reflective and restorative (Boym 2001; Ritivoi 2002) nostalgia. Yet personal experiences are not entirely isolated from the social sphere. Indeed, they are often caused by or bound to social, cultural connectedness, and more specifically to the discourse of time. Hence, the subchapter will, furthermore, attend to three other variations of nostalgia, namely imperialist (Lorcin 2012, 2013; Rosaldo 1989; Turner 1987), colonial (Lorcin 2012, 2013; Riley 2003; Bissell 2005) and postcolonial nostalgia (Hutcheon 1998; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o 1986). These variations are pertinent to nostalgia’s cultural aspect and are also directly related to the comparison of nostalgia in the narratives under consideration.

### 1.3.1. Personal and historical nostalgia

In popular academic terms, the concept of nostalgia has two major appeals, namely personal and historical. (Holak&Havlena 1992, 1998; Baker&Kennedy 1994; Stern 1992; etc.)

Personal nostalgia is rooted in the individual's remembered past or "the way *I* was". It is based on the autobiographical, on the personal experienced memory. (Holak&Havlena 1992, 1998; Stern 1992) This autobiographical past, according to Barbara Stern, is an idealized past. She notes also that the nostalgia people experience for the bygone childhood "[...] does not depend upon an actual happy childhood, but, rather, on the reconstructed fiction of one." (1992: 16)

Parallel to personal nostalgia, Baker&Kennedy propose what they call real nostalgia, defining it as a sentimental or bittersweet yearning for the self-lived past. Moreover, they suggest that real nostalgia is based on concrete experiences from the person's life, with the following explanation:

[S]timuli which elicit real nostalgia can evoke very vivid recollections. [...] A song that was popular when an individual was in college brings back a time when s/he thought s/he could conquer the world. That is, the song elicits a very bittersweet emotion which may be called real nostalgia, because the time is very vivid and experience-based. (1994: 169-174)

Distinct from personal/real nostalgia, historical nostalgia defines "the way *It* was". It refers to a time in history in which the person, often called the 'respondent' has not lived through the event, or others said did not experience this time directly because very often this was a time before s/he was born (Holak&Havlena 1992, 1998; Stern 1992). Hence, this period of time is not autobiographical, however, the individual self is nevertheless involved, performing a 'role' of imagining her/himself in the past or what Barbara Stern calls an "imaginatively recreated past" (1992). In addition, she comments that this variation of nostalgia "[...] expresses the desire to retreat from contemporary life by returning to a time in the distant past viewed as superior to the present [...] a time before the audience [of nostalgia] was born." (qtd. in Spaid, 2013: 421)

Nostalgia is not a univocal phenomenon. It conflates a myriad of usual and unusual emotions, feelings and moods. It involves a profusion of at times contradictory layers of meaning. On a metaphorical level, it might be compared with a bottle of well aged wine. It needs time, attitude, patience and care to intrigue with new tastes, nuances and color, ultimately triggering long since forgotten memories. This is what happens more or less with the nostalgic emotion. It is always there, a pile of continuously changing emotional nuances.

The next subchapter will draw attention to the next two scholars who propose another set of contrasting forms of nostalgia.

### 1.3.2. Restorative and reflective nostalgia

In her book *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), Boym poses a distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia. According to her these “[...] two kinds of nostalgia are not absolute types [...]”, which might thoroughly “[...] explain the nature of longing or its psychological makeup and unconscious undercurrents; rather, they are about the ways in which we make sense of our seemingly ineffable homesickness and how we view our relationship to a collective home” (41). Restorative nostalgia, writes Boym (49), focuses on the *nostos* and attempts to “rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps” (41). Hence, it might be linked to nationalism, because it tries to restore the lost home. It also “[...] signifies a return to the original stasis, to the prelapsarian moment.” (49). Restorative nostalgia not only seeks the absolute truth and tradition, but also tries to protect this absolute truth (xviii). Restorative nostalgia, she goes on, “[...] is at the core of recent national and religious revivals; it knows two main plots - the return to origins and the conspiracy.” (*Ibid.*) Boym comments on the pejorative connotation of the concept of ‘conspiracy’ which, she underlines, literally means “to breathe together”. (*Ibid.*) Yet this is not the case here, because conspiracy, she notes, is:

[...] to designate a subversive kinship of others, an imagined community based on exclusion more than affection, a union of those who are not with us, but against us. [...] Paranoiac reconstruction of home is predicated on the fantasy of persecution. [...] the creation of a delusionary homeland. (43)

Further on, Svetlana Boym observes the following paradigm: “They” conspire against “Our” homecoming, hence “We” have to conspire against them in order to restore “Our” imagined community. (*Ibid.*) Her comments on the ‘conspiracy theory’ hide challenging references to Elspeth Huxley’s presentation of ethnical dichotomy and relations; part II, subchapter 2.2. will approach this topic in more detail.

In terms of the temporal entanglement, in restorative nostalgia, the past is seen as a perfect snapshot. “[M]oreover, the past is not supposed to reveal any sign of decay; it has to be freshly painted in its “original image”[...].” (49)

Opposite to restorative nostalgia,

[r]eflective nostalgia dwells in *algia*, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance. [...], reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in dreams of another place and another time. (41)

[...] Reflective nostalgia does not follow a single plot but explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones. (xviii)

Reflective nostalgia does not seek the absolute truth but instead doubts it. It is flexible and “is more concerned with historical and individual time, with the irrevocability of the past and human finitude.” (*Ibid.*) “Reflective nostalgia”, Boym continues, “cherishes shattered fragments of memory” and the lost home is not of importance, but rather the “emotional resonance of distance” (49). It embeds fragments of melancholia and mourning and “is a form of deep mourning that performs a labour of grief both through pondering pain and through play that points to the future. [...] the labour of grief could take a lifetime to complete.” (55)

In her book *Yesterday's Self: Nostalgia and the Immigrant Identity*, Andreea Ritivoi reviews the two types of nostalgia which Boym proposes and links them to the analysis of the context of the immigrant identity. In terms of restorative nostalgia, which Boym refers to *nostos*/home, she observes that since it

[...] counts on the availability of a past situation beyond strictly symbolic representations, it is inevitably naïve, retrograde, and even paranoid in so far as it tends to read its necessary failure to restore the past as sabotage, conspiracy, or persecution. (2002: 32)

As far as reflective nostalgia is concerned, Ritivoi reviews Boym's explanation and adds that since it relies on the impossibility to return, it is pessimistic, ironic, cynical and it “[...] zooms [...] on the difference between reality and simulacra, the original and the copy.” (*Ibid.*) Reflective nostalgia, Ritivoi continues, expresses melancholic moods and instead of demanding a cure, it rejects it, pretending instead that no such things exist.

While investigating how nostalgia functions in the construction of immigrant identity, Ritivoi finds a missing element which neither type promises. She argues that “[B]oth restorative and reflective nostalgia seem to exclude the possibility of adjustment: One resists it in a naïve way, hoping for the return, the other cynically mistrustful of any new beginning.” (2002: 32) In addition, she claims that “[...] nostalgia in the context of the immigrant identity is about adjustment to new surroundings, the success of which depends on building bridges between the past and the present.” (qtd. in Lorcin, 2012: 11) Furthermore, she writes that “[I]n the most optimistic, but often proven unrealistic,

rendering, the adjustment is complete when the foreigner “goes native”, and when “abroad” becomes “home””. (Ritivoi, 102)

### 1.3.3. Imperialist nostalgia

Scholars associate European imperialist nostalgia with the longing for the lost empire (Lorcin, 2012: 8). Given the current debate on nostalgia in the colonial and postcolonial context, it is appropriate to consider the two nostalgic agents, namely the former colonials and the former colonized, which will be further elaborated in the analysis of the selected case studies.

In the article “Imperial Nostalgia; Colonial Nostalgia: *Differences of Theory, Similarities of Practice?*” (2013: 97), Patricia Lorcin elaborates extensively on the difference between imperial nostalgia and colonial nostalgia. She asserts that imperialist nostalgia addresses political and economic practices and activities and makes reference to events like the Falklands war between Argentina and the United Kingdom in 1982, or the Opération Épervier (1986) “[...] to shield Chad from Libyan invasion, which echoed notions of former British and French imperial grandeur; [...]” (Lorcin, 2012: 9). In summarizing, Lorcin writes that imperialist nostalgia “[...] is manifested at the national level by statements and practices associated with lost transnational dominance and international supremacy [...]” (2013: 107) hence it “[...] is all-encompassing [...] as it harks to, or echoes, periods of global hegemony [...]” (*Ibid.*, 103).

While Lorcin analyzes and stresses the differences between imperialist and colonial nostalgia in both the empire and the colony, the British-Australian sociologist Bryan S. Turner analyzes nostalgia as a problem for intellectuals and the former colonials. He takes the side of the white colonial settlers and argues that they are prone to nostalgic crisis and longing for the “motherland”. The “motherland”, he continues, is absent and therefore becomes an object of idealization, perceived as a “[...] ‘home’ located in a lost place in a lost time and thereby assumes a Utopian dimension, since that home is free from the conflicts of multiculturalism, political pluralism and ethnic conflict.” (1987: 154)

The analysis by the anthropologist Renato Rosaldo charts a different course for approaching imperialist nostalgia and marks a central contribution to postcolonial and memory studies. Like Patricia Lorcin, Rosaldo concentrates his research on nineteenth- and twentieth-century European imperialism. Unlike Lorcin and Turner, Rosaldo tackles the problem of domination and exploitation

smothering the apparently innocent essence of imperialist nostalgia by focusing on its non-European and away from the standard disciplinary contexts. He conceals that the term imperialist nostalgia “[e]ven in its origins, [...] appears to have been associated with process of domination” (1989: 108-9). He considers the involvement not only of the “officials, constabulary officers, missionaries” as potential nostalgic agents (107), but also of anthropologists and ethnologists, whom he presents as marionette executors unwillingly participating in the colonial project, “[b]oth attempt to use a seemingly harmless mood as a mask of innocence in order to cover their involvement with the process of domination” (120). Arguing that imperialist nostalgia is a form of “innocent yearning”, Rosaldo writes that it also:

[...] revolves around a paradox: a person kills somebody and then mourns his or her victim. In a more attenuated form, someone deliberately alters a form of life and then regrets that things have not remained as they were prior to his or her intervention. At one more remove, people destroy their environment and then worship nature. (108)

The major point Rosaldo makes is that imperialist nostalgia presents the brutal forms of racial domination and subordination as something pure and innocent. These imperialist agents of nostalgia mourn for what they had already destroyed and for “what they themselves have transformed” (*Ibid.*) Moreover, Rosaldo argues that “[I]mperialist nostalgia occurs alongside a peculiar sense of mission, the white man’s burden, where civilized nations stand duty-bound to uplift so-called savage ones.” (*Ibid.*) In the same token, he claims that this variation of nostalgia is a representative of the white man’s arrogance, subjugation and oppressive politics. His interpretation comes closer to colonial nostalgia because, as will be further explained in the next subchapter, colonial nostalgia deals with more personal matters rather than with international geopolitical hierarchies and supreme authorities.

#### 1.3.4. Colonial nostalgia

Colonial nostalgia, Lorcin continues, is “[...], connected to reminiscences and evocations of a past lifestyle and an idealized vision of the intercultural relations within the colony that existed at that time” (2013: 103). This means that colonial nostalgia is concerned with more personal patterns. Likewise, it “[...] is associated with socio-economic deprivations or changes.” (*Ibid.*, 107) As the



most extreme example of colonial nostalgia, Lorcin brings the so-called *pied-noir* into consideration. In terms of other European communities who lived in French North Africa, Lorcin exemplifies colonial nostalgia in Kenya. She claims that decolonization that follows immediately after colonization does not necessarily project bitterness, an emotion and experience prerequisite for Algeria. Lorcin writes that:

[I]n the case of Kenya, [...], where Jomo Kenyatta called for reconciliation and urged the settlers to remain in Kenya in order to demonstrate to the world that different races could work together, colonial nostalgia did not take the angry, acrimonious tones of the early iterations of *Nostalgie*. (2013: 104)

In this respect, Lorcin continues with the comment that colonial nostalgia is defined through the particular lifestyles of the colonies. The lifestyles are developed under the white women's involvement in the colonies. Not only Lorcin, but many other scholars have already pointed out the importance of women's engagement in the development of domestic and social matters in the construction of the canon of colonial nostalgia. For instance, in her book *Taking Land, Breaking Land: Women Colonizing the American West and Kenya, 1840-1940*, Glenda Riley compares the two frontiers of West America and Kenya and draws parallels between the situations of the pioneer women noting that, "whereas most men excelled in colonizing the body, most women [were] especially adept at colonizing the mind." (2003: 13) Moreover, Riley claims that even if the women immigrated due to their own financial and social hardships, they still brought with them this civilizing manner, the "enlightenment",

[b]ecause white society of the time charged women in particular with maintaining virtue and supporting the spread of churches and schools, *white women settlers felt uniquely prepared for the task of colonizing*. [emphasis added] (*Ibid.*, 294).

While Riley's claim harbors some racial tension of women's hegemony over the uncivilized natives, Patricia Lorcin shares the same opinion, but expresses it more mildly, portraying the white women settlers in the philanthropic and mother-figure role.

The difference is highlighted in the following paragraph:

[w]omen as educators, as role models, as guardians of national cultural and social traditions - this provided the colonial project with a familial and more compassionate dimension, the dimension in which colonial nostalgia is anchored. (2012: 11)

More about the leading themes and the roles of the white women settlers in Kenya, their identity construction and their narratives of nostalgia will be addressed in Part II.

To turn back to the discussion on colonial nostalgia in comparison to imperialist nostalgia, the anthropologist William Cunningham Bissell makes a notable difference between imperialist and colonial nostalgia. In his article “Engaging Colonial Nostalgia”, Bissell suggests that while imperialist nostalgia is “[...] understood as a response to a loss of global position or prestige, and treated as a form of reaction [...]”, colonial nostalgia “is clearly connected to its imperial counterpart, but points to rather disturbing and difficult features of the contemporary global landscape.” (2005: 216-17) In addition, Bissell links imperialist nostalgia to the former colonizer, and colonial nostalgia to the former colonized and claims that it is reasonable why the colonizer might long for the return of the lost empire. The point which raises utter bewilderment for him is why the colonized voice their nostalgia for the colonial period. This prompts him to draw the attention to the following questions of “[...] what does it mean when Africans voice similar views, seemingly harkening back to colonialism as a better age?” and “[H]ow exactly do we come to terms with expressions of colonial nostalgia by the descendants of those who struggled long and hard to overcome the effects of European domination and exploitation?” (*Ibid.*, 217).

However, Bissell proposes that the former colonized felt dissatisfaction with the postcolonial situation. He recalls the news report on Angola twenty-five years after independence in 1975. As a major problem, he lists the “lack of progress in rebuilding” caused by “shortages of funds and materials”, “the disrupted administration and damaged or decayed infrastructure” in Kuito which was a “graceful colonial city once known for its gardens, its fountains, and its rich its rich soil” (*Ibid.*). In this case, nostalgia functions like a compass showing a somehow paradoxical longing for the happy colony life and the current devastations and lack in progress and economic development in the degenerating present postcolonial occurrences. These thoughts are reminiscent of the notorious claim Svetlana Boym shares about the dubious faculty of nostalgia. She summarizes beforehand in the introductory part that:

[i]n a broader sense, nostalgia is rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress. The nostalgic desires to obliterate history and turn it into private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition. (*The Future of Nostalgia*, 2001: xv)

### 1.3.5. Postcolonial nostalgia

Another variation of nostalgia, which also deals with the former colonizer and the former colonized, is displayed in the concept of postcolonial nostalgia. Whereas imperialist nostalgia longs for a lost national prestige and power, and colonial nostalgia longs for a lost culture and lifestyle, postcolonial nostalgia might be said to echo the search for a lost identity, roots and what Linda Hutcheon calls “a lost coherence”. In her the article “Irony, Nostalgia, and the Postmodern”, Hutcheon explains that:

[t]o some, the “négritude” move in African cultural theory, with its focus on the pre-capitalist, pre-imperial past, was the sign of a nostalgic search for a lost coherence. Many oppressed people - Holocaust survivors and North American First Nations peoples among them - have had a strong and understandable nostalgia for what is perceived as their once unified identity. But most often, the post-colonial focus of attention has been on the nostalgia of the (usually) European colonizers, on their sense of loss and mourning for the cultural unity and centrality they once had. But, as Fredric Jameson has said, “a history lesson is the best cure for nostalgic pathos.” (qtd. in Vervliet&Estor, 2000: 201).

This search of the lost coherence and the attempt to reconstruct the unity is highly expressed and captured in postcolonial literature where nostalgia involves themes such as displacement, exile and return. Contemporary Kenyan writers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Grace Ogot, Meja Mwangi, Hilary Ngweno, Margaret Ogola, and R. Mugo Gatheru, tackle problems in the context of colonial and postcolonial political and socio-cultural relationships. Interestingly enough, not only Kenyan novelists address these problems; indeed, some European writers and settlers who came to Africa during the colonial period also engage the same matters in their narratives. Not directly mentioned, however, topics like displacement, resistance, bifurcated identities, belonging, racial differences, political and cultural discrepancies, etc. frequently occur in the works of Florence Riddell, Nora Strange, Karen Blixen, Elspeth Huxley and Kuki Gallmann. For instance, the African patriot and critic Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o fiercely defends the revival and cultivation of the Kenyan nation and language by appealing that:

[O]nly by a return to the roots of our being in the languages and cultures and heroic histories of the Kenyan people can we rise up to the challenge of helping in the creation of a Kenyan patriotic national literature and culture that will be the envy of many foreigners and the pride of Kenyans. (1997: 64)

In this sense, the restoration and preservation of the authentic Kenyan tradition refers to the nostalgia as a means of return to the cultural roots. In addition, Kuki Gallmann, an Italian-born

Kenyan national writer and environmentalist, professes the same credo which, apart from the loss of her husband and son, is the leading inspiration in the establishing of the Gallmann Memorial Foundation in 1984. This relatively modern foundation strives and struggles for the preservation and cultivation of the African fauna and flora.

This part has focused on the evolution of nostalgia etymologically and theoretically. It has also illustrated some of the basic objects and variations of the concept. After having outlined the contextual basis for the analysis, the second part of the thesis, then, is designed as a practical implementation of the theory provided above and will further engage with the representations of nostalgia in the three selected case studies.

## II. NOSTALGIA IN SELECTED AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVELS BY KAREN BLIXEN *OUT OF AFRICA*, ELSPETH HUXLEY *THE FLAME TREES OF THIKA* AND KUKI GALLMANN *I DREAMED OF AFRICA*.

### 1. Karen Blixen alias Isak Dinesen (1885 - 1962)

Karen von Blixen-Finecke, née Karen Christentze Dinesen, a Danish writer and an artist also known by her nom de plume as Isak Dinesen, was born on 17th April 1885 in the fishing village Rungstedlund near the small town of Rungsted which lies to the north of Copenhagen, Denmark. Her father, Wilhelm Dinesen, was an army officer, a writer and a passionate adventure-seeker while her mother Ingeborg, née Westenholz, came from a wealthy bourgeois merchant family. From her early years, Blixen was deeply influenced by her father's stories about the wars he took part in and his two-years of experience among the American Indian tribes in the United States. Blixen identified herself with him, who was by nature a talented, restless and fearless man, devoted to his turbulent and adventurous lifestyle and most of all: a dreamer. After her father committed suicide, the young Karen grew up under the conservative and smothering auspices of her Unitarian redoubtable mother and grandmother. The dense air filled with a strict Victorian-required obedience, continuously fired constant conflicts between the young Karen and her family, while making her realize her own strong quest for freedom. The fact that she was educated at home and never properly attended school does not strip the Danish Scheherazade out of possessing a rich imagination and frivolous manner in creating and telling stories. Indeed, at a very early age she was already annoyed by the era that she lived in, wondering "[H]ow, [...] could a girl living in this deadly boring twentieth century [...] gain accesses to that heroic world?" (Hannah, 1971: 18) While her life was mostly determined by Victorian dogmas, her summer visits to her uncle's luxurious estate Katholm in Jutland opened a new horizon for fresh life motivations and expectations. Karen opened her eyes to the freedom her father had had and was made familiar with the other side of aristocracy, duty and responsibility. Thus, deeply drawn by the old-fashioned courtly aristocratic lifestyle, she was also able to establish a kind of 'bovarysme'<sup>3</sup> pattern of

---

<sup>3</sup> 'Bovarysme' is a concept coined from Gustave Flaubert's debut novel *Madame Bovary* (1857). It indicated a tendency toward escapist daydreaming in which the dreamer imagines him/herself to be a hero/heroine in a romance, while at the same time consciously ignoring the everyday realities of the situation. This concept displays one of the characteristic features of the eponymous heroine Madame Bovary.

behavior incited by rebellious outbursts towards her aunt and by a constant urge to invent stories while letting her vivid imagination run free. The disappointment from both her family and the twentieth century standards of living, were highly influential factors dictating the topic selection and writing style Blixen acquired as an adult.

In January 1914, at the age of 29, Karen Blixen married her cousin Baron Bror von Blixen-Finecke and both decided to settle in Kenya and to establish a coffee farm at Ngong. The Baron and his Baroness were inspired by her uncle, who had recently returned from East Africa, and his lively descriptions, which stimulated the idea to settle there for a lifetime. At the time when Blixen and her husband settled in Kenya, there was an ever-growing interest in farming and owning coffee plantations; this was the time when the power of the British East Africa was at its zenith. From 1905 to 1907 the coffee market increased tremendously and Africa became an attractive place for many Europeans, who strove for prosperity and economic wealth. Patricia Lorcin writes that “[b]y the time the Blixens were contemplating marriage, coffee was already a money-spinner in Kenya and its cultivation was a European monopoly.” (2012: 49)

In 1921, the Baroness divorced her husband. Due to his unfaithfulness she suffered syphilis which she had to treat back in Denmark. Due to the profitable coffee investigation, she was able to manage the farm until 1931. Then, the idyllic life in Kenya came to an end and Karen had to return to Denmark, where she finally acquired the profession as a writer and took on the pen name Isak Dinesen, due to financial troubles. Her most famous works are: *Out of Africa* (1937), the short story *Babette's Feast* (1958), which was adapted into the first Danish film to win the Academy Award for best foreign language film, and *Seven Gothic Tales* (1934), which is a collection of short stories. Karen Blixen alias Isak Dinesen died on the 7th of September 1962 at her home in Rungstedlund, Denmark.

### 1.1. Visions of Africa

An essential element which deeply influenced Blixen's life philosophy and can be seen throughout her writing style and visions of Africa, was her passion for art and painting. Hand in hand with the wild fantasy of inventing stories, combined with the inherited adventurous spirit for freedom from her father and the inclination towards art and masks, Karen Blixen put on her rose-coloured glasses

to capture the nature and life in Kenya, which somehow brings a romantic signature to her works, especially to her autobiographical novel *Out of Africa*, where she portrayed nature as a piece of art. Thus, it might be argued that her aspiration and enchantment with nature and the pastoral reminds us of the Neo-classical perception of nature and art. For instance, Blixen invited us into the vivid and realistic essence of Africa's unspoiled fauna and flora right from the beginning of her memoir *Out of Africa*. For her, the richness of life mingled with harmony, exhibited through art and nature.

[T]he importance that she, like Wilde, attributes to art also provides a clue to the effect Isak Dinesen seeks to attain in her practice as a writer. A countryside is turned into a landscape, a scene from real life is made into a work of art, and through this process the true nature of the real world is revealed. (Hannah, 22)

The splendour of African landscapes inspired Blixen to paint her visions through words. It provides the long yearned freedom. She visioned Africa as her way out of both the tyranny of her aunt and grandmother, and from the modern age she constantly "[s]corns [...] for its preoccupation with petty things." (Hannah, 15) She captured Kenya as an "Edenic place" which is also a place of rejuvenation (Whitlock, 2000: 115) This is evident from the beginning paragraphs of the novel (which is worth quoting in length):

[T]he geographical position and *the height of the land combined to create a landscape that had not its like in all the world. There was no fat on it and no luxuriance anywhere*; it was Africa distilled up through six thousand feet, like the strong and refined essence of a continent. The colors were dry and burnt, like the colors in pottery. *The trees had a light delicate foliage*, the structure of which was different from that of the trees in Europe; [...] *The views were immensely wide. Everything that you saw made for greatness and freedom, and unequalled nobility.* [...] The chief feature of the landscape, and of your life, was the air. [...] In the middle of the day *the air was alive over the land, like a flame burning*; it scintillated, waved and shone like running water, mirrored and doubled all objects, *and created great Fata Morgana*. Up in this high air you breathed easily, drawing in a vital assurance and lightness of heart. In the highlands you woke up in the morning and thought: *Here I am, where I ought to be.* [emphasis added] (13-14)

This depiction of nature reminds one of an artist who, in a euphoric mood of inspiration, is urged to catch the moment fearing that the muse will fly away at once and the memories will never come back in the same chronology, "[...] as if remembering were just one more way of being in time" and place. (E. Casey qtd. in Ihde&Silverman, 1985: 51)

Apart from the artistic inspiration the Kenyan nature revealed, it also introduced Blixen to the culture of hunting. The young Baroness became enthralled by participating in safaris and gaming, a

role which had a lot to do with the status of white female settlers in the colonies at that time. It is interesting to notice that many women in the colonies were supposed to do activities to which they were not accustomed to doing at home. They stepped into the role of pioneers who had to manage both; on the one hand, the domestic realm in the diaspora and, on the other hand, the farms as enterprises bringing more income. Another essential issue which cannot be neglected is that of the gender-role-reversion. Especially in Blixen's novel, it becomes clear that neither her husband, nor her lover shared the same passion for hunting as Blixen did. They preferred to lead less adventurous and more aristocratic way of life. Hence, the presence of women in the hunting fields of Kenyan safaris, as well as farming and planting, was just one of the few female activities in the African diaspora.

With regard to her attitude towards the natives, Blixen again revealed her temperament which is contrary to the common behavior of the white settlers' elite clique in the colonies. As mentioned in the biographical account, one of the reasons for which she decided to escape the European civilization was namely her rebellion against the ruling schema. Instead, she had chosen to belong to the Kenyan diaspora and to live according to the values of an ancient and rustic regime, where the freedom of choice and humanity had much more quality than the manipulative money-making British ruling machine.

Blixen, however, did indeed utilise the privilege of the coloniser status, but "[w]henver possible tried to act as a buffer between the natives on the farm and official government agencies, including the police" (Brantly, 2002: 78). She believed in their right to regain authority over the land that had been stolen from them. She "[...] was clear that the future of Kenya as a country lay in the hands of the natives, not the white settlers." (*Ibid.*) Moreover, Baroness Blixen was not afraid to make a public objection against the taxes, which had to be paid by the natives. Although her coffee farm suffered from financial calamities, Blixen treated the natives with respect and largesse. She was even honoured to be acquainted with them, because their friendship she valued most and often said, "[I] have been blessed with heroic friendships." (qtd. in Hannah, 37) The features of heroism, stoicism and braveness are especially depicted in *Out of Africa* through the following depiction of the native friend who:

[...] faces any change in life with great calm. [...] - in the face of pain or of a great operation they generally showed little fear. [...] But when I myself got to know the Natives, this quality in them was one of the things that I liked best. They had real courage: the unadulterated liking of danger [...] (30)



Furthermore, she did not interfere and oppose their farming skills, for she acknowledged the fact that the Kikuyu had been nomadic agricultural people with a vigorously developed farming acumen, much better than the English colonial settlers, and, indeed, “[s]he ran the coffee at a dead loss, and the Africans made the profit“ (*Ibid.*, 77). Blixen was never really interested in improving her economic comfort at the expense of the natives. She did not even make the slightest attempt to adopt a European elite masquerade<sup>4</sup> among her neighbours. What she did was to go even beyond the Western politics of government and dared to share courageous thoughts about the future of Kenya, expressed in the following quote, “[P]ersonally, I think the whites should leave Africa, also South Africa, even if it will take several years” (qtd. in Brantly, 83).

Karen Blixen herself was oppressed before her ‘escaping’ to Kenya. What she longed for was a sense of belonging, for the expression of free will, for uniting with the spirit of the place instead of striving for material wealth. Labelled as ‘pro-native’ (cf. Hannah, 33), she attempted to ease “her people’s” efforts by finding them a piece of land after being compelled to sell the farm, offering a life of devotion while utilizing the principle of ‘noblesse oblige’ which finds its way throughout simple gestures - “[...] they asked me where they were to go; [...] It is more than their land that you take away from the people, whose native land you take. [...]”, moreover they asked her to go to Selikali and “[...] obtain from them that we may take all our cattle with us to the new place and that we shall all remain together where we are going” and “[w]ith this began for me a long pilgrimage, or a *beggar’s journey* which took up my last months in Africa.” [emphasis added] (Blixen, 318-320) The principle of ‘noblesse oblige’ became one of the prime navigators for her attitude towards the natives. Her aristocratic roots, indisputably, oppose the dogmas of the ‘white man’s burden’ and juxtapose with the common attitude of the English settlers. It is, indeed, salient that the latter also show both patterns of behaviour, namely ‘bovarysme’, which was mentioned previously, and ‘noblesse oblige’ but in a different manner. According to Sir Edward Grigg, who was a governor of Kenya from 1925 till 1930:

[A]ll white men and women destined to spend their lives in Africa [...] were born into a special and inalienable responsibility. Throughout their lives they would have to set a standard of civilization among people still far behind them (whatever the

---

<sup>4</sup> The word ‘masquerade’ is used to signal pretended elite habitudes of settlers who lay claim to own the natives and treat them as secondhand people. Although keen on masks, Karen Blixen opposed this kind of masquerade and the process of displacement and via her memoir *Out of Africa* she indirectly propagated that the squatters should regain their authority over the land. The word does not denote the concept of masquerade utilized in psychology and psychoanalytic studies.

future might hold) in culture. They were assigned to an involuntary aristocracy. (Cf. Elspeth Huxley's novel *White Man's Country*, Vol. 2, 1956: 253)

The subsection titled *Kitosch's Story* in *Out of Africa*, for instance, demonstrates a white settlers' punishment of one of his servants called Kitosch. The young stableboy was sentenced to severe torture which resulted in his agonizing death. He was punished for disobeying his master's instruction not to ride but to lead his mare back home. Albeit G. P. Putnam's Sons, Blixen's publisher's rebelled against releasing this story, nevertheless, she not only left it in the book but also described the scene through her lens. Few of the most indispensable and eloquent fragments of the story are:

[...], according to the Native ideas, a comprehension for his [Kitosch's] death should now be made to his people.

But the idea of justice of Europe varies from that of Africa, [...]. The judge reminded the jury that the degree of an offence rests upon the intentions of the persons concerned, and not upon the results.[...]

It can be said that by his intention, and his attitude of mind, the African, in his grave, saved the European. [...]

After the doctors' evidence, the case turned upon what was called in court 'the wish-to-die theory'. [...] The judge imposed a sentence of two years R.I. on the settler, and of one day on each of the Natives. (239-242)

Obliterating the morals and trappings of racial domination, Blixen showed tolerance, sympathized and had a constant urge to help the indigenous people. She staunchly held to her concept of duty, responsibility and dedication, where the attitude of aristocratic nobleness breaks all racial and class boundaries. In his book *Ansikt til Anskit* (1969) Erik Egeland palpably points out the negative connotations of the concept and the reason for its usage:

[T]he only really reliable principle in the relationship between parties, where one is technologically and economically superior to such a fantastic degree must be 'Noblesse oblige'. [...] Yes, if society was so democratic that White people could recognize the Blacks as equals, a *modus vivendi* might possibly be found. But it is my experience that the longer one comes in socially into a White democratic society, the stronger the Whites feel and insist upon their race's superiority. [...] Noblesse: It is nothing else or less than this: to keep one's word. It is to take responsibility for what one says and does. (qtd. in Brantly, 81)

And indeed in an empathic manner later on after the publication of *Out of Africa*, Blixen reveals more openly than ever her attitudes and engagement with the native people, despite the fact that she belongs to the superior clique. This is illustrated in the following statements:

*I loved the natives.* In a way the strings and the most incalculable emotion I have known in my life. Did they love me? No.

But they relied on me in a strange, incomprehensible, mysterious way. A stupendous obligation. *One would die for them.* [emphasis added] (Hannah, 34)

Another disclosure says:

[I] stood against all of Kenya's Civil Service with the Governor in the lead; *I was bankrupt, which in England really means outcast, but I was more in my patched shoes than the gentlemen in their uniforms, and I made them give my squatters land around Dagoretti and around Limura and around Mbagathi.* [emphasis added] (Brantly, 82)

These examples shape only a handful amount of her humanitarian activities revealed throughout the eyes of an artist, a settler, and a human who felt a deep affinity with the African nature and external loyalty to the land and the people of the Third World.

What we witnessed so far is that Blixen's visions of Africa were influenced by artistic, social and political factors wrapped in a romantic and adventurous writing style. She reverses the notion of home and voluntarily frees herself from Victorian Europe to settle in Africa. And this is her way to propagate her political orientation and belief of equality, to present her good-willed aristocratic manner of serving her duties and responsibilities, to picture the enchanting beauty of nature and finally to vent her nostalgia for the lost home in Kenya. Drawing parallels between her life and her novel, the last subchapter deals with the representation of nostalgia as a response to Blixen's psychological revival and growth.

## 1.2 *Out of Africa* (1937)

Karen Blixen's return to Denmark is marked by a turbulent twist. Moreover, her unconditional surrender to the departure of the idyllic home compels her to start setting up her life again. After being declared bankrupt and losing her farm and home, the new start is almost overwhelming for the ageing outcast. Devastated by being compelled to return to Denmark she has to decide which profession she is going to follow, how to rearrange her new life in the place where she was born and which she so much wanted to abandon. She decided to become a writer. Her choice brought further rejections; the situation of a Danish writer publishing in English for a Danish and American

readership was a challenge which was unprofitable. She needed a different and, most of all, a male mask to provide for her broader reading audience and so the nom de plume Isak Dinesen was born. Soon after she adopted her new pen name, Karen Blixen (now Isak Dinesen) wrote her first memoir *Out of Africa* in 1937. It came in response to Blixen's emotional recall of Africa, as a remedy for her nostalgia and a solution to her desperate financial needs. Unfortunately, the memoir was not accepted by the European readership which had no knowledge of the living conditions in Africa at that time. What followed was a wave of indignant critical opponents, blaming Blixen on the basis of 'romanticised' racism, of falsifying history and of not properly indulging in and obeying the European dogmas. All this critique has reasonable explanations. In a letter to her brother, Blixen wrote that she:

[...] believes that life demands of us that we love it, not merely certain sides of it and not only one's own ideas and ideals, but life itself in all its forms, before it will give us anything in return, and when you mention my philosophy in life, I have no other than that. (Isak Dinesen, *Letters from Africa. 1914-1931*, 1981: 61)

This credo captures another life ideology of Blixen's artistic figure and her belief that in order to be able to experience the whole richness of life, one needs to be free and open to the world. Hence, this part seeks to explicitly focus on the way she exercises her freedom in life via the means of nostalgia in the memoir *Out of Africa*.

The antecedent subchapter has revealed one main issue regarding the topic under question, namely the matter of attitude. And it is especially important, indeed, to realize and to be accustomed to the time-changes, conditions and circumstances one accepts when leaving the home country. It is excessively important for a person to recognize the attitude h/she carries when arriving at a foreign country because the attitude dictates the success in life. This attitude develops further in a social vehicle which is deeply influential for the way people envisage the host country, the way people engage and participate in social, economic, cultural matters; it also affects the way people adapt, integrate and are accepted in their new place of residence. However, Blixen's attitude, as already mentioned, is not imposed by the Western dictatorship. Rather, it has a rebellious character and is synchronized with her persuasion of justice and humanity toward people who were severely oppressed and subjugated. Her attitude is not only essential for presenting the manner in which she visions the people and the land, but it also helps her to illustrate her nostalgia later on in the memoir.

Previously it was also mentioned that Karen Blixen's openness brought artistic inspiration in life whenever the eye stretches and whatever the imagination creates. The sublime majesty of African nature and the behavior of the natives is placed in a symbiosis of unpredictability and authenticity which the artist - Blixen - tries to capture in the following lines: "[...] a landscape that had not its like in all the world.", [e]verything [...] you saw made for greatness and freedom, and unequalled nobility." (13); "[...] when the earth answered like a sounding-board in a deep fertile roar, and the world sang round you in all dimensions [...]", it felt like "[...] being in disgrace with the Great Powers pressed on you." (46); "[T]he Natives became silent under the drought. [...] It was their existence which was at stake." (47); "[A]ll Natives are masters in the art of the pause [...]" (50); "[T]he immigrant Somalis [...] have a keen sense of gratitude and will also bear for ever [...]", because they are Mohammedans and "[...], have a moral code according to which they will judge you." As far as the native tribes are concerned, "[T]he Massai here hold position. [...] they remember, they can thank you, and they will bear you a grudge." (115) The rest of the tribes know no such code:

[T]hey have it that most people are capable of most things, and you cannot shock them if you want to. [...] Left to their own nature, and to the tradition of their nation, they will look upon our activities as upon those of nature. They judge you not, but they are keen observers. The sum of their observations is what you pass for with them, your good or bad name. (116)

There are some points to be figured out in this context which have the following consequences. Firstly, the author Blixen paints with words her nostalgia for the African scenery, nature and atmosphere, realizing that she will never feast her eyes on it again. Secondly, the diversity and unpredictability of both nature and people, is something which elevates the settler Blixen to a level of excitement and vividness; she felt herself alive and free to express each capacity of personality she is able to. This diversity corresponds to the diversity of her essence. Consequently, there was a very strong bond between her and Africa, from the beginning pages of her memoir, she writes that:

[A]s for me, from my first weeks in Africa, I had felt a great affection for the Natives. *It was a strong feeling that embraced all ages and both sexes.* The discovery of the dark races was to me a magnificent enlargement of all my world. If a person with an inborn sympathy for animals had grown up in a milieu where there were no animals, and had come into contact with animals late in life; [...] or if someone with an ear for music had happened to hear music for the first time when he was already grown up: their cases might have been similar to mine. After I had met with the Natives, I set out the routine of my daily life to the orchestra. [emphasis added] (25)

Thirdly, the last sentence also reveals something of a great importance for a settler, who acquires a new sense of the self in a foreign country, namely the ever-growing sense of belonging, which later on develops in clear life vocation and devotion. Blixen's attitude toward the natives and nature of Kenya is only one of the factors which developed into the nostalgic call in her novel.

Another essential matter regarding the question how Karen Blixen exercises her freedom through nostalgia is present again right from the plangent opening of *Out of Africa*. "[I] had a farm in Africa, at the foot of the Ngong Hills." (13). This tells the reader about the author's status in the diaspora, namely that of a farm owner. Previously in the biographical note, it was mentioned that after the marriage with her cousin, Karen Blixen acquired the title 'Baroness'. Utilizing the privilege of her status, she, like Robinson Crusoe, builds a "colony" of her own, in which she can serve "her peoples'" demands and needs. Here again, the topic of attitude is open to discussion. It has already been mentioned above that the attitude of the immigrant is essential when settling in a foreign country. The attitude of the host people toward the newcomers is likewise as important, because they can "[...] destroy your prestige within an hour." (115) The instances listed below provide a clear view on the natives' attitude toward the Baroness. The comments are made by Kamante and Farah's brother, Abdullahi Ahmed Weid, two of the serving members of Blixen's household:

KAMANTE: Mrs. Karen was not a racist. She was Mzungu,<sup>5</sup> but that didn't matter. Mrs. Karen has a very kind heart. She did not discriminate against African or Mzungu, child or grownup. There were very few quarrels because Mrs. Karen showed no tribalism.

ABDULLAHI AHMED WEID: The Baroness felt that all were equal and that justice and fairness was everybody's right. In those days, racial discrimination in that multiracial country was similar to a war in which there was no actual field combat. The Baroness always pretended that racial discrimination was non-existent. She knew it existed, but at the same time she knew she could do nothing to remedy the situation. (qtd. Brantly, 81)

Apart from the direct defence, the feature also pointing towards the close relationship is the fact that Kamante refers to Baroness by her first name. Abdullahi refers to her with more respect, he stresses the manner in which Blixen silently expressed her battle against racial discrimination by neglecting the issue. What we deal with here is a description of friendship and the clever manner in which

---

<sup>5</sup> 'Mzungu' is Swahili (the lingua franca of East Africa): someone who wanders without purpose / someone constantly on the move. It came to be applied to all White people in East Africa, as most were encountered as traders, visiting colonial officials or tourists. (<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=mzungu>).

Blixen prevents even the slightest flame from exploding into a war. She uses the strategy of secretly acting against it via the power of words without directly inciting unrest by adding fuel to the fire. Further revelations about her persona are presented in the memoir at, for instance, the birthday party for the little George. In the dialogue between the two they discussed topics such as racism and Blixen's place in the tribal realm:

[George] announced that it was his birthday next day, [...] and his mother was going to ask the English passengers for tea, would I come? he said.  
 ‚But I am not English, George‘, said I.  
 ‚What are you? he asked, in great surprise.  
 ‚I am a Hottentot,‘ I said.  
 [...]
 ‚Never mind,‘ he said, ‚I hope you will come.‘ [...]
 To his mother: ‚She is a Hottentot. *But I want her.*‘ (*Out of Africa*, 254-255)

Here, Blixen's social connectedness stretches further into nostalgia which stresses no longer a lamentation for the lost home or time, but for the lost status in life and for the privileged position which she gained among the people. It would be wrong to think that her status in the colony resembles the word 'control'. Blixen does not exercise control over the natives. On the contrary, the condition of attempting to exercise control over herself, while preventing strikes of unnecessary panic of losing the home, the country and the connection to the people, deprived her of the control over her spirit and strips her ambition to be devoted to something or someone.

It is astonishing how exactly these people, described as either calm observers or severe judges, can also experience nostalgia for the white settler.

The last chapter of the book called *Farewell* illustrates the climax of nostalgia from both sides.

“[...], the people were with me, and I with the people, [...]”, “[D]uring all my life in Africa I have not lived through another moment of such bitterness. [...]”; the nothingness of speech by now was manifest to me.”, “[T]he old Kikuyu themselves stood like a herd of old sheep, all their eyes under the wrinkled lids fixed upon my face.”, “The people of the farm who grieved most at my departure were I think the old women. [...] The old women of the farm and I had always been friends.”, “I say good-bye to each of my houseboys, and, as I went out, they, who had been carefully instructed to close the doors, *left the door wide open behind me.*” [emphasis added], “[...] Sirunga, my squatter Kaninu's small grandson, who was an epileptic, [...] appeared to say a last good-bye to me, [...], he started to run after the cars as fast as he could, [...]. He ran all the way to where the farm road joined the highroad.” (323-29) This also exposes Blixen's nostalgia, namely the feeling that the

other side also suffers from the separation; the feeling that there are people, who are going to miss you and who will wait for your return. In the same token, Blixen felt deeply accustomed to the natives and the idea of separation seemed at first out of question. When its necessity is demanded, this separation becomes deeply destructive and the restorative process turns out to be painful and uncomfortable to bear. Even the thought of it might induce one to behave unpredictably or even aggressively. In addition to the adjustment to the African atmosphere, Andreea Deciu Ritivoi investigates the concept of nostalgia in terms of the immigrant identity claiming that, “[...] nostalgia in the context of the immigrant is about adjustment to new surroundings the success of which depends on building bridges between the past and the present.” (Lorcin, 2012: 11). Here, nostalgia takes the role of a strategic move to adapt in order to be accepted. The Baroness adjusts herself to the new surroundings, for even in a sojourn in Africa and the fact that she is too inexperienced and immature she courageously asserts that, “[...] I learned their manner from them, [...]” (Blixen 47). At the very beginning of the novel, she captures the people of those lands as being “[...] great at the art of mimicry.” (*Ibid.*, 26) I would dare to continue the sentence by saying “Well, she too.” Needless to say, but the mimicry the natives tend towards is not the same mimicry Blixen adopted. The fact that Blixen is so skillful in mimicking also arises from her artistic essence. Her artistic qualities help her to be accepted and trusted. This act of mimicry, read from a postcolonial perspective, might lead toward harsh criticism underlying racist strategies of subjugating the indigenous people. However, Blixen’s mimicry should be elaborated upon Homi Bhabha’s explanation of the concept, noting that, “[...] the structure of mimicry derives from a fundamental but unstable urge on the part of colonial authority.” Bhabha challenges the stable and fixed authority of the colonizer by further suggesting that:

[A] further consequence of mimicry is the undermining of the colonizer’s apparently stable, original identity. The fact that anyone could be “almost White but not quite” implies that no one could ever quite be White. [...] *The identity of the colonizer is constantly slipping away.* [emphasis added] (qtd. in Huddart, 2006: 51)

In addition, this mimicry carries connotations with the excitement and strong will to be accepted in the foreign surroundings. This mimicry, fired by the excitement of the positive attitude Blixen granted after arriving in Africa, proves the instability and slippery character of her colonial identity. In the same token, a further claim was noted also by Donald Hannah in his book *Isak Dinesen and Karen Blixen: the mask and the reality*. He opens the first chapter with the following portrayal:



[B]aroness Karen Blixen-Finecke combined several quite different figures in one and the same person and during the various stages of her life it would have been impossible for even the closest observer to predict what the next would bring forth. (1971: 11)

It is again, the excitement and openness for the unknown, performed through various masks and mimicry, which motivated the Baroness to express and exercise her freedom. She was constantly shifting between the performance of different roles. She was the lion, the mother and the teacher. Simultaneously, she was also the lioness, the protector and the hunter for her people's rights. She was the witness, the participator and the fair judge. Her voice was heard and her advice appreciated. The lion is an animal with symbolic features. The lioness as the mother-figure is self-sacrificing and feels a strong obligation to guard and vindicate her family too. And Blixen was represented as both the lion and the lioness, for she not only took care of 'her people' but tried to preserve their culture and cultivate a sense of justice. Her shooting of the lion is highly symbolic, for she did not only save the oxen, but also gained prestige among the natives and, most importantly, she prevailed over the symbol of superiority in the realm of nature, "[A]fter Ismail had gone to Somaliland, I had a letter from him which was addressed to Lioness Blixen, and opened: Honourable Lioness" (*Out of Africa* 68).

It is a common observation that Karen Blixen presented a romantic picture of Kenya, trying to build a utopian society led by its feudal aura. Here the question that appears automatically is why she chose a romantic portrayal of Kenya at a crucial time in its history? Why did she not respond to colonialism and the treatment of racial and political questions with the same firmness the British Empire did? One possible answer is that she was a freedom pioneer. In an interview after the publication of her first collection of tales, Blixen affirms that, "[I] moved my stories back into a really romantic time, when people and conditions were different from today. I could become completely free only by doing this" (Hannah, 32).

Another reason might be that she took on the role of the lesser evil, proposing an entirely new solution to the native's situation at that time. Her solution was expressed through the ignorance of the common Western dichotomy scheme categorizing settler/colonized, man/woman, rich/poor, master/servant, home/squatters. In her vision, these dualisms do not resemble Jacques Derrida's approach which implies a hierarchy and the superiority of the one over the other, because Blixen did not prioritize such hierarchy and injustice toward the native people. Rather, she accepted herself as an equal. In addition, the reviewer Henning Kehler reports that:

[I]t is foreign to her to see them [the Blacks] as people of a worse quality than the White race... She confesses that the Whites are not the only real people in the world, and that the world would be much more impoverished without the Blacks. (qtd. in Brantly, 73)

Further on, she demonstrated her political dissatisfaction utilizing animalistic metaphors, which is another manner of Blixen exercising her freedom. This comparative maneuver should not be interpreted as insulting or racial, but merely as her way of expressing the truth. The Baroness engaged with political issues expressing her opinion about the current political situation in Kenya and its effects on the people. Again in a metaphoric manner, she writes:

[T]he *oxen in Africa have carried the heavy load of the advance of European civilization*. Wherever new land has been broken they have broken it, panting and pulling knee-deep in the soil before the ploughs, the long whips in the air over them. Where a road has been made they have made it; and they have trudged the iron and tools through the land, to the yelling and shouting of the drivers, by tracks in the dust and the long grass of the plains, before there ever were any roads.[...] *The whips have marked their sides, and you often see oxen that have an eye, or both of them, taken away by the long cutting whip-lashes.* [...] It is a strange thing that we have done to the oxen. The bull is in a constant state of fury, rolling his eyes, shoveling up the earth, upset by everything that gets within his range of vision - still he has got a life of his own, [...]; his days are filled with his vital carvings and satisfactions. *All of that we have taken away from the oxen, and in reward we have claimed their existence for ourselves.* [...] *The oxen thought: Such is life and the conditions of the world. They are hard, hard.* [...], it is a matter of life and death. It cannot be helped. [emphasis added] (*Out of Africa*, 225-26)

The freedom of opinion Blixen launched in is not left unnoticed and, indeed, she was figuratively crucified by numerous international critics for being excessively racial and even vulgar in her depiction of Africa and the people. She was also harshly blamed for not adequately and appropriately responding to colonialism. She was also reproached for being guilty of some of the atrocities that were permitted with regard to the people, for somehow handicapping the European readership who was not at all familiar with the other continent and its political situation. And last but not least, Blixen was accused of trying to dehumanize the indigenous people and regarding them as less human. (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, etc.)

In an oppositional accord, many other critics defended her in claiming that this was “[a] part of her way of expressing herself.” (Esle Brundbjerg qtd. in Brantly, 84) Moreover, one of her critics, Lasse Horne Kjældgaard, argues that despite her racial sentiment for which she should not be pardoned,

[s]he wasn't of the same nationality as the ruling elite, nor was she of the same gender. She was for many years a single woman managing a coffee farm by herself in a male-dominated society. This gave her a critical distance towards the position of the colony. [...] Yes, Karen Blixen participated in Britain's colonial project in Kenya. But she was more than just a participant. In *Out of Africa* she also acts in a contradictory role, of being a witness to and a judge of colonial practices there. And I believe this trail of roles, [...], are important to bear in mind when assessing the ethical implications of *Out of Africa*.<sup>6</sup>

The following quote confirms the truthfulness of the argument above: “[N]atives themselves were aware of this, and if they really wanted a matter settled they would ask me to give judgement” (Blixen, 93). Furthermore, Blixen reflected on her judgmental inner conviction as a position that, “[...] held a profusion of potentialities, and was dear to me. I was young then, and had meditated upon ideas of justice and injustice, but mostly from the angle of the person who is being judged; [...]” (*Ibid.* 96).

The strong spiritual, as well as moral relationship towards the natives, had been more than closely described. And the constructive nostalgia that appears at the beginning, in terms of capturing nature, developing loyalty to the servants, building an own utopian society, neglecting a direct conflict of racial and class inequalities, shifts into destructive nostalgia at the end of the novel. But how does Blixen represent nostalgia at the moment of sitting down and recollecting memories and putting them in black and white? Here nostalgia acquires a new image; an image shown in the quotes that follow:

[T]he past, that had been so difficult to bring to memory, [...] adhere, been caught, conquered, and pinned down [...]. It had become history; with it there was now no variableness neither shadow of turning. [...] The grass was me, and the air, the distant invisible mountains were me, the tired oxen were me. [...] Still the human mind has great powers of self-renewal. (*Ibid.*, 113; 233: 279)

The elegiac moods represented resemble a situation of acceptance and regret. These yearnings are illustrated in her moments of weakness recalling memories from her early childhood:

[W]hen I was a child I was shown a picture - a kind of moving picture inasmuch as it was created before your eyes and while the artist was telling the story of it. [...] I am glad that I have been told this story and I will remember it in the hour of need. The man in the story was cruelly deceived. [...] he must have thought: ‘What ups and downs! What a run of bad luck!’ (213; 215)

---

<sup>6</sup> cf. <http://humanities.byu.edu/kjaeldgaard-on-out-of-africa/> for more information

She also felt deceived and this has overtones of despair and regret. She admitted that “[d]uring my first months after my return to Denmark from Africa I had great trouble in seeing anything at all as reality. My African existence had sunk below the horizon.” (Hannah, 47)

Blixen felt like an outcast in the country where she was actually born. As she confessed: “[...] I owed to the people on whom I was dependent to try and make some kind of existence for myself.” (*Ibid.*, 47) The only way out of this unbearable alienation was to take control of her life while letting her memories bring her to the desired past and so letting her make sense of the present. Just as she found comfort in her childhood by constantly inventing stories, so did she in the present, namely finding comfort in her past overloaded with nostalgia for the bygone life of her dreams. In Denmark, she was capable of taking the time she needs to reassess the current situation and to rearrange her life. Moreover, she struck a balance between the private and public victories as well as of the compromises and risks she took only to keep her spirit and existence free from Westernization. After having lost her farm, the love of her life, Denys, and her idyllic life in Africa, Blixen returned to Denmark where she “had taken the final step to becoming ‘Isak Dinesen’” (Hannah, 46).

She did not only lose the land and home but she lost her freedom and her will to live.

With regard to Blixen, the loss of the farm, the separation from the people and leaving Africa, brought her almost to commit suicide. At first, it appeared as a trance-like dreaming condition of the mind, a total escapist escape of the mind from reality.

[I]t was a curious thing that I myself did not, during this time, ever believe that I would have to give up the farm or to leave Africa. I was told that I must do so by the people round me [...]. All the same nothing was farther from my thoughts, and I kept on believing that I should come to lay my bones in Africa. [...]

During these months, I formed in my own mind a programme, or system of strategy, against destiny, and against the people in my surroundings who were her confederates. [...] Lose them, I cannot: it cannot be imagined, how then can it happen?

In this way I was the last person to realize that I was going. (Blixen, 283-284)

It is this kind of nostalgia that neglects the present, “[while] also recognizing the impossibility of return. It shapes its own world, where the very insatiable appetite for idyllic reminiscence generates

even more reminiscing, and thus even more nostalgia” (Ritivoi, 135). Then comes the so-called reflective nostalgia, which is an awareness of death.<sup>7</sup> Blixen explained that:

[W]henever I was ill in Africa, or much worried, I suffered from a special kind of compulsive idea. It seemed to me then that all my surroundings were in danger or distress, and that in the midst of this disaster I myself was somehow on the wrong side, [...]. (*Ibid.*, 298)

Ritivoi elucidates reflective nostalgia in the following way, which resembles Blixen’s condition:

[A]cutely alert to the possibility of loss, and feeling banished to the margins of her universe, of any universe, the reflective nostalgic can see the world *without herself*, and tries desperately to reinsert herself in it while also being aware of the transitory nature of such an insertion. The nostalgic person anticipates the final departure (death), by living in everyday life through parting from stages of herself at various moments or in various circumstances of her existence. (*Ibid.*, 118-119)

Locked in a depression, her whole being could not realize the fact of departure. Blixen no longer felt secure in her invented Kenyan world; she lost the ground under her feet and control over the situation; she was no longer given the opportunity to exercise her freedom. What she also lost was the feeling of being useful for someone, of being worth and accepted as an equal.

Although devastated and heartbroken her moral obligation outweighed her being lackadaisical in her actions and prevailed upon the conclusion of sheltering her servants, “[A]s for me myself, the settlement of the squatters’ fate was a great appeasement to me. I have not often felt so contented.” (322) It is both a sense of relief of discharging her duties, a regret as well as a fear of the unknown that expect her at her natal place.

From here onward her recovery process began. It started with Blixen - the orphan driven away from Africa and her family and ended with Isak Dinesen - the modern writer. Karen Blixen returned to Denmark with a mind overwhelmed with the feeling of being a tree without roots and a hypochondriac heart overloaded with nostalgia for the still fresh memories. She had to take off her rosy glasses and had to experience the hard reality and nostalgia in its fullest form. Nostalgia, in this case, embarks on the strategy of readjustment. Unable to write in her mother’s house, she needed a

---

<sup>7</sup> ‘Reflective nostalgia’ is a term mentioned in Andreea Ritivoi’s book *Yesterday’s Self: Nostalgia and the Immigrant Identity* (2002: 118). Cf. p. 20-22 from the thesis and the difference between ‘restorative’ and ‘reflective’ nostalgia.

“room of her own”<sup>8</sup> and decided to book a room in a hotel. Settled in “her own” room, pressed by financial difficulties, Karen Blixen realized that either she had to adjust again to the now modern Denmark or she would have simply vanished in her grief, as a penniless and a-social individual. In the rush of the situation, the urge for invigorating a new identity was needed. Thus, the mask of Isak Dinesen was born. The etymology of the pseudonym is another sign for her psychological growth, for it hides her motivational drive toward creativity. Without losing her sense of humor, Blixen created the name by using her birth name Dinesen and “Isak“ meaning “one who laughs”. Else Cedeborg investigates the name further by claiming that for Blixen, “[...], who came home as the prodigal daughter [...]” who was “[...] broke, ill, disillusioned, but who all the same could ‘give birth’ to a book and a new identity”, “[...] it has been a divine joke, a postmenopausal miracle” (qtd. in Lewis, 2003: 64).

Reading the book from cover to cover, we have witnessed a few essential matters which immediately come to the surface. Firstly, the nostalgic responses Blixen uses in her novel and in her life to exercise the longed freedom are strongly expressed and prove her psychological and sociological growth during and after her sojourn in Kenya.

Secondly, the Baroness in the book and the writer behind the typewriter become effusively sentimental as the ending approaches. Yet, another synonym for sentimentality, romanticizing spiced with pinches of drama and exaggeration, is nostalgia.

The last observation points out that, while the Baroness plays the fictitious persona of the author, Karen Blixen the person has overcome her nostalgia via a successful memoir, a compilation of all memories, sufferings and joys, a piece of art and of eighteen years of her life. She decides to redirect her melancholy mood into a piece of work, in which all her experiences and memories become alive again. Sitting down in her hotel room, recalling and putting down on the blank sheets her nostalgia helps her to overcome the past and the present. It gives her a fresh optimistic view of the future, and most of all, it shows her again how to exercise her freedom, namely through writing.

---

<sup>8</sup> Virginia Woolf’s feminist essay “A room of one’s own“ implies the most important assertions of the feminist literary criticism. It applies not only to the female characters in fiction and writers of fiction in particular, but to all women in general. Woolf writes also that: “[...] - a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.” (1993: 2)

## 2. Elspeth Huxley (1907-1997)

The “child of Africa”<sup>9</sup>, Elspeth Josceline Huxley, was born on 23rd July 1907 at 22 Sussex Square, London, England. Her mother, Eleanor Lilian Grosvenor (alias Nellie), descended from a noble lineage, daughter of a baron and granddaughter of a duke, Nellie was a member of the Grosvenor family, which included marquesses and dukes of Westminster. Elspeth’s father, Major Josceline Charles Henry Grant (alias Jos), was a person of noble Scottish blood. His grandfather was Sir Charles Grant, who had been Governor of Bombay, while his father Sir Charles was a Foreign Secretary of the Indian government. A soldier in the third Battalion of the Royal Scots Regiment and a fighter in the Boer War (1880-1881), Jos was by nature a risk-taking and courageous man, but he was also “[...] a fabricator of improbably though infallible (to him) get-rich-quick projects, yet he lacked the organization and application to make his ideas play.” (Nicholls, 2002: 11) After a few money-making failures, which brought a financial turbulence, the exoticism of a new horizon showed great promise to the young family. As already mentioned in chapter II page 2, the years 1913/14 marked the apex of the British imperial rule in Kenya. When the Uganda railway was finished, the import of cash-crops was made possible and the farming in the fertile White Highlands was blossoming. The Grants too followed the “gold rush” for Africa and let themselves be persuaded by the enthusiasm of the farm owners. Apart from their close relations to the Mildays (Nellie’s friends), who promised to help them settle down, Somerset Playne published a book titled *East Africa (British), its History, People, Commerce, Industries, and Resources* (1908), revealing the charms of the African nature, but most importantly, the profits farmers could make from sisal and coffee plantations. The Grants arrived in Kenya on 28th December 1912. Elspeth was left in London under the care of Nellie’s friend Daisy. After Nellie and Jos had established themselves in their new home in Chania Bridge (now Thika), they discussed the opportunity of bringing their daughter out from London. At the age of six, completed by a governess and a maid, Elspeth first set foot on the African soil on 29th December 1913. This time was hard for both, mother and daughter, to get acquainted and accustomed to each other. Very often, Elspeth spent her time with her governess, instead with her mother, who tried to bring the routine Western upper-class life standards into the Kenyan diaspora by indulging her penchant for social life in amusement. Intolerant to boredom and to her husband’s incompetence in enterprise, with a witty sense of humour, “[...] with a mind as fast as a cheetah, [...]”, and the unique ability of a successful entrepreneur and acumen

---

<sup>9</sup> Patricia Lorcin names Elspeth Huxley a “child of Africa” in her book *Historicizing Colonial Nostalgia*, 2012: 114.

for agricultural matters, Nellie became an iconic stereotype of the female subject in the colony. (Nicholls, 25) Her absence was crucial for Elspeth and later on appears to be a tender issue revealing not only one of the author's nostalgic impulses in *The Flame Trees of Thika*, but also pinpoints the role of the white female subject in the colony - a topic which will be more deeply elaborated in subchapter 2.2.

The education Elspeth received was just as unconventional as her upbringing. Altogether it was marked by chaotic, "[...] a severely and regularly disrupted life" during which the "child of Africa" was often even "treated as a parcel, being passed from hand to hand." (Nicholls, 73)

Enjoying the freedom and idyllic life on a friend's farm at Molo, Elspeth was sent to Miss Seccombe's boarding school in Nairobi. The outbreak of World War I brought the family a financial aftermath and mess to Elspeth's childhood and education. When the war broke out, Nellie and Elspeth were on their way back to England. In 1916 Nellie and Jos moved to Madrid leaving their daughter behind in England. One year later, mother and daughter were reunited and the young Elspeth was sent to Belstead School at Aldeburgh in Suffolk. Soon after she was expelled "for running a betting syndicate on horses", and she was mainly taught by her mother at home. (*Ibid.*, 54)

Deeply fascinated by her surroundings and the charms of Kenyan's landscapes, inheriting the passion for reading from her mother, Elspeth faced a sudden rush of I-want-to-write-stories-on-Africa. She was overwhelmed by the success of her first published article in the magazine called "The Magician Monthly". She was even more ambitious to launch out into the ample field of journalism when in 1923 she won the competition for the best essay by a pupil in one of the schools of the British Empire (*Ibid.*, 69). However, the inability to teach her daughter in Latin and appreciating her ambition to study in Cambridge, Nellie decided to send Elspeth to the only whites school in Nairobi. Just like any child, Elspeth too was impatient to free herself from the parental straightjacket and to explore the world. In 1928 she arrived in England with the impression of "[w]ich was always called Home in those days, but it was not. [...], everything was tiny, almost miniature...[...]. There was an indefinably alien look, perhaps because of the monotony [...]" the land was dragged in. (*Ibid.*, 82) Elspeth easily adapted to the living standards and after receiving a degree in agriculture at Reading University in England, she then embarked on a ship to America. After finalising her studies at Cornell University in upstate New York, Elspeth joined an organisation called Empire Marketing Board (EMB), which promoted the products of Commonwealth countries. Working for the EMB did not distract her from her lifelong passion for journalism, and she continued to write articles for British and Empire newspapers. On 31 December



1931, Elspeth married Gervas Huxley, who descended from the famous Huxley' family. Although she and her husband established a secure base in England, Elspeth was requested to write the biography of Hugh Cholmondeley, third Baron Delamere,<sup>10</sup> hence she had to return to Kenya and do some researches and interviews. Elspeth welcomed this opportunity of return with enthusiasm, moreover "[...] she was glad to undertake the job, particularly as much of the research would have to be done in Kenya." (*Ibid.*, 95)

After the publication of the two volumes of *White Man's Country. Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya* (1935), Elspeth reaffirmed her vocation, for she realized that her heart and interest rested on writing and reporting on Africa's political and social affairs. When in September 1939 the war between Germany and Britain broke out, Elspeth still continued to broadcast for the BBC, even though she worked simultaneously part-time for the JBC.<sup>11</sup> During the war, the Huxley family bought a pig and dairy farm in the Wiltshire countryside in England, where they remained for the rest of their lives. In 1947 Elspeth Huxley was appointed by the British government to report about the state of literature and publication of books in East Africa. Her reports "[...] played a crucial part in the development of African literature in East Africa." (*Ibid.*, 178). In 1962 she was appointed Commander of the British Empire.

Elspeth Huxley left a rich literary repertoire of articles, crime stories, and over 30 novels which challenged not only the postcolonial contexts, bringing a fresh air of colonial nostalgia, but also intrigues the contemporary reading public even nowadays. Along with her numerous articles on Africa, European colonialism and its literary chronicles, her most famous works are the semi-autobiographic novel *The Flame Trees of Thika* (1937), which was made into a film in 1968, and its sequel *The Mottled Lizard* (1962).<sup>12</sup>

The last visit to Kenya Huxley made was in 1995 as if to take a farewell, "[s]itting at breakfast on the veranda with a view of the great mountain [Mount Kenya] sharp against a soft-blue sky [sic], Eden does not seem far away." (*Ibid.*, 435).

---

<sup>10</sup> Lord Delamere was an aristocrat who had travelled around Africa in the late 19th century. He was a pioneer farmer, a leader of the white settler's community but most of all he was an active promoter of the progression and development of the colony. His are the words: "Help me advertise this country in any way you can ..." (qtd. in Lorcin, 2012: 35) His manifesto brought many upper-class members to the colony who provided financial support to the country's agriculture and economy.

<sup>11</sup> Joint Broadcasting Committee was a secret organization, which was set up to broadcast to other countries in the event of war, preparing material for use in neutral and enemy countries. For more information see Nicholls, 149.

<sup>12</sup> The title *The Mottled Lizard* was changed for the American edition of the book into *On the Edge of the Rift*.

Elspeth Huxley died on 10th January 1997 in a nursing home at Tetbury in Gloucestershire, England.

## 2.1. Visions of Africa

It is complex, delicate and even often inconvenient to work out a vision left on spontaneous impressions by first encounters with a country, which due to persistent incursions from outside, had been figuratively disenfranchised, while its own history had been recorded. As a matter of fact, it is undeniably true that as in the case of Blixen, the matter of attitude might provoke an excessively euphoric and positive first impressions impulse, but what is often also irrefutable, as in the case of the Grants, is the vice versa reflection; hence even the most thrilling emotion might turn into a discriminative and arrogant attitude or behaviour. The historical records marked the early 1920s as the time when the process of domestication and consolidation was already underway and Kenya became known as the White Man's Country. It is also necessary to remember that,

[w]hen the early Europeans began to voyage to the New World, cultural clashes were hardly any cause for concern. The voyagers were not aware of their European identity; they saw themselves as human beings, while the "others" were non-Europeans, if not, at times, downright nonhuman. (Ritivoi, 73)

These settlers were empowered by the Empire to proclaim their superiority by claiming large tracts of land. Hence, the shift in attitude and behavior was apparent. There were those, like Karen Blixen, who envisioned Kenya as the "Edenic place", and there were others, like Huxley's parents, who saw nothing romantic and enchanting in this rotten country of cannibals and magicians. (*The Flame Trees of Thika*, 1959).

In addition, this subchapter will focus on the first impressions the settlers had, gathered in the autobiographical novel *The Flame Trees of Thika*, and hand in hand with other instances and events from Elspeth Huxley's life and narrations, it will also reveal: a) how she envisioned Kenya, and b) to what extent the impressions of her narrow surroundings and the life experiences she had influenced the scope of her narratives and altered her opinion of the people and the land she presented.

An essential reason for the matter of attitude and how it is expressed and reflected on is the social background. Previously it has been mentioned that Karen Blixen belonged to the middle-class.<sup>13</sup> On the contrary, the Grants<sup>14</sup> are descendants from the upper class and are practically addicted to the luxurious life this social milieu spoiled them with.<sup>15</sup> As such, they are not flexible in adapting and absorbing the African culture and life standards as Blixen was. Instead, their first impressions of the country implied tremendous disappointment, with a lack of tolerance to the living conditions, hence their attitude was coloured by the patterns of class and race division. At first, the seeking of adventure and benefit had grotesquely blurred their perception of the exotic paradise, and the hot enthusiasm was soon reduced to a cold frustration and myopia gnawed by racism and discrimination. The examples listed below illustrate the first impressions her family had when they arrived in Kenya for the first time:

[W]hen Nellie stopped to reflect on her life at this time, she said: *'this is quite the slackest country, as far as mental effort is concerned, that you can imagine. As far as material things go, we are getting on all right, [...]*. Her interest in African culture also lay in the future. *Like their fellow settlers, the Grants were in BEA to make a living, by methods far superior in their eyes to those employed by Africans on their shambas.* In their minds they were improving the Africans' way of life by offering them wages and an opportunity to see how the British lived. [...] *There was the Empire and there we were at the heart and centre of the world. No one questioned our position. Everyone else was a barbarian, more or less.* [emphasis added] (Nicholls, 32-37)

*[E]verything was dusty; [...]. Thika in those days - the year 1913 - was a favourite camp for big-game hunters and beyond it there was only bush and plain.* If you went on long enough you would come to mountains and forests *no one had mapped* and tribes whose languages no one could understand. [...] *'You let a nigger strike a white man', [...]* *'and next they will kill you in your bed.'* [emphasis added] (Huxley 7; 10; 50)

After all, Kenya at that time was a frontier, and as such had been a magnet for adventurers, big-game hunters, safari enthusiasts, eccentrics and opportunists. Most of all, it had been a palatable bite for white settlers, such as the fictitious characters Alec Wilson and Roger Stilbeck from *The*

---

<sup>13</sup> After the marriage with her cousin Baron Bror von Blixen-Finecke, the title Baroness did not bring her comfort and higher life standard in Kenya. On the contrary, it brought her humiliation and syphilis. (see chapter 1, p. 28)

<sup>14</sup> In *The Flame Trees of Thika* Robin stands for Jos (Elsbeth's father) and Tilly stands for Nellie (Elsbeth's mother).

<sup>15</sup> Reference to the biographical note which reveals how Nellie tried to bring the routine Western upper-class life standards into the Kenyan diaspora by indulging her penchant for social life in amusement.

*Flame Trees of Thika*,<sup>16</sup> who were in search of making a fortune and benefit from the untapped fertility, and who had never even the slightest doubt of intruding, grabbing, of taking over a land which is not theirs and of exploiting the inhabitants as cheap labour. Apart from these settlers, there were those like Huxley's parents, who had a different vision and expectation of the continent. Elspeth Huxley was in her early childhood when she came in Kenya. Like most of the children, she too was very manageable, untamed, utterly curious and creative in imitating the attitude and manner of behaviour the adults had. In addition, during her girlhood, the young Elspeth was able to observe, to absorb and to copy social and ethnic manners of adaptation, integration and resistance. The attitude, which is a key theme in the analysis on Karen Blixen, is evidently not the same as the one performed by Elspeth's parents and their pioneer friends; the first impressions of the land, just as those revealed later on, are utterly controversial. On the one hand, what the young Elspeth faced was a world of "[...] hard work tempered with a great deal of frivolity" (Nicholls, 37); she absorbed a world of frivolity of dredging alone along the stream of early youth, for her parents were too busy with farming and ploughing up plants very often left their child being parcelled to and fro, exploring the wild world by her own. On the other hand, she also absorbed the world of ethnic discrimination, culture clashes, a world of hidden ignorance which neither the superior nor the inferior felt comfortable in. Consider the following instance:

[T]he white settlers in BEA were the dominant class, and as far as they were concerned Africans were to be labourers. Although they sometimes found it charming, whites rather despised the Africans' belief in 'witchcraft' and 'magic'. This created an undercurrent of tension in African society. [...] There was the Empire, and there were we at the heart and the centre of the world. No one questioned our position. Everyone else was a barbarian, more or less. (*Ibid.*, 37)

Very often, the young Elspeth witnessed her mother's vehemently bursts of frustration as, for instance, the one illustrated below:

[...]. 'I wish I'd never come to this rotten country' [...] Sometimes she spoke aloud in my presence without exactly speaking to me; I was a kind of safety-valve, helpful to

---

<sup>16</sup> In the novel, while Alec Wilson confutes Tilly's argument in persuading her that:

I didn't come to civilize anyone. I came to escape from the slavery one has at home if one doesn't inherit anything. I mean to make a fortune if I can. Then I shall go home and spend it. If that helps to civilize anyone I shall be delighted, but surprised. (120)

Roger Stilbeck feels lucky to be able to grasp the opportunity and profit from the "[w]onderfully healthy climate, splendid neighbours, magnificent sport, thousands of years of untapped fertility locked up in the soil." (9)

her feelings even in a passive role. 'Everything is raw and crude and savage and I hate it!' she cried. The place is full of horrible diseases and crawling with insects, no one knows how to do anything properly, and there's nobody to talk to for hundreds of miles!' (*Ibid.*, 39)

Apart from the influence embedded by her parents, Elspeth built up her own vision of the continent and the people. She encountered a world beyond the one defined as non-European or nonhuman, where nature, animals, natives and witchcraft form a distinctive universe. This Huxley illustrates in the following manner:

[I] began to perceive that a third world lay beyond, inside and intermingled with the two worlds I already knew of, those of ourselves and of the Kikuyu: a world of snakes and rainbows, of ghosts and spirits, of monsters and charms, a world that had its own laws and for the most part led its own life, [...], and was there all the time under the surface. It was a world in which I was a foreigner, but the Kikuyu were at home. (*Ibid.*, 191-92)

The theme of the African nature and landscape finds its place in every novel by Elspeth Huxley. Lacking the artistic skills of Karen Blixen, though deeply captivated by reading literature and writing, she pays particular attention to the description of nature and its inhabitants. Unlike Blixen, Huxley does not need rose-coloured glasses to depict her enchantment by the African scenery in *The Flame Trees of Thika*. Right from the novel's beginning, she reflects on the "smell of Africa", which she later on "grew to enjoy". In a metaphoric manner, Huxley skilfully illustrates the raw dust, the plainness of the landscape, which at first tends to annoy her. From the "dusty red carpet one's feet descanted with little plops into" (7), she sketches a view of sunlight "[...] to the Tana river [sic] and beyond: [...]", overwhelmed by a superhuman ability, which makes you feel "[...] that you could walk straight on across it to the rim of the world." (13) This and other rivers, Huxley captured "no longer than streams", which "had dug down through soil red as a fox and rich as chocolate to form steep valleys whose sides were now green with young millet and maize." (*Ibid.*)

The constant travels in and out of Africa gave Huxley a clear perspective of its grandness, "[f]or until you actually saw it and travelled across it [...], you could not possibly grasp the enormous vastness of Africa. [...]; beyond each range of hills lay another far horizon." (*Ibid.*, 28)

She felt the freshness in the air and the sparkling of the sunlight in Njoro, a city which her mother was also in love with. Huxley reveals not only the heart of Africa with its mixed smell of fresh dew, leaf-mould, cedar, pepper and dry, yet she catches the melody of Africa with its sounds which were

everywhere - the sounds of the birds, insects, trees and plants, the sounds of the tribes, especially the singing of the Kikuyus. In an adept manner, she makes her readers even see the heat of Africa:

[I]t seemed that everything was quivering - air, heat, grass, even the mules twitching their hides to dislodge flies who paid no attention; the stridden insect falsetto seemed like the voice of air itself, chattering through all eternity to earth and grass. The light was blinding and everything was a high note, intensified, concentrated: heat, light, sound, all blended into a substance as hard and bright and indestructible as quicksilver.

*I had never before seen heat*, as you can see smoke or rain. But there it was, jiggling and quivering above brown grasses and spiky thorn-trees and flaring erythras. *If I could have stretched my hand out far enough I could surely have grasped it, a kind of colourless jelly.* [emphasis added] (*Ibid.*, 20)

The “child of Africa” seems very much attached to the little daily joys African life offered to her. Apart from the exotic scenery, the wild animals seem to have appealed to her the most. Hypnotized by their variety and patterns, Huxley describes the realm of animals with tenderness, accuracy and tremendous delight. It is no accident that one of her reviewers, Thomas Hinde, makes the following commentary:

[N]o one can write better about the country and animals of Kenya than Mrs Huxley, for she not only knows them and feels strongly about them, but continuously chooses the vivid description which makes them alive to us. (qtd. in Githae-Mugo, 1978: 15-16)

As far as the illustration of the natives is concerned, there are significant differences if compared to Karen Blixen’s representation of the people previously. Elspeth Huxley depicts the natives not as heroic and amiable as Blixen. (cf. Part II, page 31-2) On the contrary, she portrays them as “bronze statues endowed with life” who were constantly armed with spears and poisoned arrows and for whom the only protection which the Europeans in those days could hide behind was the matter of respect and superiority. (Huxley 16; 30) Huxley also illustrates them as static figures being put to ornament the exoticism of the landscape. The following example intends to support the argument above:

[T]hey walked about their country without appearing to possess it - or perhaps I mean, without leaving any mark. To us, that was remarkable: they had not aspired to re-create or change to tame the country and to bring it under their control. [...] *The natives of Africa had accepted what God, or nature, had given them without apparently wishing to improve upon it in any significant way.* [emphasis added] (46-7)

Indifferent to the modern technologies, the local people often confronted the white settlers with their ignorance. While going throughout the pages, one gets the impression that Huxley is impatient to explain and share her discoveries with her readership. It is, though, not an outburst of indignation with which Huxley juxtaposes the two worlds. It seems as if she excused them for being impartial, attempting to perceive the situation from their point of view. With a philosophic touch of consideration, Huxley notes that it is a common and regular occurrence for people, who are facing something entirely new for the first time, to act differently. And what if some are ignorant and others - astonished, or frightened? This she explains in the following utterance:

[A]lthough we were astonished at their ignorance even of lamps, [...], the sight of a tongue of flame imprisoned in a bubble, independent and mobile, must have appeared altogether miraculous to those confronted with it for the first time. [...] that struck these people with the force of wonder and amazement. (*Ibid.*, 31)

Due to the fact that she herself was very keen of animals, it is a common feature to judge the others according to your own vision and perception. As a protector of animals, she observed the way the locals related to the animate beings. Apparently, in her visions, the natives were not only ignorant of the modern developments the Europeans brought with them, but were also indifferent to the importance of the animals as an inseparable part of the ecosystem, thus “had accepted what God, or nature, had given them”. (*Ibid.*, 47) In this respect, Huxley depicts the local tribes as being “horribly callous” in their relation to life and animals. She remarks that “[i]n their eyes, I suppose, pain was simply a thing that had to be suffered, whether you were a beast or a man; and as for beasts, they did not seem to give them credit for having any feelings.” (*Ibid.*, 129) A similar characteristic feature of the natives has been depicted in Blixen’s *Out of Africa*. Unlike Blixen, who envisages the natives as people of high courage and stoicism, for Huxley, their behaviour and nature is a mere torpidity, recklessness and even imbecility. According to her they are not only illiterate, but also unable to think or reflect on surrounding occurrences, but rather live in their own world of magic tribal tradition and profanity attending a need to get someone who could civilise them. As a reason for such an awkward behaviour, Huxley comes up with the following anatomical consideration:

[...] perhaps it may be, as some doctors have suggested, that his brain is different: that it has a stronger growing period and possesses less well-formed, less cunningly arranged cells than that of the European - in other words, that there is a fundamental disparity between the capabilities of his brain and ours. (qtd. in *White Man’s Country*, Vol. 1, 1974: 221)

With regard to Huxley's attitude toward the natives, there is another fundamental issue which should not be ignored. During adolescence, Huxley's views radically changed, especially when she undertook her first serious commitment, namely to write the biography of Lord Delamere. Skilfully articulating her narrative manner, with a remarkable facility in using metaphor and simile, she unfolded her talent of conveying not only the visual imagery of Lord Delamere, but also the essence of his, and of her, visions, endeavours and contests. In her own and those of Delamere's perception the situation at that time was quite simple in explanation, namely:

[T]he land to which Delamere came was, by European standards, wholly primitive. Its scattered peoples, grouped into separate and mutually hostile tribes, were pagan, frequently nomadic, ignorant of the outside world and of such simple devices as the plough, the wheel, the pump, the loom, the coin; their tool was the digging stick, their dress the skin, their weapon the spear. [...] Europeans were not 'destroying any old or interesting system but simply introducing order into blank, uninteresting, brutal barbarism' [...]. *Civilization was good, barbarism was bad.* [emphasis added] (*White Man's Country*, Vol. 1, Preface v)

It was definitely a challenge to compare and contest her own visions with the ones of the Lord, and simultaneously, it was a pivotal matter, which at that time, attracted her the most. Furthermore, not only the life of the settler's leader hovered over the content of the biography, but also it dealt with the researching and documenting of the history of Kenya during the early days of colonialism.

Consider the following paragraph taken from Huxley's biography:

[T]he story of the white colonists' labours and conflicts in early BEA was close to Elspeth's heart, for she had grown up in the country while they were taking place. In the 1930s her sympathies were all with the colonists, and she used the opportunity of writing D's biography to counter some of the arguments put forward in books and newspapers by Norman Leys and William MacGregor Ross, who were both of the opinion that Africa should be for the Africans and the sale of land to white farmers was wrong. (Nicholls, 109)

The same credit is also to be noticed in the Preface of *The Mottled Lizard* (1962), manifesting that Huxley was determinately sure that the primary duty of the 'white man's burden' is to discipline the indigenous people because the latter needed white authority to rule their life for the better, where Huxley supposes:



[...] it was partly because the Kikuyu were conditioned to authority. They expected and needed a ruling, they desired order and decision, and when they got it they accepted it with inward relief: they had shifted the galling burden of decision onto other shoulders. (1988: 326)

In *The Flame Trees of Thika*, Huxley goes even further in her explanation why these indigenous people need to be civilised by exemplifying them metaphorically as trees, which do not form a forest, thus “each tree grew on its own.” (19) Given the current debate, Elspeth Huxley tried to persuade herself and her reading public that a nation, which can not stand for and on its own and which is not united and fights for its right as one, might easily be conquered. What she felt to realise, however, was that the depth of her perspective had been blurred by the way Delamere defined colonisation, namely that Europe should be recognised as the only colonising authority who must be followed.

What she also appears to forget is that ‘civilizing’<sup>17</sup> should not be a matter of pretence, neither should be a method of intrusion, of ignorance and underestimation of Africans rights, self-respect and tribal pride. (Nicholls, 111; 192) Hence, her world of idyllic disciplining native savages would be ruined by the atrocities of World War I and she would have been cognizant of the fact that it is the Empire which carried all the responsibility and consequences for its own failure. As a colonial writer at the nadir of the British ruling system, Elspeth Huxley positioned herself in a state of anxiety, disappointment met by nostalgia for the lost empire, interrogated a critical view of imperialism’s self-destruction.

To resume, related to her frivolous childhood, which imbedded the influence of attitude and manner of behaviour from both sides, the one of the settlers and the one of the local people, Elspeth Huxley’s life and legacy shows that her ideas and visions about Kenya changed over the time; her mind and perceptions of the continent evolved and she became more and more engaged with its problems and troubles. What we also already know is that her unconventional education had also influenced the shift of her perceptions and life ideology. People who followed her career together with the academic scholars, who are familiar with her legacy, know that the visions she had, are primarily the product of life long engagement with social and political affairs regarding Africa. Her divided loyalty of imperial and African identity torn between two motherlands had also influenced her style of writing. Hence, her literary output was marked by controversy and ambiguity. On the one hand, some postcolonial academicians interpret her novels as an apology for the atrocities of the White Mischief (cf. Lorcin, 2012) Other postcolonial scholars criticise her for being too racial in

---

<sup>17</sup> ‘Civilizing’ in terms of helping the underprivileged natives to become literate.

her believing that, “[...] British colonialism was a progressive enterprise that would, in the long term, benefit the Africans.” (cf. Lorcin 2012: 115; Githae-Mugo, 1978: 40-1), as well as blamed her in preaching the imperial cultural phenomenon of the ‘white man’s burden’.

While the anti-colonialist insurgents like Karen Blixen exhibited the principle of ‘noblesse oblige’, those like Elspeth Huxley claimed the lack of civilisation in a savage nation, exemplified by reference to anatomy and witchcraft, and tolerated the imperial facet of the ‘white man’s burden’. At a later stage in Huxley’s life, the prolific writer and broadcaster, who had faced the turmoil of two world wars as well as the Mau Mau rebellion, shifted her writing into a different direction, which is based on aspects referring to post-war anxiety and nostalgia for the vanishing empire. Following the coherent model of analysis the part on Karen Blixen had already underpinned, the next discussion will deal with answering a specific research question as well. While the previous chapter has focused on the question how Karen Blixen exercises her freedom via her nostalgia in the novel *Out of Africa*, this chapter will deal with the question of how Elspeth Huxley justifies a nostalgia for the lost empire, taking up as an example her semi-autobiographical account of childhood years spent in Kenya.

## 2.2. *The Flame Trees of Thika* (1959)

Elspeth Huxley worked on her novel *The Flame Trees of Thika* out of Africa. Christine Nicholls assumes that she wrote it as a response to Karen Blixen’s memoir *Out of Africa*. As a curious assumption the biographer suggests that the novel was to question the romantic picture of Kenya and the heroism of the natives, hence aiming at substituting it with a more objective one. Nicholls recalls the commentaries of Huxley’s mother referring to the novel:

‘As a book it fails’, Nellie wrote to Elspeth in 1938. [It is] terribly self-conscious throughout, and, when she gets reminiscent, really weak. She gives no impression at all of Berkeley [Cole]’s, or Denys [Finch Hatton]’s character [...] - I, I, I all the time and the later bits about Ingrid L. [Lindstrom] are just unintelligible. [...] I hope you don’t think it is the last word in African books. Good God, you can do better than that!’ (Nicholls, 286-7)

Whether Huxley took this harsh attack as a motivation to write a semi-autobiography is a matter of speculation. It might well be reckoned that the publication of the novel was due to a competing

response toward the departure from the romantic presentation typical for the 1920s, or a tendency of the white settler's narrative toward a literary realism which engaged with political and social involvement from the 1930s onwards. Its publication might also be taken as nostalgia for the relentless passage of childhood and for the country and the people, which were vanishing from the exotic African scenery. Although Huxley was eager by the success of Karen Blixen's memoir, which, after its publication in 1937, became a best-seller and even a runner-up for the Nobel Prize, she did not want to stay aside and passively let the Baroness' romanticism create a broken perspective in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Moreover, in the time of the Mau Mau uprising and the aftermath of World War II, Elspeth Huxley looked back to her childhood years to relive and analyse, as well as to negotiate and to react to the approaching end of the British Empire.

A crucial point which immediately catches the reader's attention is that Elspeth Huxley constructed two narrative selves, who, parallel to each other, take turns in the memoir, namely that of Huxley the child and Huxley the adult. The created image of a white child in a dark country allowed Huxley to relive a second girlhood and to recollect the adventurous and thrilling experiences on the farm. Like a refreshing breeze, these memories stream out to imprint themselves on hers and on her readers' mind how life was before the Western political scene flooded the continent to its full. Referring to the fact that while learning how to discern right from wrong, black from white, and hard work from laziness, we witness how Huxley - the child - was delighted by every single experience the continent had offered to her. The exhilaration of the infant adventurer who, overloaded by the "[...] fresh air with the smell of dew and leaf-mould and cedar, [...]" (228), made acquaintance with the forest race of hunters called Dorobo, as well as the songs of the Kikuyu, who celebrated the death of the duiker<sup>18</sup> and her unborn baby (125, 221), all this gave Huxley "a jolt to her memory". (220) Here the description of the smell, the sounds, the melody and even the heat of the country and the sunsets are recalled. Huxley recollected that "[...] time can never be wasted when there are such sights to look at, and such things to enjoy", like the African sunsets. (127) Like 'Alice in Wonderland' she revealed a realm beyond the surface, a realm which did not belong to the settlers but to the wild and virgin world of forest tribes like the Daboro, among many more. She remembered that:

[I]n our circle of cool shade, as if under a rustling green pastoral, we inhabited a different world from the sun-soaked Kikuyu ridges that stretched to meet a far, enormous sky, blue as a wild delphinium and decorated with vigorous clouds that

---

<sup>18</sup> Duiker, also known as duikerbok, is a name given to any small African antelope.

threw shadows as large as islands on to the hillsides and valleys. It was as if we sat in a small, darkened auditorium gazing out at a stage which took in most of the world. [...] ‘This is a savage country, [...]. An ability to sketch in water-colour and sing German *Lieder* is not very useful if there is an outbreak of plague or a puff-adder has got into the kitchen.’ (118-19)

The created image of a child also gave her the room for depicting the European elitism of some of the white settlers, as well as saved her from being blamed for their assaults towards the natives, as for instance the following examples illustrate: “We are coming now to the country of the cannibals” (15); “We did not seem to be anywhere. Everything was, just the same, biscuit-brown, [...]” (21); “They don’t think” (25); “Tell them they can have whatever it is they like to eat. [...] They are too stupid to understand rupees.” (29); “Everything is raw and cruel and savage and I hate it!” (39); or “ You let a nigger strike a white man, [...]” (50), etc.

Furthermore, this neutral position enabled her to make remarks on the wrongs the British Empire had done to the continent. For example, she illustrated an absurdity of her father, buying “[...] a bit of El Dorado in a bar of the Norfolk hotel from a man wearing an Old Etonian tie” (7); or phrases like “[A]ny amount of labour,’ Roger Stilbeck had said. ‘You’ve only got to lift your finger and in they come.’” (9); “[W]e had with us in the cart a cook-cum-houseboy called Juma *lent to us, as a great favour, [...]* [emphasis added] (14); “[T]he idle slaves are scratching themselves.” (15), and more specifically, Huxley recalled what respect meant in those days, namely:

[J]uma had a patronizing air that she resented, and she doubted if he was showing enough respect. *Those were the days when to lack respect was a more serious crime than to neglect a child, bewitch a man, or steal a cow, and was generally punished by beating. [...]* Kept intact, it was a thousand times stronger than all the guns and locks and metal in the world. [...] So Tilly was a little sensitive about respect, and Juma was silenced. [emphasis added] (16)

Last but not least, due to the child image, Huxley was able to bridge her childhood experiences and knowledge of the African way of life with the more problematic historical accounts, affairs and consequences, causing the vanishing of the British Empire in general. In doing so, she impetuously strived for searching meaning and comprehending of the ongoing events and what had caused the empire to stumble and deteriorate. Moreover, using the child’s image as a foil, Huxley - the narrator challenges the grandeur of the empire and the white man’s burden, and focuses on the position of the white settlers’ community in the colony and more precisely on the role of the female subject in the colony.

In reference to the previous subchapter on Karen Blixen, which embarks upon the pattern of ‘noblesse oblige’ as her life philosophy, the current debate will direct the focus of analysis to a different principle, namely that of the ‘white man’s burden’.<sup>19</sup> Originally, behind the context of this principle, lies the imperial purpose embodying a civilising mission and a moral obligation of the white settlers to rule those people who cannot speak for themselves, hence, given names like “Other”, “Orient”, or “The East”. (cf. Edward Said *Orientalism*, 1978) This mission can only be accomplished through the means of colonising the non-white people by the superior powers of Western industrialism and capitalism. Moreover, the ‘conspiracy theory’ which Boym comments on in part I, p. 20 of the thesis, finds its relevant position in the context behind the ‘white man’s burden’. Elspeth Huxley, just as her mother, believed in the superiority of the British Empire. At the beginning of their home-making in Kenya, it becomes obvious the manner in which Nellie “designates a subversive kinship of others, an imagined community based on exclusion more than affection, [...] in the process of creating a delusionary homeland.” This is a common strategy used by the colonial settlers in their pursuit of a more bearable existence in the continent.

The following statement by Nellie should also be taken into consideration:

[W]e may have a sticky passage ourselves, *but when we’ve knocked a bit of civilization into them, all this dirt and disease and superstition will go and they’ll live like decent people for the first time in their history.* [emphasis added] (120)

Huxley too makes similar observations of, for instance, the specific odour the tribes are to be differentiated by, which she summed up as “the smell of Africa” (10), or the laziness of the “[...] able-young man who did nothing all day but grease their limbs and plait their pigtails while their mothers and sisters toiled in shambas, [...]” (25), or the indifference toward the European inventions, simply because these are savage “bronze statues” who, when felt alarmed, “vanished into the void like antelopes” (30). Huxley demands that these people had a concomitant need to be “Europeanized”. Moreover, she is particularly astonished at their weird attitude when staring at the lantern for the first time and “looking as if [they] expected to be cooked and eaten.” (30) Further on, Huxley explains the necessity of the white man’s mission seeing the deadlock and the manner in which the locals took everything for granted and “had accepted what God, or nature, had given them without apparently wishing to improve upon it in any significant way” (47). Thus, they had to learn what gratitude means, because evidently they “had never acquired it [gratitude] towards each other,

---

<sup>19</sup> Originally, “The White Man’s Burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands” is a poem composed by Rudyard Kipling in 1899.

and therefore could not display towards Europeans; [...].” (112) As a “child of Africa”, Huxley’s apprehension of ‘civilizing’ was blurred by the opinion of her family and other adults around her, hence she misinterpreted it. Later on, as a broadcaster and narrator in *The Flame Trees of Thika*, she radically changed her position and vision. Huxley did believe in the process of transforming the wild into the tamed, but she now manifests and emphasises on the civilising manner of doing it, a manner excluding words like violence, injustice and intolerance. Additionally, in the *Flame Trees of Thika* she deliberately emphasizes the meaning behind several scenes, in which she juxtaposes themes like injustice and intolerance towards the natives. One of them is illustrated in the case concerning the mission-boys, who had been picked out and pushed to accept every accusation, like the Hereward’s mission-boy Kamau who “[...] had been arrested, and would soon be tried for something he knew nothing about.” (131-32).

Huxley also does not underestimate the importance of the story of the deportation of a white settler, who had killed a native. The court case of Galbraith Cole was thoroughly emphasised in both books, *White Man’s Country* and in *The Flame Trees of Thika*. He was the brother of one of Karen Blixen’s closest friends in Kenya. Apart from the numerous incidents of cattle stealing, this case received a huge discussion and attention in England too, at the time. Being due to the constant disappearing of sheep, Cole decided to take the law into his own hands and, after arresting two of the robbers and shooting the other one, he was put on trial for manslaughter,

[...], and, when a jury mainly composed of sympathetic fellow-farmers acquitted him, *the Governor went above their heads and deported him from the country. All the farmers took his part*, but this did not help him, even though he was said to be the finest stockman in East Africa, and Lord Delamere’s brother-in-law. (199)

Another scene reveals the injustice towards Sammy by Mr Roos for whom all the natives came from one and the same dough, and intentionally instigated a wrecked demonstration of racial superiority. This is explained in the paragraph below:

[M]r. Roos was not going to stand for insubordination [Sammy’s pride had suffered from the assaults by the Dutchman] and decided to put the matter to the test. [...] They were on the shamba, ploughing the last furrow before outspanning for the rest of the day. The Dutchman rasped out an order; Sammy ignored it, and walked away. Whereupon Mr Rood [sic.] threw down his whip, took a run at Sammy, and kicked him on the backside. [...] Sammy stumbled, wrested the spear from the startled youth, and turned to face the Dutchman with murder in his eyes. (50)

The further development of the case shows that Huxley does not only diminish the importance of the matter, but rather illuminates a difference in European judgemental attitude. “[I]t was this attitude among the British”, she insisted, “that all the Boers loathed and feared. [...] The British were concerned with personal status, the Dutch with racial survival.” (51) After all, the crucial point here is that Robin refuses to punish Sammy for his ignorance and insubordination. On the contrary, he protects him and Sammy is left free because of “contradictory evidence.” As a matter of fact, Huxley challenges the position of the white settlers in the colony as well. Unlike Blixen, Huxley draws the bulk of attention towards the discussion of the settler’s society in the colony. In doing so, she blurs the perception of the white settler’s stereotype the colonial and postcolonial readers are accustomed to, namely as:

[...] racist, sexually promiscuous, heavy-drinking “Happy Valley” aristocrats by commemorating the “ordinary” settlers who were committed to the land, who laid foundations for a modern economy, and whose relations with Africans were characterized by mutual respect. (Linder, 2010: 96)

In the same train of thought, Huxley reminds her audience of those farmers and pioneers, who worked hard, invested their capital in the land and valued the opportunity of cropping and harvesting. This becomes evident by the depiction of Robin and Tilly’s personalities. The fact that Huxley neither uses her parents’ real names in the novel, nor turns to them with ‘my mother’ or ‘my father’, points toward two main observations. Whereas the first one derives from the fact that the novel is a semi-autobiographical account of her life, the second one derives from the hypothesis that Huxley envisions her parents’ role and participation as an integral part of the white settlers’ society per se. Hence, she is able to separate the parental from the colonial image of her parents, thus emphasizing their contribution to the development of the British colony. In the same token, she lays emphasis on how their visions and attitude, particularly towards the native people, were subject to change. Even Lettice, who is presented as incredulous at first, seems to feel sorry for the natives and the primitive conditions they were living in.

LETTICE. There must be *something* we can do! All those children half-deformed and the women going along like toads under those enormous burdens and the babies with flies all over their eyes! Shall we ever be able to make an impression? Will it ever be changed? (59-60)

TILLY TO LETTICE. It all comes as a bit of a shock at first. [...] But you'll get used to it. One sort of grows into the life. (69)

TILLY TO LETTICE. Surely it isn't a question of which is superior, Lettice or the continent of Africa, [...]. It's a question of adapting ourselves to the conditions. (119)

These instances show not only sympathy and a desire to educate the indigenous people, but what is more important, they underline the fact that Huxley puts the image of the female subjects in the centre of the white settlers society. Her female characters embody higher priority and attain higher profile in the colony. These women are being depicted as independent, courageous, skilful in cultivating and ploughing, tolerant and compassionate. Also, they indulge in employing and controlling the manual labourers and often spend their time enjoying safaris, and participating in game hunting. In her pursuit to assure the readers that the women in the colony took an essential part, Huxley pinpoints the sturdy individualism her mother possessed and proposes her as an iconic image of the so-called New Woman. Her portrait carries a spirit of "a new contagious gaiety", and regardless of the tough and, at times, severe life, "her powers of resilience were great. She could write off her failures, not because she did not mind about them but because she minded too much; [...]." Her mother "was by nature a participator, and had a dozen enterprises under way." (43) Nellie, (Tilly in the novel), was especially convinced in the success of the "white man's burden", and was confident that even if the natives did not want to participate in improving their agriculture and develop socially and economically, "we shall". (68) Huxley depicts her mother as a respectful figure, who also adopted a bit of superstition from the local people.<sup>20</sup>

Apart from the heroic silhouette of her mother, Huxley picks up another female character who also possesses rugged individuality<sup>21</sup> and keeps a respectful status in the colony. Mrs Walsh, also called Pioneer Mary, is depicted as an authoritative figure who "[...] had no fear, and went among tribes as yet untouched by European influence, [...]. The natives she employed feared and respected her, and [...] although womanly enough in looks, she displayed, [...], nothing of a woman's character; she was forthright, hard, and sometimes fierce, and none of them ever molested her." (86)

It is evident that the women Huxley portrays, gained an imperial authority in the colony. They are presented as the superior who defended and supported its conventions and instructions, as well as

---

<sup>20</sup> Huxley's desire to have her mother's assurance for a return was urgent. As a result, Tilly encourages her daughter to kiss the walls of the living-room, thus convincing her that: "you will come back for sure." (274)

<sup>21</sup> The term 'rugged individuality' is borrowed from Wendy Webster's article: "Elspeth Huxley: Gender, Empire and Narratives of Nation, 1935-64", 1999: 533.



persuasive activists in improving and encouraging the agriculture of the continent. Women, in Huxley's novel step out of the well-known stereotype of the Victorian "angel in the house", participate in the evolution of the hazardous imperial enterprise, and are prepared to bring enlightenment to the dark continent. (cf. Part I, 1.3.4. Colonial nostalgia, p. 24). As already mentioned in Part I, the importance of the role of the female subject in the colony encompasses not only "colonizing the mind", but also qualities such as eagerness and surveillance of educating, performing the European attitude and guarding of national, cultural and social traditions, because "this provided the colonial project with a familial and more compassionate dimension, the dimension in which colonial nostalgia is anchored." (cf. p. 24-5) However, an essential point ought to be inserted here, namely that the status of the female characters in the colony is far more different from the attitude these women underwent through the ongoing accomplishment of their civilizing mission. Driven by their selfish first instincts at first, these women were blinded by the miserable living conditions they were not used to. Later on, their attitude changed from an egotistic to an altruistic one, thus the capacity of their personalities underwent cultural, sociological and psychological growth and completeness.

To resume, referring to all that has been discussed so far, as well as drawing on the examples provided, it should be noted that Elspeth Huxley justifies her nostalgia for the lost empire driven by a certain mood, which is narrated through the perspective of the child as well as of the adult Huxley. They both experience the mood of a new promise, while looking "through the open window at the undulating purple ridge-back of the Ngong hills, [...]" and being glad to have "[...] kissed the four walls of the grass hut at Thika, [...]" which guaranteed a return. (Huxley, 281)

This mood is built upon her personal and professional evolution, as well as upon her life experiences, responses, reflections in political, social and cultural accounts. Elspeth was fifty years old when she published the novel and "perhaps that had made her aware of how relentlessly time was passing" and how different the continent had now become in retrospect to her exotic and frivolous childhood. (Nicholls, 288) Undoubtedly, Huxley's mood is also influenced by her mother and by other female personages, whose vigorous influence and strength hold the centre of the colony. However, it is also a product of dissatisfaction and anxiety, provoked by the modernisation which played havoc, both for the settlers and the natives, and which brought an economic crisis in the thirties and had a colossal devastating influence onto the colonial agriculture. (cf. Part I, p. 25) This mood faces both, colonial and imperialist nostalgia. Colonial nostalgia in so far, as her lamentation for the relationship between settlers and natives, for the lifestyle the female subjects

have brought to the continent, as well as for the dissatisfaction from the “lack of progress in rebuilding” has been evoked. (cf. Part I, 1.3.4. Colonial nostalgia, p. 25). Moreover, the mood, which penetrates the pages of her novel, is born out of disappointment of the failure of the white men’s civilizing mission which also led to the suicidal end of the British Empire. This vein refers to imperialist nostalgia, because it is not only defined as mourning for a certain mission (‘white man’s burden’), but is also “[...] manifested at the national level by statements and practices associated with lost transnational dominance and international supremacy [...]” (cf. Part I, 1.3.3. Imperialist nostalgia, p. 22). Recalling what Rosaldo insists on in Part I, namely that the imperialist nostalgia is a paradox of mourning “for what they had already destroyed and for “what they themselves have transformed” (cf. Part I, p. 23), we notice that Huxley’s mood does not differ a lot, for hers are the words that the settlers “[c]ame in quest of adventure, stayed to make colony and, in the process, destroyed what they had come to seek.”(qtd. in Lassner, 2004: 158)

Furthermore, Huxley’s mood celebrates the evolution of the female subject in the colony in general and in life in particular. Last but not least, her mood is built out of fear referring to the historical archive of the British empire. She was anxious that if there were no chronicles and records about the ‘Empire’s grandeur’, nobody would remember it and its existence would sink into oblivion.

### 3. Kuki Gallmann (1943)

Once an Italian, now a Kenyan national, <sup>22</sup> Kuki Gallmann was born on 1st June 1943 in the Venetian province Treviso. She grew up in her grandfather’s house, where her family sought shelter from the Italian Civil War (1943-1945). Kuki’s father was an educated man, who possessed a versatile personality. He was a parachutist, a surgeon, a soldier, an animal lover, but most of all, he was a passionate adventurer, who had the wonderful ability of storytelling. Often, when Kuki takes a stroll down memory lane, she remembers him as the person who

[...] had the gift of making me believe, and of believing himself, that *there is always a new adventure*, something waiting to be discovered, *if we can only find the time to*

---

<sup>22</sup> See the section *Annex*. Attached you will find the email correspondence with Mrs Gallmann, where she writes: “I was once Italian [...]” and a few lines below: “I am back home”, referring to Africa as her home.

*look for it, and the courage to jump. His drive and his energetic attitude to life galvanized me, making me perceive that there were no limits to what one could achieve. I was keen to explore, eager to follow in his footsteps. [...]*  
 He loved nature, creatures wild and tame, [...]. He instilled in me these same feelings. [emphasis added] (*I Dreamed of Africa*, 1991: 5)

Although Kuki was mainly brought up by her mother, she inherited much of the same enthusiasm and emotional thrill for adventure from her father. Moreover, he was the person who first introduced her to the existence of a foreign continent. He was the storyteller, who whirled her across the majestic vistas, untamed forests, dotted with wild animals and rare species, and stunning sunsets; thus instilled in her a consuming desire to migrate back to the land of our earliest ancestors - Africa. Already in her early school years, Kuki was eager to share her affection for the exotic continent with her schoolmates. Led by a feeling of déjà vu, she grabbed the first opportunity to write an essay on the topic “Myself twenty years on”, in which she realistically describes her future life on the African continent. Shortly after her first year at the University of Padua, where she studied Political Sciences, Kuki married Mario, by whom she had a son - Emanuele. Realizing that the reckless passions of youth could not make up for the lack of experience, after two years of marriage, they came to the mutual agreement to separate. Together with her mother and her son, Kuki decided to escape the noise of the town and settled down in an old villa on the Riviera del Brenta. It did not take long until she made new acquaintances, one of which was with Paolo and his wife Mariangela. The events which happened next took an unfavourable turn. A near fatal car accident left deep physical and psychic scars on Kuki’s body and in her mind. The healing process and her convalescence took her many years, during which she suffered multiple painful surgical interventions. Although Paolo was not dangerously injured, he lost his wife in the very same car crash. It might have been karma, or simply a concurrence of circumstances, however, this tragedy brought Kuki and Paolo even closer to each other. In a moment like this, the need to hold on to someone and the necessity to believe in something is more than just desirable - it is indispensable. In such an unfortunate situation, Kuki was lucky to find a soulmate in the person of Paolo; someone, who reminded her very much of her father. In the face of Paolo she found another storyteller, who could evoke in her the “images of unbound freedom” and a dreamer, who could make her “smell the dry grass of unknown savannahs”. Kuki’s sixth sense whispered to her that, “[T]he key to my future was Paolo.” because “[H]e began to represent the link with a different world, the hope of change and of a new life.” (*I Dreamed of Africa*, 17)

Shortly after Kuki was officially divorced, she and Paolo got married. Along with Emanuele and Paolo's two daughters, they took off from the airport of Venice, bound for Africa, on their way to a new beginning. (*Ibid.*, 31) The Gallmanns acquired a cattle ranch called Ol Ari Nyiro - a 100,000 acre of land in Western Laikipia, situated in Kenya's Great Rift Valley. Later on, this ranch was developed into a wildlife and nature reserve. In 1980, when Kuki was pregnant with Sveva, Paolo died in a car accident. Three years after Paolo's death, at the age of 17, Emanuele was deadly bitten by a puff-adder, while trying to extract venom to make anti-venom. Instead of retreating into a shell and building walls out of pain, sorrow and self-accusation around herself, Kuki Gallmann stayed on and converted her most bitter loss into a mission to conserve the African nature and to bring balance between mankind and environment. She established the "Gallmann Memorial Foundation" in memory of her husband and son, motivated by the motto "to preserve a wild oasis of biodiversity through sheer determination, willpower and imagination."<sup>23</sup>

In the early 1980s, Kuki Gallmann obtained Kenyan citizenship. With the official permission of Kenya's- then President Daniel arap Moi and the director of the Wildlife Department Richard Leakey, on 18 July, 1989, Kuki undertook a campaign against the illegal ivory trade. There was "a pile of neatly and dramatically arranged elephant tusks, the emblem of a holocaust representing almost 2,000 dead elephants." (*I Dreamed of Africa*, 301) Twelve tons of elephant tusks were ignited as a demonstrative protest against the blood trade and the "man's thoughtless destruction of the environment" (*Ibid.*, 302).

Today, Kuki Gallmann - the humanitarian, the writer, the conservationist, the guardian of African fauna and flora - travels around the world to deliver lectures to students and to participate in various environmental projects. Together with her daughter Sveva, she teaches children and adults about conservation in the hope that this will inspire generations to come. However, her main concern remains with the development of the initiative of the conservancy of the African environment and its natural resources. She lives at Kuti in the highlands of Laikipia, by choice alone, but never lonely, enjoying the company of her memories and her two dogs. (*Ibid.*, 318)

---

<sup>23</sup> The official homepage of the Gallmann Foundation provides useful and detailed information referring to its projects, experiences, community, conservation and ideology, [www.gallmannkenya.org](http://www.gallmannkenya.org)

### 3.1. Visions of Africa

The discussion so far has shown that Kenya wears a number of diverse appearances as captured separately by the private experiences of the previous two authors. We have witnessed that the visions, which Karen Blixen presents, do not resemble those of Elspeth Huxley. The romantic vision of Kenya and the humanitarian attitude of “noblesse oblige”, which pervade the pages of *Out of Africa*, have been replaced by historicizing the lost Empire and obeying the maxim of the “white man’s burden” in Elspeth Huxley’s novel *The Flame Trees of Thika*. The difference in attitude and vision projected through the narrative style in both novels, rests partly on the process of domestication and consolidation during colonization. Whereas the recollection of personal experiences and the question of identity are excessively valuable categories in analyzing the modes of behaviour in the colony, the dynamics of political and economic vicissitudes, which overwhelmed the ruling scheme of the British Empire in the period between 1913 to 1962, are also essential in pinpointing the consequences in the post-independent setting. A reference to the introductory part (p. 2) shows that after the Anglo-German agreement of 1890, the British Protectorate was proclaimed over Uganda. Five years later, Kenya was declared an East Africa Protectorate. The main aim of the Protectorate was to encourage the settlement by European farmers in the so-called ‘White Highlands’, hence, providing the welfare for their colonial agents, who strictly obeyed to and fostered the prosperity of the Empire’s economy. What the British imperial clique actually did, was to enslave mentally and colonize physically the native people by claiming their land and deprive them of their rights and peaceful existence. A deeper glance at the historical records from 1913 onwards till the beginning of the First World War (1914-18), displays the grandeur of the British colonization in Kenya. During the two World Wars, Kenya became a British military base, which brought turbulence in the economy, yet continued to enhance its modernization and socioeconomic growth. However, this also led to other crucial consequences. One of which was the civil disobedience advocated by the rising Kenyan sense of nationalism and patriotism. Toward the end of World War II (1939-45), the rising temper of the Kikuyu could not longer be suppressed. In 1946, the Kenya African Union (KAU) was established, led by Jomo Kenyatta whose primary aim was to obtain an access to the White Highlands and the resettlement of landless Kikuyu, whose return to the reserves was one of the crucial factors forming a political upheaval. (Miller&Yeager, 1994: 24). However, the organization was not able to unite the voice of Kenyan nationalism. In 1952 the political unrest, caused by the division between the extremist and

the moderate wings of KAU, manifested itself in the well-known Mau Mau uprising. Although the rebellion was unsuccessful and a great number of Kenyans lost their lives, the flux of European immigrants decreased radically during the 1950s. One of the reasons for this was that the British colonial rule was undergoing a stage of an economic and political crisis, which was increasing episodically during World War I, World War II, Mau Mau rebellion and since. There were still those who emigrated to make a profit from farming and cropping, however, the ‘Good old days’ triumph of the white settlement had been slowly vanishing, and

[t]hose who emigrated to take up farming in Kenya did not expect to be applauded as the bearers and disseminators of a superior culture, but went with a shrewd appraisal of its risks and prospects and with a wary eye on the guarantees offered by the imperial government.” (Low&Smith, 1976: 465)

Elsbeth Huxley perceived this occurrence as a threat which had the potential to overshadow the existence of the British Empire, hence causing its oblivion. (Cf. Part II, p. 64-5)

Then there was certainly a wind of change after Jomo Kenyatta headed the independent Republic of Kenya on December 12th, 1963. Whether this change advanced the welfare of the pastoral people or not, is a matter of speculation.

The following discussion intends to reveal another distinct appearance of Kenya, illustrated through the angle of Kuki Gallmann, who experiences Africa approximately ten years after its independence. It will, nevertheless, continue to refer to colonization as the leading factor affecting the process of modernization with its irretrievable results in post-independent Kenya.

“[K]enya in February 1970”, Kuki Gallmann remembers,

[w]as at its hottest and driest. The yellow grass and the first acacias on the way from the airport; a gazelle - perhaps an impala - grazing in the long strange grass; the African faces of smiling porters; women in bright clothes balancing baskets on their heads: these were my most vivid impressions, after the fog and dampness of Venice. (*I Dreamed of Africa*, 19-20)

The picture she presents at first is more or less influenced by her childhood dream to live in Kenya. Suddenly, her dream comes true and her senses are engrossed by the beauty of nature. She is enchanted by the exotic trees and plants, by the diversity of wildlife, as well as by the wide unapproachable horizons. In her autobiographical novel *I Dreamed of Africa*,<sup>24</sup> Gallmann makes the following revelation:

---

<sup>24</sup> Kuki Gallmann’s memoir was adapted into a film in 2000, starring Kim Basinger and Vincent Perez.

[I]t was only my second night in Africa, yet something had begun to grow inside me [sic] which I could not stop, as if my childhood dreams had finally found the place where they could materialize. I had arrived where I was always meant to be. I did not know how it could be practically achieved, but I was certain beyond any shadow of doubt that it was here that I wanted to live. [...] I, like him [Paolo], was in love with Africa. (25)

In a manner close to the one of Karen Blixen, Gallmann captures the African nature, the animals and the pastoral tribes of Kenya. She describes her first encounter with a buffalo during a hunt, organized by Paolo. She remembers those days as a time of pure bliss, enchantment and harmonious coexistence between man and beast. (51) Although the wrongs and the horrors of the Mau Mau rebellion were still vivid in the 1960s and the early 1970s, “[i]t was still the time of big-game hunting, before the pressure of poaching and the destruction of the environment had made this sport anachronistic and, eventually forbidden; [...]” (35)

Despite the echoing salvo of the Kikuyu unrest, nature, in Kuki’s eyes, was still benevolent to its inhabitants. She illustrates those untamed places which “followed ancient patterns”, like, for instance, Lake Turkana, that is

[...] a slow progression through black volcanic rocks. A last hill smouldering with heat and lava, barren landscapes, and then the purple, grey, black and jade expanse of the prehistoric lake appears, silent and majestic, with its islands immersed like immense sleeping dinosaurs. (43-4)

In those years, the huge trees sheltered those who needed their shades. The idyllic bay of the Kiwayu and the Mkokoni, occupied only by villagers, provided free manoeuvring for those who were out fishing. She notices that, “[...] gardening in Africa is most rewarding; given water and a minimum amount of care, everything grows so fast that one can sit under the shade of the trees one has planted in a matter of only a few years.” (79) There was a peaceful coexistence, which reigned between the locals, the animals and nature. Her attention was, and still is, constantly drawn by the slightest daily delights and joys, resembling much of Huxley’s attitude toward nature as a child, for “small things can often make big things bearable.” (28)

Kiku also recalls how she was surprised by the way the natives “noticed small details or any alteration in their [animals] behaviour and the manner in which, “[...] cattle and sheep grazed freely, [...]. In the heat of the day I often met cattle drinking from one side of a water reservoir or a dam and elephant from the other, tolerant of each other’s presence. I loved that.” (67-8)

As far as her vision of the pastoral people is concerned, Mrs Gallmann depicts their inward as well as outward appearance in a detailed manner, partly to inform the readers of their distinct characteristic features, and partly to remind herself that the richness and colourfulness of local ethnicities should be more appreciated and treasured. Occasionally, she does not miss the opportunity to add some more flavour to their exoticism. In *I Dreamed of Africa*, she describes her amazement, while gazing at

[...] the transformation which had occurred in the people we employed, who normally wore European clothes. Now dressed - or undressed - in their traditional style, they had emerged from their everyday working rags and deformed shoes as butterflies hatch from caterpillars. Slim and agile, proud and handsome, colourful and noble, free and nimble in the rhythm of the dance, [...]. (83)

The description of the Pokots, who are remarkable for “keeping their traditions for longer than many other tribes”, the Maasai, the Kikuyu, the Meru and the Kamba, among many others, who are culturally aloof skilful hunters and excellent in agriculture, add an extra spice to the diverse ethnic brew of local patterns, traditions and culture. The Somali and the Boran tribes, Kuki illustrates as “handsome and wild” and the women are “tall and proud with eyes of dark velvet” (63)

Apart from the description of the local tribes, Kuki Gallmann also mentions a few other well-to-do settler families, who are not many in number, but who decided to stay on and live in Kenya, as for instance the Buonajutis, the Roccas, the Blocks, the Colviles, etc.

All in all, the social identity forming the Kenyan population during the 1970s and 1980s, was determined as highly diverse and “shaped by the dynamics of its history and the advantages and limitations of its physical environment” (Miller&Yeager, 61). Although the majority was given to the Africans, there were also other dialectically and racially distinct nationalities counting to the population in Africa. Small, but influential communities were formed by Asians, Africans from other parts of the continent, Arabs, and Europeans. (*Ibid.*, 61) The diversity of such ethnic agglomerations must be traced back to the colonial times, because they are historical products of constant emigration, which advanced reforming and modifying the local political, economic, and religious setting.

If we look back to the colonial times again, when the desire to morally and economically improve and enlighten the “other race” to make them full human beings was overwhelming, we will recall that the capitalist mode of production the British introduced to the natives not only opened up a terrain on which to exemplify their reaction and further appropriation but also paved the way towards ethnic, class and gender barriers. These barriers are further intimately linked to and



reflecting on the religious orientation and on factors such as education, occupation, family economic status, privileges in the sphere of health and work, and other vital human services. In a similar vein, the dynamics of capitalism and urbanism reflected the Kenyan society on a cultural, religious, and ecological level. The diversity between the urban and rural residents, between Muslims, Christians, and other religious groups, was a crucial denominator for rising conflicts. These rivalries, according to Miller and Yeager, “are now finding common ground in pursuit of secular causes involving political reform, human rights, and environmental conservation.” (62) This historical throwback is essential for the discussion of Kuki’s visions, because she faces directly all these obstacles, especially regarding the frivolous misuse of natural resources and poaching. One of the problems concerning the ownership dilemma of natural resources, was “[...] that which is owned carries permanent value and should be nurtured, [and] that which is not may contain transient value and can be freely exploited by anyone on the basis of need or desire.” (Miller&Yeager, 69) Needless to say that this situation was not saluted by the local tribes and by the landless natives residing in the drylands. In one of her interviews, Kuki Gallmann discusses the conflicts that arose between two tribes, namely because of the usage of water resources. She explains that there is a constant conflict for one and the same resource, but mainly between pastorals. She gives an example with two tribes, namely the Pokots and the Samburu, who are constantly fighting. Such situations have learned Kuki to take the role of an arbiter between them and to try to find a solution for their reconciliation.<sup>25</sup>

Another example is taken from her novel and reveals how her husband Paolo has been kidnapped and robbed by a group of Kikuyu.

‘[G]et out, this is robbery.’ [...] Paolo counted seven men, dressed in rags, looking wild, carrying pangas and simis.<sup>26</sup> [...] They took his watch, his shoes, and all his clothes apart from his underpants and a turquoise silk scarf [...]. It was the car they really wanted. (112)

The situation of the women in Kenya did not change much after collecting the independence. They were still responsible for domestic routines such as gathering firewood, keeping the household, for tending babies, children, harvesting and cropping. During the 1980s,

---

<sup>25</sup> See “Balancing Your Life with Ellen Susman”, published online on October 24, 2014. There Kuki discusses her proposal of reconciling the fight between the two tribes.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Panga’ means machete and ‘simi’ comes from ‘Kikyuy simi’ meaning a knife with scabbard.

[...] 70 percent of Kenya's female population was rural, and about the same percentage was functionally illiterate. Although urbanization and new educational openings are now altering these ratios, women remain constrained by a combination of customary, statutory, and religious obligations governing marriage and divorce - [...]. (Miller&Yeager, 83)

Kuki Gallmann envisions the Kenyan rural women as having “seldom a chance to come out of their shells.” (*I Dreamed of Africa*, 266) They are mostly dependent on their husbands and often do nothing but “[...] looking into the distance, sitting with children around their huts, waiting for the time to cook their maize and vegetables.” (*Ibid.*, 267) Hence, Gallmann was resolved to help them by all means. She delivered the tools and materials these women needed, such as beads, wool, skins and cotton, and became pleasantly surprised by their skills and the final outcome. She remembers the enthusiasm with which the rural women accepted her task and

[b]lankets and lace, wallhangings and belts, necklaces and earrings, delicate and exotic, appeared as by magic from their worn, clever hands. With care and patience, a small thriving Art and Craft Centre gradually began in Ol Ari Nyiro, and it was a true satisfaction for me to see the pride and enthusiasm the women put into their work; the proceeds gave them money of their own, and helped them to make their lives better and more fulfilled. (*Ibid.*, 267)

Among the spicy brew of native people and ethnic agglomerations, there was unaccommodated population who destabilized and affected “[...] virtually every aspect of Kenya's biosphere, including not only its lands, but also its forest, energy, and water resources, its treasure of wildlife and wildlife protected areas.” (Miller&Yeager, 68) It was not until the late 1970s, when the poaching drastically increased and became a threat, causing the extinction of the elephants. Kuki Gallmann has experienced the cruelty and horrors of the blood trade herself. In another interview, she recollects the horrific scenes of how she was almost beaten to death by ivory traders, in her attempt to prevent poaching at her ranch.

After the loss of her husband Paolo and her son Emanuele, recognizing the seriousness of the obstacles at stake, Kuki Gallmann establishes “The Gallmann Memorial Foundation”. The main purpose of this organisation is the conservation of nature and biodiversity, as well as to restore the peaceful coexistence between man and the beasts. After the tragic loss, Gallmann decides to stay on and devote her life and strength to the protection not only of nature, but also of the authenticity of local traditions and customs. Her ambition to preserve the nature and the animals is not only a figment of a tormented mind, it is a product of highly symbolic circumstances, which taught her the life lessons like for instance that people, who dare to take life for pure enjoyment, benefit, revenge,

etc., are not going unpunished. Not occasionally, the brother of Paolo, who shot an elephant, died in his sleep three months later after the game hunting. (36) Paolo, who swore Kuki “[N]o more, I promise. This is my last elephant.”, was hunted by premonitions and talked frequently about his death and the preparation of his funeral, died in a car crash. Through the genesis of her vision, Kuki Gallmann is determined to preserve the environment, to restore generations of knowledge and tradition, and to transfer the message that people should protect that which cannot be reproduced. The poachers, who rapidly increase in number and all the other local, as well as worldwide co-operations, are misusing the natural resources. Driven by philistinism, barbarity and cruelty, they are disturbing the balance and harmony in nature and life.

### 3.2. *I Dreamed of Africa* (1991)

*Africa is the mother.* (Kuki Gallmann, 2016)

Given the current analysis of Kuki Gallmann’s life and visions of Africa, this subchapter will follow the model of discussion the previous two case studies dealt with and will focus on the discussion of nostalgia in the autobiographical novel *I Dreamed of Africa*. What we have witnessed so far, is a pattern of nostalgia which has been induced either by a romantic attitude (referring to Karen Blixen), or by a mood built upon the documentation of a once-upon-a-time Empire (with reference to Elspeth Huxley). While the antecedent case studies have heretofore implicitly debated on the ways Blixen and Huxley vent their nostalgia for bygone times and glorify the “Good old days”, now the intent is to focus on essential factors which revise the notion of nostalgia in *I Dreamed of Africa*. Among the major objects which evoke nostalgia in autobiographies or memoirs, are those of ‘home’ and ‘time’. (Cf. “Objects of nostalgia”, p. 13) In addition, these patterns will be carefully looked at once again, yet from a slightly different perspective.

### 3.2.1. Home

From the medieval times on to the present day, the notion of 'home' has considerably changed. It was originally referred to one's birthplace and, according to Johannes Hofer, was one of the major factors for the pathological condition of homesickness of many soldiers, who had to fight abroad. Lately, 'home' was considered as a place where people felt free and emotionally attached to. In colonial understanding, the notion was replaced by the term 'diaspora', which stood for a provisional place of sojourn where multicultural treasures melt upon economic and political powers and followed a hierarchical world scheme of gender, race and class segregation and obeisance. (Cf. p. 14-15)

The modern perception of 'home' is less concrete and more mythic, echoing the romanticized version, which we are brought up with and which we preserve in our memories. Albeit in seemingly ambiguous understanding, it still refers to aspects such as family stability, privacy and a deep sense of belonging, even if it is no longer a direct synonym for birthplace.

Both, Karen Blixen and Kuki Gallmann, share a strong sense of belonging and a deep emotional attachment to Africa, regardless of the period they live and write in. Blixen, for instance, finds not only home, but freedom and vocation on the African continent. It is evident that she inhabits the place just as the place inhabits her and every time, when she wakes up in the morning, gazing at the vastness of the exotic horizon, she is confident that: "Here I am, where I ought to be." (*Out of Africa*, 14) But life often plays tricks, especially to those, who expect it the least and, due to a bankruptcy, later on, she is compelled to leave the utopian home and to return to Denmark - her natal home. This marks the demise of her freedom and causes her an emotional collapse, which coincides with the end of her farming ventures. Despite the current circumstances, Blixen finds comfort in recalling the thrilling African escapades in an hour of need and desperation. Hence the place keeps her memories alive, as well as impels her rehabilitation and opens new perspectives in life. However, her constant return to the once-upon-a-time past echoes a quest for the search of a lost identity and a sense of belonging.

In the 1970s, when Kuki Gallmann and her family were on their way to settle down in Kenya, the number of white settlers was considerably decreasing. Except the diplomats and the managers of international companies, most of the people were either born there, or had chosen Kenya because they had fallen in love with it and not because they were driven by any kind of materialistic interests. (*I Dreamed of Africa*, 38) She interprets their choice as a recognition, a memory carried in

their [our] genes. (Cf. *Annex*) In the same token, Gallmann and Paolo were not settling down in Africa to seek fortune, rather they were choosing a way of life. (*Ibid.*, 35) In the novel she explains the reason for swapping her privileged and comfortable life in Italy for the exotic continent, which was still under the spell of the Mau Mau uprising, in the following passage:

[M]any times in later years I asked myself how it all began. I had sometimes this urge to find the link, the reason why, and when people ask me why I decided to come to Africa, *the answer lies in the days of my childhood. [...] The desire to go to Africa seemed to have been an obscure yearning to return, a nostalgic inherited need to migrate back to where our ancestors came from. It was a memory carried in my genes. The urge to fly home, like the swallows.* [emphasis added] (7-8)

For her, like for Blixen and Huxley,<sup>27</sup> Africa is the “Garden of Eden”, where the ancient man took its first steps; as such it should be kept sacred and preserved. (*Ibid.* 316)

What the example above also shows is that on the story level the notion of ‘home’ is decentered to denote the “cradle of mankind”. It generalizes Africa as the birthplace of humankind, hence as such it signifies ‘one home’. On a discourse level, however, its interpretation not only signifies ‘one home’, but also dwells in deeper allegory referring to Africa as a personification to a living organism, that of the ‘Mother’, which falls into disgrace with the audacity and barbarism of her children, videlicet the poachers, the anti-environmentalists and those who take advantage of it to enhance their own profit.

Approached from an ontological angle, the moral lesson behind ‘one home’ teaches us that discourses like racism, discrimination, intolerance, among many others, are artificial, however, undoubtedly potential factors for raising conflicts and disharmony in life, which eventually violate the laws of nature. Gallmann’s ambition to conserve the nature and protect its threatened species, to restore the harmonious coexistence between animals and mankind, as well as to cultivate the ancient morals, traditions and customs, reveals only a part of her vocation to guard her home. A careful observation of the allegorical and metaphoric patterns the active environmentalist uses in her narrative, periphrastically displays another fact. It utters a deep concern towards the contemporary mobility of the human race, who gradually focuses on greed and profit rather than on the attempt to preserve their heritage. Driven by maternal instincts, Gallmann establishes the Memorial Foundation in dedication to her husband and son. It becomes an emblem of habitat

---

<sup>27</sup> Apart from this reference, there is another one which is presented in Huxley’s book dedicated to the beauties of the Kenyan wildlife, *Last Days in Eden*, (1984). She touches upon the question of nature conservation, claiming that there are two main concerns which deserve an urgent attention. The one refers to the ever growing unchecked population in Africa and the other one deals with the intense poaching, which is running out of control. (Cf. Lorcin, 2012: 186)

protection, health care, education and community service and, approached allegorically, stands for 'one home'. This foundation is the only way "to combine the wild with the tame, and to plan a safe route for them to tread." (*Ibid.*, 252) She opens the ranch for children of all races to teach them that "[...] we did not have the right to pollute or to destroy the environment which surrounded us and which had an equal right to existence" and to remind them of their interdependent bond to nature, animals, culture, and heritage for "[...] one can and should coexist with the wild, in harmony... [and] learn how to utilize Nature without spoiling it, in fact protecting it at the same time." (Gallmann, 250-51) Referring to the problems of ethnic discrimination and segregation once again, Kuki Gallmann explicitly proves that the assumption of 'one home' is not illogical and artificial. In the novel, she describes how Kenya slowly converts to a cosmopolitan country and shelters people of diverse origins after its independence. She reveals that her son Emanuele, for instance, was particularly fond of his friendship with the Indian boy Mukesh Pandit and was attracted by oriental philosophy and customs. The 'cradle of humankind' brings together again all diverse races and cultures, spread all over the world, to unite them under the mission of nature and heritage conservation. At the same time, Gallmann juxtaposes and engages with two contemporary occurrences regarding the situation of children in the cosmopolitan Kenya, which is also related to the attitude of the adults and the upbringing of young nature and culture vultures. The one refers to Renaldo Rosaldo's observation on "innocent yearning" for something which has been destroyed and then worshipped (cf. p. 23), and the other one refers to the proclamation of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o on returning to the roots. (cf. the quote on p. 26) Both of the settings, however, pinpoint the aspect of tolerance toward other ethnicities, toward oneself and toward nature. The following subsequent instances have been selected for consideration:

[A]frican children still living in wild surrounding, where there are no schools or missions, have any amount of time to learn directly from the book of Nature what urban children must attempt to learn from the poor surrogate or badly-printed books. [...] They learn survival through the habits of the wildlife, and recognize the edible parts of plants, the ones they can use for medicine. This is the background to their harmonious growth in balance with the laws of Nature. (163)

Yet, the modern times intervene with the harmonious symbiosis between nature and people and bring chaos and confusion. The children in particular and the natives in general, are endangered because the environment is handicapped, hence:

[t]heir space and their way of life are disappearing fast and for ever. Since the mission came, with the school and the church, and the shop full of strange things which one needs money to buy, life has changed for the worse for the free pastoral African people. [...] Their culture endangered, their minds filled with notions and rules they do not need and cannot understand, *the new generation is forgetting*. [emphasis added], (164)

On the other hand, the spicy brew of nationalities living in Kenya is a highly valuable factor for coping with worldwide problematic issues like integration, tolerance and social connectedness. Consider the instance below:

[T]here is a tremendous bonus in bringing up children in Kenya. Children educated by parents with an open mind learn from a very early age that it is normal to look different, to dress in different ways, to eat different foods and worship different gods; and that all this is not just acceptable, but interesting, enriching, instructive and worthwhile. (171)

In addition, inspired by her mother's enthusiastic devotion to save and restore the traditions and customs of the ancient African culture, her daughter Sveva

[h]as launched '4 Generations', a visionary project, [...] *which she is now expanding to the other parts of the world*. It attempts to reverse the gradual loss of indigenous oak traditions by re-establishing proactively the intergenerational links between children, parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. [emphasis added], (317)

The expectations behind the activities and approaches listed above, could be attended as utopian, however, their accomplishment is not impossible. Africa, captured as the mother of the human race, also fosters an awareness to reconsider the contemporary world order and cultural hierarchy built upon mostly in the favour and defence of certain leading European interests. Whether people, like Kuki Gallmann, are determined to return to the roots of mankind, or not, is a matter of choice and not of an obligation. The point is that wherever people feel their home is, they should engage themselves in protecting it. Together people should strive to cultivate their traditions and heritage, they should accept and tolerate ethnic diversity and should unite their strength to preserve nature, in the hope to facilitate action against disruption and destruction, which are potential factors overshadowing and terminating human existence.

### 3.2.2. Time

Part I has already outlined the main aspects of ‘time’ in reference to the notion of nostalgia. It has been discussed that yearning for a bygone past is one of the most essential and defining premises for evoking nostalgic feelings. Avoiding any repetition, the element of time here will be approached from the viewpoint of Bryan Bradley, who claims that “[...] nostalgia often characterizes the longing to overcome present circumstances [...] and the nostalgic longing crystallises into a plan for present action and reform, [...] ]” (cf. p. 17) What will also be of ongoing interest in the following discussion, is the matter of how nostalgia frames time intervals and how these influence the alternation of Kuki Gallmann’s identity.

What was discussed in reference to Karen Blixen and Elspeth Huxley so far is that both settlers “[...] yearn for a different time - the time of [their] childhood, [or youth], the slower rhythms of [their] dreams. In a broader sense [their] nostalgia is a rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress.” (*Ibid.* p. 12-13) They both are apt to drift to the realm of nostalgia, because they either feel safe (referring to Karen Blixen), or try to find an explanation of why the notoriety of the British empire has gone and what are the consequences of it (referring to Elspeth Huxley). Yearning for the past enables them to deal with problematic circumstances in the present, hence their nostalgia has an episodic character; in other words, it is a tendency towards reality-denial and glorification of past settings. This is especially evident in Karen Blixen’s novel when she is forced to return to Denmark. With regard to Elspeth Huxley, she too anchors on nostalgia as a safeguard for facing her anxieties and obscurity in the present. Her mood of dissatisfaction and fear is caused by the present circumstances and through the narration of her childhood experiences from an adult perspective, she attempts to relive the grandeur of the British Empire, to re-evaluate, reconsider and document its existence, and most of all, to prevent its fall into oblivion.

As far as Kuki Gallmann is concerned, neither her childhood, nor a lamentation for the lost home are factors for her nostalgia. There is no such fondness and affection for the “Good old days” as we find in Blixen and Huxley’s texts. In fact, her nostalgia has a constructive character; it starts as a private lamentation caused by the two losses and develops into a historical appeal for nature conservation. This pattern of nostalgia relates to certain stages of her life, the evaluation of which demonstrates how her identity transits and alters over time.

The first main stage, marking a new beginning, is the episode after the tragic car accident, when Kuki meets Paolo. At this stage they are still in Italy, however, as the autobiographical resume



indicates, they are both passionate about Africa and intend to spend the rest of their lives there. The first step toward the realization of the goal is marked by burning her diaries, a highly symbolic ritual in Kuki's life, which serves the function to eradicate the pain of the tragic accident and to blaze the way to experience the life and the place she dreams of. The flames smouldering out of the burnt paper signify a rebirth. Kuki remembers that

[n]ow that way of life had come to an end, a new page, literally, had been turned. [...] I regarded going to Africa as a rebirth, and I had learnt from my accident that for a new plant to sprout, the seed pod must crack and die. Holding on to the old was no way of progressing. I decided to burn my diaries. (*I Dreamed of Africa*, 30)

The second stage marks the time interval between the two losses she has to experience and learn how to deal with her bereavement. In March 1980 Kuki loses Paolo in an aeroplane crash. Life, however, playing many queer tricks upon us, often reveals that people are born with strength and an individual quality of resilience. Sadly, as it often turns out, nobody is really aware of it, as long as something occurs to examine and measure their toughness, stoicism and determination to obtain an understanding for the unanticipated emotions and reactions. There are those who retreat into a shell when facing difficulties, or experiencing losses and traumata. However, there are others, like Kuki Gallmann, who do not let bereavement and despair to devour them but rather seek to find a focus in life. The following memory sketch does not only display a vast effulgence of nostalgia, but also a state of growth and self-awareness, framed between the loss itself and her mental condition after the funeral procession; yet, life has already start testifying Kuki's individual strength and resilience:

[I] will not forget the smell of gardenia, [...] [It] came strong to me from the large bush, almost run to tree, which grew close, and I felt dizzy with memories and grief. [...] Never again would Paolo pick a gardenia for me, [...]. Our life together had been full, and I knew I had been luckier than most just being able to accumulate all the memories, to share in all the adventures, to walk with him to the end of his road: yet I felt the agony of not having been there when he died, as if unwillingly, I had let him down. [...] I did not know yet what it had done to me. In my agonizing sense of loss, of 'never again', I too felt as if a new strength had descended over me during the night he died. [...] *The stronger me took over*. [emphasis added] (121-23)

Despite the overwhelming bereavement, Kuki stoically attempts to avoid her personal solitude and agony by finding a new meaning and determination in life. "[T]he first was to adopt the right

attitude to the land [she] was suddenly responsible for, as on this would depend its [her] future.” (144) More than ever before, she is determined to prove that she deserves the privilege to live in Kenya. In the same way, Kuki “[...] learned to take decisions which could affect many people and have far-reaching results [...].” (147-8) Although the absence of Paolo was palpable everywhere and the places and the familiar views were fresh reminders of “never again”, filling her heart with utter remorse, part of him was still present and even more alive than ever before; Paolo lives in their unborn child Sveva. “[T]he challenges were enormous”, she recalls as if this happened yesterday,

[a]nd more difficult than I had ever imagined. My solitude was beginning to become a burden to me, and my friends and my small child could not really fill it. These were the toughest years of my life, but as I had decided to stay and make a success of it, I cried my tears unseen in the night, and during the day I got on with the job. (152)

Being partly accustomed to the new life, with a baby girl in her hands, soon after the death of her spouse, Kuki suffers another even more terrible loss. Her son Emanuele is bitten by a puff-adder while trying to produce anti-venom out of its poison.

The phenomenology of nostalgia caused by a loss, especially that of a child, covers a wide range of unanticipated reactions, which often puzzle the bereft and those in his/her surroundings. The riot of grief advances to such an extent that Kuki’s identity has split into different selves, a condition which she metaphorically explains in the paragraph below:

[T]hat day and the night and the day which followed, I shed layers of my being as a snake sheds its skin. I kept coming in and out of myself, watching myself acting as from a great distance, and suddenly re-entering my body and the agony of my tormented soul.

Now I watched one part of me splitting from the other, and taking over. (195)

There is an evident tension between the self, which acts rationally, led by mechanical reactions of saving her child’s life, and, the other self, which makes time stand still, debilitating her mental condition, blurring the linear passage of time with the nonlinearity of grief. The two selves are vacillating between the past urgent need of searching answers of “How?” and “Why?” and the present feeling of being wrapped into a cocoon, due to shock, hopelessness and the fact that accepting the reality of the approaching death has not yet reached full awareness. Phantoms of disbelief and formidable obstacles are looming her way to “make contact a last time, to hear again his voice, to bring him back to consciousness.” (197) The opposing state between the ‘rational self’

and the ‘emotional self’ throw her into a condition of indifference. The reminiscence of it becomes explicit in the following passage:

[I] just wanted to be left alone. To think. To face, alone, what I must face. [...] Emanuele’s burial... how absurd. Just a few moments ago - a few hours, lives, millennia - there was a future. *Now, nothing*. [...] I stayed in bed, wondering why I should ever get up and what should I dress for. I contemplated days and days stretching ahead and I felt no desire to see what the future had again in store for me. *No curiosity. A sort of apathy*. [emphasis added] (203; 219-20)

However, the ominous feelings, fears and despair which overwhelm her after being fully aware of her son’s death find their way to arrange the chaotic stream of bereavement into a meaningful and analeptic pattern. Accepting reality and the fact that the grief threatens to turn into a chronic state over time, thus making her inadequate to take care of herself, her new-born child and her home, Kuki’s nostalgia conceives into a plan for present action and reform. (cf. Bradley, p. 17) Facing the past is her choice for recovery. This plan strengthens her rationality and helps her to find a vision and reason in life anew. It also reveals another split of her identity, namely that of the writer who tries to heal the nostalgic yearning with scrypto-therapy. She decides to escape the darkness and emptiness of the past by taking refuge in the memories and fill the blank pages to which they were previously exposed. Moreover, reliving, rethinking and dressing up her memories with words, is the means by which she can build up a pattern of personal significance. To recall the past is definitely a painful experience, however, it is also her only chance to survive the present. This becomes further explicit in the passage below:

[i]n Emanuele’s death I could find the key to the essence of life. [...] I chose instead to face directly the pain of my irreplaceable loss. I thought about it, spoke about it, mainly wrote about it. [...] There is a bonus in tragedies of such magnitude. You realize that there is no further to go down, and that you have two choices. You can stay at the bottom and get used to the agonizing paralysis of those deaths, [...]. Or you can decide to rise to the surface again, and being living once more. [...] Once you return to the surface you are as new, you have grown and have left down there your old self like a discarded and useless cocoon; [...] Only in changing my attitude to it, and giving my life a new purpose, could I balance the waste and make sense. (229-30)

The last stage coincides with the preceding one to respond to Kuki’s quest for clear vision in life. It presents her as an active environmentalist, who establishes anti-poaching campaigns demonstrating one of her fundamental steps towards self-recovery and towards her determination to guard and

preserve the African fauna and flora. Taken by a euphoric energy to save the last living elephants from extinction, she sets ablaze tons of ivory as a revenge on the poachers and the environment foes. She writes:

[A] couple of nights after that weekend, on the verge of sliding into oblivion, I saw a sudden clarity that the real purpose of burning all the ivory publicly was to show to the entire planet Kenya's commitment to end the ivory trade: when the President lit the pyre in front of the assembled world press, the flames had to catch and flare up instantly and dramatically. (300)

This act of protest signifies on the one hand, that if the ivory tusks do not belong to the elephants, they do not belong to anyone. There is nothing beautiful in an ivory tusk and everything made out of it, rather it symbolizes a blood trade's trophy financed by people's philistinism.

On the other hand, there is something in the fire per se, which is highly definitive. Setting a fire again in the last monumental scene of her novel is a clear prototype for putting an end to something essential and setting a new beginning; it resembles the same idea behind the burning of her diaries at the beginning of the novel. The ritual of setting fire reveals furthermore major features of her identity development. It stands for control and empowerment. To dispel any potential misunderstanding, the notion of empowerment here transcends beyond the common parlance, which relates the term to discourses such as racism and discrimination. Here, the notion is used to express activities bound to humanitarianism and not against it. Hence, it goes against the grain to condemn the statement made by Gillian Whitlock in her book *The Intimate Empire*, who claims that:

[...] in Kuki Gallmann's memoir, the ivory fire is a symbolic moment, a ritual of possession, which functions in the same way as the other ceremonial, when the white hunter is buried to become part of the Kenyan landscape. The fire also becomes a symbol of the rightful restoration of a white Kenyan to a position of authority, a man 'not subject to the tribal pressure which had crippled some of his predecessors' and a sign of the leadership of white Kenyan settlers in the conservation movement. (2000: 115)

Her radical approach should not be confounded with a demonstration of possession, an attempt to claim the land or to recover the white settler superiority. The fire escorting armadas of black ivory puffs in the skyline symbolizes degradation of the human race to such a low level when money is more valuable than life. It also issues a revolt against purposelessly executing harmful creatures, and last but not least, it enhances the sense of empowerment as a sign of threat for all the poachers, who might have the audacity to continue their illegal activities.

The conflict with time is as an essential motif as the deep attachment to the place in Gallmann's novel. It outlines the distinctive stages through which her identity trespasses and alters according to different past episodes of her life. The split of the selves creates coherent spacing between selected temporal intervals from the past, present and future. However, contrary to the other two writers, Kuki Gallmann does not take the same voyage to the past in pursuit of comfort. She sets her grief and nostalgia in a motion toward the change in the future, making it more valuable than the past. All of the three authors embark on a retrospective journey to the past, either driven by nostalgia for the lost paradise, or by yearning for the bygone grandeur of a lost empire, or fostered to exorcize the ghosts of a loss by wrapping the memories and pain in "[...] writing a story of seeking and of lessons learned, a story of growth and enchantment." (*I Dreamed of Africa*, 318)

## CONCLUSION

Relying on the records of Kenyan history and applying the relevant interdisciplinary theories and approaches, this thesis dealt with the rise of the phenomenon of nostalgia. It focused on the usage of the word before and after its entering into the social vocabularies and dictionaries. The thesis has traced its development from the ancient times presenting it as an incurable psychosomatic disease to its present status of a fundamental emotion, which might be either highly beneficial or deeply disappointing. It also analyzed major relevant objects and socio-cultural varieties of nostalgia, by implementing them into the discussion of the autobiographical novels under question.

The following summary aims to provide an answer to the question, which was raised at the beginning of the thesis, namely, how far the novels of Karen Blixen, Elspeth Huxley and Kuki Gallmann revise the notion of nostalgia during a process of domestication in Kenya and to what extent their nostalgia enhanced their individual growth psychologically and sociologically. (Cf. p. 3).

Fifty-five years have passed since the liberation of Kenya from the British rule, however, the Kenyans are still experiencing the spell of the colonial enigma. Deeply puzzled by the circumstantial conditions which affected the vanishing “Garden of Eden”, Karen Blixen, Elspeth Huxley and Kuki Gallmann create a lifelong attachment and loyalty to Kenya through their nostalgic memories of a long-lasting yearning for freedom, childhood, and nature conservancy. Additionally, the analysis of the novels has shown that not only Kenya presents diverse appearances but the personal drives of their nostalgia too, as captured separately by their private experiences and escapades. All of them employ nostalgia in a different level of apprehension in their texts, however, none of them cast the well-known stigma upon Africa as the ‘dark continent’. Rather, they perceive and present Kenya as the ‘cradle of mankind’ with its spicy brew of nationalities and celestial horizons, dotted by exotic animals and savannahs. Although the present platform, on which they stand to recall their nostalgic memories, encompasses essential periods in Kenya’s history, the novels display that nostalgia, whether past or present-oriented, deconstructs the notion of origin and converts the sense of belonging; a process referring to both, the local people and the immigrants.

The natives, just like the immigrants, had to adjust and adapt to the circumstances and living conditions in their mother country anew. (Cf. Elspeth Huxley and Kuki Gallmann's novels.)<sup>28</sup> Apparently, it was tough and hard for the three selected immigrants to integrate and socialize, however, the difference between them and the rest of the immigrants is to be found in the attitude they showed during the process of home-making. Apart from the private struggles, the social clashes and financial turbulences before and after colonization, living in Kenya felt natural to them. The revision of nostalgia they illustrate is implemented into the process of helping the others to create memories by providing them with access to history, to the natural resources, reserves, and cultural treasures. Another notable revision of nostalgia, which occurs in the three novels is incorporated in the process of social connectedness and ethnic and cultural tolerance. The authors' nostalgia is not framed in the stereotype of "once-upon-a-time", but rather it maps the deep disappointment of the "now-time" and how this has formed the past and affected the future. Apart from deconstructing the notion of origins and belonging, nostalgia apparently deconstructs the vision of Africa, by converting the personal experience into a social struggle, which affects immigrants, natives and other nations in general. Furthermore, the depiction of the natives and the environment pinpoints an opposition to the (post-)colonial understanding of Kenya as the 'dark continent'. Moreover, the careful examination of their observations persuade the potential readers to repaint Africa for the cultural richness, tradition and value which it deserves.

Karen Blixen, Elspeth Huxley and Kuki Gallmann embark on an adventurous voyage to a self-exploration and the involved lamentation of a lost coherence, and searching for answers regarding personal or public matters determines the notion of nostalgia as a process of constructing and deconstructing private and social identities. As a matter of fact, the identities per se, likewise the individual growth, are not private properties, but social constructions developed and modified according to the intensity of adjustment, social communication and integration.

What becomes also evident from the analysis of the memoirs is that the three authors have a clear purpose and vision in life, which refers to both, the private and the public interests. To have a specific vocation and the ability to recover after traumata and direct one's mental strength towards its realisation is already a sign for psychological and sociological growth. In addition, the three immigrants obtained the confidence and determination to adjust and to integrate socially and

---

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Huxley's *The Flame Trees of Thika* p. 254-5 to find out more about the shift of the natives' attitude towards the settlers and the manner in which they are prepared to defend them against the invasion of the Germans. As far as Gallmann is concerned, page 83 from her novel illustrates the "transformation which had occurred in the people employed, who normally wore European clothes." ( see *I Dreamed of Africa*)

culturally with people from the Third World. Hence, the publication of their memories historicizes their private struggles and knowledge of the continent in the way they visioned it, in an attempt to inform, reform, develop and be part of Kenya's history making.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary sources

Blixen, Karen. *Out of Africa*. 1937. London: Penguin, 2001.

Gallmann, Kuki. *I Dreamed of Africa*. 1991. London: Penguin, 2007.

Huxley, Elspeth. *The Flame Trees of Thika: Memories of an African Childhood*. 1959. London: Pimlico, 1998.

### Secondary sources

Agnew, Vijay. *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home*. Toronto: Toronto UP, 2005.

Baker, Stacey M., and Patricia F. Kennedy. "Death by Nostalgia: A Diagnosis of Context-Specific Cases." *Advances in Consumer Research* 21.1 (1994): 169-174.

Bissell, William Cunningham. "Engaging colonial nostalgia." *Cultural Anthropology* 20. 2 (2005): 215 - 248.

Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic, 2001.

—. "Nostalgia and Its Discontents." *The Uses of the Past: Hedgehog Review* 9.2 (2007): 7-9.

Bradley, Bryan. "Revenge and Nostalgia: Reconciling Nietzsche and Heidegger on the Question of Coming to Terms with the Past." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 38.1 (2012): 25 - 38.

Brantly, Susan. *Understanding Isak Dinesen*. Columbia, S.C.: U of South Carolina Press, 2002.

Casey, Edward S. "The World of Nostalgia." *Man and World* 20 (1987): 361 - 384.

—. *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.

Chase, Malcolm, and Christopher Shaw. "The Dimensions of Nostalgia." *The Imagined Past*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989.

Clewell, Tammy. *Modernism and Nostalgia: Bodies, Locations, Aesthetics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013: 5.

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

- Dickens, Charles. *The Complete Works of Charles Dickens: Little Dorrit*. Vol II. New York: Cosimo, 2009: 575.
- Dinesen, Isak. *Letters from Africa: 1914-1931*. Ed. Frans Lasson. Trans. Ann Born. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1981:61.
- Ferguson, Niall. *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*. London: Allen Lane, 2003: xiv.
- Flaubert, Gustave. *Madame Bovary*. 1857. Ed. Stephen Heath. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Fodor, Nandor. "Varieties of Nostalgia." *Psychoanalytic Review* 37 (1950): 25 - 38.
- Frost, Isaak. "Homesickness and Immigrant Psychoses." *Journal of Mental Science* 84 (1938): 801 - 847.
- Gatheru, R. Mugo. *Kenya: From Colonization to Independence, 1888-1097*. North Carolina: McFarland&Company, 2005: 5.
- Githae-Mugo, Micere. *Visions of Africa*. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1978.
- Green, Gayle. "Feminist Fiction and the Uses of Memory." *Signs* 16.1 (1991): 290 - 321.
- Haghighi, Maryam. *Literary Schools*. Tehran: Avaye Noor, 1993: 44.
- Halmi, Nicholas, Paul Magnuson, and Raimonda Modiano. *Coleridge's Poetry and Prose*. New York: Norton, [2004] 121: 27-36.
- Hannah, Donald. *Isak Dinesen and Karen Blixen: The Mask and the Reality*. London: Putnam, 1971.
- Hemingway, Ernest. *Green Hills of Africa*. 1935. New York: Macmillan, 1987: 72-73.
- Hofer, Johannes. "Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia." 1688. Trans. C. K. Anspach. *Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine* 2 (1934): 376 - 391.
- Holak, Susan L., and William J. Havlena. "Nostalgia: An Exploratory Study of Themes and Emotions in the Nostalgic Experience." *Advances in Consumer Research* 19.1 (1992): 380 - 387.
- . "Feelings, and Memories: An Examination of the Emotional Components of Nostalgia." *Journal of Business Research* 42.1 (1998): 217 - 226.
- "Home." *Webster's New World College Dictionary*. 4th ed. Indianapolis: Wiley, 2004.
- Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Robert Fragles. Intro. Bernard Know. London: Penguin, 2002: 5. 165-170.

- Huddart, David. *Homi Bhabha*. London: Routledge, 2006: 51.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *The Politics of Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- . *The Canadian Postmodern*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1998.
- . "Narration and Memory." *Methods for the Study of Literature as Cultural Memory*. Ed. Raymond Vervilet. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000.
- Huxley, Elspeth. *White Man's Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya*. 1935. Vol 1 London: Chatto&Windus Ltd., 1974.
- . *White Man's Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya*. 1935. Vol 2 London: Chatto&Windus Ltd., 1956: 253.
- . *The Mottled Lizard*. 1962. London: Penguin, 1988.
- . *Last Days in Eden*. UK: Harvill P, 1984.
- Ihde, Don, and Hugh J. Silverman. *Descriptions*. USA: U of NYP, 1985.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. 1778. Ed., Robert B. Loudon. Trans. Robert B. Loudon. Introd. Manfred Kuehn. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006: 71.
- Kuhn, Annette. "A Journal through Memory." *Memory and Methodology*. Ed. Susannah Radstone. London: Berg, 2000.
- Lange, Thomas, and Harald Neumeyer. *Kunst und Wissenschaft um 1800*. Germany: Königshausen &Neumann, 2000: 90.
- Lassner, Phyllis. *Colonial Strangers: Women writing the End of the British Empire*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2004: 158.
- Lewis, Simon. *White Women Writers and Their African Invention*. USA: Florida UP, 2003: 64.
- Levy, André, and Alex Weingrod. *Homelands and Diasporas: Holy Lands and Other Places*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005.
- Liddell, George H., and Robert Scott. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
- Linder, Ulrike. *Hybrid Cultures - Nervous States: Britain and Germany in a (Post)Colonial World*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010: 96.
- Lorcin, Patricia M. E. *Historicizing Colonial Nostalgia: European Women's Narratives of Algeria and Kenya 1900-Present*. New York: Palgrave, 2012.
- . "Imperial Nostalgia; Colonial Nostalgia: Differences of Theory, Similarities of Practice?" *Historical Reflections*. 39.3 (Winter 2013): 97 - 111.

- Low, Donald A., and Alison Smith. *History of East Africa*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1976: 465.
- Lowenthal, David. "Nostalgia Tells It Like It Wasn't." *The Imagined Past*. Ed. Malcolm Chase & Christopher Shaw. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989.
- McCann, W. H. "Nostalgia: A Review of the Literature." *Psychological Bulletin* 38 (1941): 165 - 182.
- "Memory." *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. Oxford: OUP, 1989.
- Miller, Norman, and Rodger Yeager. *Kenya: The Quest for Prosperity*. 2nd. ed. USA: Westview, 1994.
- Nicholls, Christine S. *Elspeth Huxley: A Biography*. Britain: Harper Collins, 2002.
- "Nostalgia." *Webster's New World College Dictionary*. 4th ed. Indianapolis: Wiley, 2004.
- Panelas, Tom. *American Journal of Sociology* 87.6 (May 1982): 1425 - 1427.
- Riley, Glenda. *Taking Land, Breaking Land: Women Colonizing the American West and Kenya, 1840-1940*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico, 2003.
- Ritivoi, Andreea Deciu. *Yesterday's Self: Nostalgia and the Immigrant Identity*. Lanham, Md.: Roman&Littlefield, 2002.
- Rosaldo, Renato. "Imperialist Nostalgia." *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston: Beacon, 1989.
- Rosen, George. "Nostalgia: A 'Forgotten' Psychological Disorder." *Psychological Medicine* 5 (1975): 340 - 354.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London: Granta, 1991: 9.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. 1978. London: Penguin, 1995.
- Sedikides, Constantine, Tim Wildshut, and Denise Baden. "Nostalgia: Conceptual Issues and Existential Functions." *Handbook of Experimental Existential Psychology*. Ed. Jeff Greenberg. New York: Guilford, 2004.
- Shumsky, Neil Larry. *Homelessness: A Dictionary and Reference Guide*. California: Greenwood, 2012.
- Spaid, Brian I. "Profiting from Our Past: Evoking Nostalgia in the Retail Environment." *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research* 23.4 (2013): 418 - 439.

- Starobinski, Jean. "The Idea of Nostalgia." *Diogenes* 14 (1966): 81 - 103.
- Stern, Barbara B. "Historical and Personal Nostalgia in Advertising Text: The Fin de siècle Effect." *Journal of Advertising* 21.4 (1992): 11 - 22.
- Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham: Duke UP, 1993.
- Su, John. *Ethics and Nostalgia in the Contemporary Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005.
- Thiong'o wa, Ngũgĩ. *Decolonizing the Mind*. London: James Currey, 1986.
- . *Writers in Politics: A Re-engagement with Issues of Literature & Society*. Oxford: James: Currey, 1997: 64.
- Trigg, Dylan. *The Aesthetics of Decay: Nothingness, Nostalgia, and the Absence of Reason*. New York: Peter Lang, Inc., 2006.
- Turner, Bryan S. "A Note on Nostalgia." *Theory, Culture & Society* 4 (1987): 147 - 156.
- Vervliet, Raymond, and Annemarie Estor. *Methods for the Study of Literature as Cultural Memory*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000: 201.
- Walder, Dennis. *Postcolonial Nostalgia: Writing, Representation, and Memory*. New York: Routledge, 2011: 49-50.
- . "Remembering Rousseau: nostalgia and the responsibilities of the self." *Third World Quarterly* 26.3 (2005): 423 - 430.
- Webster, Wendy. "Elspeth Huxley: gender, empire and narratives of nation, 1935-64." *Women's History Review* 8.3 (1999): 527 - 545.
- Wells, Stanley. *Shakespeare's Sonnets and a Lover's Complaint*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985: 44.
- Whitlock, Gillian. *The Intimate Empire*. London: Cassell, 2000.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. London: Bloomsbury, 1993: 2.

## Electronic Sources

- Chesoni, William. "Why is Kenya more famous than the most other African countries?"  
<https://www.quora.com/Why-is-Kenya-more-famous-than-most-other-African-countries>.  
 access on 3.Feb.
- Holy Bible. (NIV) Psalm 137 "By the rivers of Babylon." Ed. Biblica, Inc., 2011.  
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%20137>.  
 access on 23 Juni 2016.
- Hutcheon, Linda. "Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern." Ed. Marc Plamondon. Toronto UP, 1998.  
<http://www.library.utoronto.ca/utel/criticism/hutchinp.html>.  
 access on 14 Apr. 2016.
- Kjældgaard, Lasse Horne. *Kjældgaard on Out of Africa*. Provo: Brigham U.  
<http://humanities.byu.edu/kjaeldgaard-on-out-of-africa/>.  
 access on 7 Dec. 2016.
- Marin, Manuela. "Between memory and Nostalgia: The Image of Communism in Romanian Popular Culture." 5 Dec. 2013.  
<http://www.transfam.socjologia.uj.edu.pl/documents/32445283/42fed4c0-76ea-405b-b0c9-132b4c74137c>.  
 access on 17 Mai 2016.
- 'Mzungu.' *Urban Dictionary*. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=mzungu>.  
 access on 24 March 2016.
- Susman, Ellen. "Balancing your life with Ellen Susman - Kuki Gallmann Interveiw."  
 24 Oct. 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YikKsCsAJ0>.  
 access on 3 Feb. 2016.

[www.gallmannkenya.org](http://www.gallmannkenya.org)

## APPENDIX

### Email correspondence with Kuki Gallmann (08.10.2016)

(Q=Question; A=Answer)

Q: *To what extent nostalgia pervades the novel? I am asking this question because your writing style and word choice does not display weakness caused by the loss of family members. On the contrary, it shows a person who is determined to stay on the continent and develop the grief into a vocation, taking the challenge of anti-poaching and conservation of nature with stoicism and inner strength. Was it nostalgia that made you more attached to Kenya?*

A: You are right in saying that the tragic deaths of my husband and of my son have - in some inscrutable way - given me a strength and a resilience I did not know I possessed but that have been crucial to enable me go through the horrors of poaching and violence that I have witnessed and lived first hand.

What you define as nostalgia does not really apply to me as such: the main difference, say, between Karen Blixen autobiography and mine, is the fact that after her dramas she left Kenya, and she began to write about her time here once back in cold Denmark, alone, beaten and ill.

I stayed and decided to take on the challenge, giving my every living moment to the cause of conservation and to what is necessary to ensure it works.

[...]

I was once Italian and as you know moved to Kenya well after Independence so the colonial attitude does not apply to me.

What is the common denominator of all the ones who have chosen to live in this part of Africa, I have interpreted as a feeling of recognition: a memory carried in our genes; in the same way as migratory animals are periodically guided irresistibly back by a genetic memory to the places of their origin, it is the same for humans.

Paleontologists found the most ancient human remains in the Rift Valley of East Africa. This is where we all come from. I am back home. My husband and my son are buried in my garden, where I one day soon shall be. So we shall join the ancestors.

[...]

My autobiography has been my catharsis - as I have learned early in life that the only way to exorcise our ghosts is to face them: delivering my thoughts to a blank page comes natural to me.

I lived and live alone, never lonely, so there is hardly anyone to confide in: writing to me is undoubtedly therapeutic.

Q: *Am I right by suggesting that Kenya healed your grief for your husband and son?*

A: Yes. Sadly, accidents occur everywhere in the world. Here (Kenya) I could do something tangible to transform the irreversible loss of their young lives into a hymn to their memory.

Q: *Did the continent bring back the balance in your life and give you strength to devote yourself to nature conservation?*

A: Yes for sure.

Q: *Did it give you the courage to stay, instead to leave the continent?*

A: Yes. I had no choice. All around they were cutting the forests. I decided to protect the trees.

Q: *What drew my attention, while reading your book, was the word “resilience”. If I am mistaken with the word, could you give me your perspective to this point?*

A: Yes, I have learned to take everything that happens in my stride. Africa is the mother.



## Abstract in English

Kenya, alias the ‘cradle of mankind’, has the reputation to be one of the few countries in the world with a history dating back to the Old Stone Age. Once, a peaceful country, untouched by economic systems like Capitalism and philosophic theories like Marxism or Darwinism, it had to experience the western ideological hallmarks of racism, subjugation, cultural and ethnic clashes later on. Although, the mainstream constituency of western people very easily adopted to the role of the superior over the inferior, there were also those who rejected it as wrong and withdrew.

Fifty-five years have passed since the liberation of Kenya from the British rule, however, the Kenyans are still experiencing the spell of the colonial enigma. Facing the problems at stake, three white female immigrants record their nostalgic yearnings for the vanishing “Garden of Eden” in the form of autobiographic novels.

The thesis elaborates the notion of nostalgia as represented in the selected books by Karen Blixen *Out of Africa*, Elspeth Huxley *The Flame Trees of Thika*, and Kuki Gallmann *I Dreamed of Africa*. Relying on the records of Kenyan history and applying the relevant interdisciplinary theories and approaches, this thesis focuses on the rise of the phenomenon of nostalgia. It views the usage of the word before and after its entering into the social vocabularies and dictionaries. Moreover, the thesis traces nostalgia’s development from the ancient times, presenting it as an incurable psychosomatic disease, to its present status of a fundamental emotion, which might be either highly beneficial or deeply disappointing. It also analyzes major relevant objects and socio-cultural varieties of nostalgia, by implementing them into the discussion of the autobiographical novels under question. The separate analysis of nostalgia interpreted in the three novels captures the authors’ distinct attitude, visions and vocations, in their pursuit of freedom, searching for answers and the recovery of the lost coherence.

Moreover, the thesis shows that the three selected writers not only revise the notion of nostalgia, by deconstructing the sense of origin and belonging but also proves that immigration and adjustment are no longer a matter of fact. Rather, they are factors which offer an ultimate opportunity, thus enabling them to enrich their socio-cultural knowledge and enhance the psychological growth of their identities.

**Abstract in German**

Kenia, auch die ‘Wiege der Menschheit’ genannt, gilt als eines von der wenigen Ländern dieser Erde, das auf eine Geschichte verweisen kann, die bis in die Altsteinzeit zurückreicht. Einst ein friedliches Land, unberührt von den Wirtschaftssystemen wie etwa dem Kapitalismus und dem Marxismus, hat es auch später seine Erfahrungen mit den westlichen Kriterien von Rassismus, Unterjochung, kulturellen und ethnischen Zusammenstößen durchleben müssen. Obwohl die Mehrheit der Menschen aus dem Westen sich sehr schnell in die Rolle der Herrschenden eingelebt hat, hat es auch solche gegeben, die diese Verhaltensweise als falsch zurückgewiesen und sich daraus zurückgezogen haben. Mittlerweile sind fünfundsünfzig Jahre vergangen, seitdem sich Kenia von der englischen Herrschaft befreit hat, allerdings erleben die Kenianer immer noch die Auswirkungen des Fluches des kolonialen Mysteriums. Drei weiße weibliche Immigrantinnen, die sich den Problemen vor Ort gestellt haben, entscheiden sich ihre nostalgische Sehnsüchte nach dem Verlieren des “Gottesgartens” in autobiografischer Form aufzuzeichnen.

Diese Arbeit erforscht den Begriff von Nostalgie, wie er in den ausgewählten Werken, nämlich Karen Blixens “*Out of Africa*”, Elspeth Huxleys “*The Flame Trees of Thika*” und Kuki Gallmanns “*I Dreamed of Africa*” repräsentiert wird. Bezugnehmend auf die kenianische Geschichte, wendet diese Diplomarbeit passende interdisziplinäre Theorien und Methoden an, um sich auf den Ursprung der Phänomenologie des Begriffes Nostalgie zu konzentrieren. Sie betrachtet die Verwendung des Wortes bevor und nachdem es in die einschlägigen sozialen Wörter- und Fachbücher Eingang gefunden hat. Des Weiteren folgt diese These den Spuren der Entwicklung der Nostalgie von der Antike an, als sie als eine unheilbare psychosomatische Erkrankung dargestellt wurde, bis hin zum gegenwärtigen Stellenwert als fundamentales Gefühl, das entweder höchst wohltuend oder äußerst unerfreulich sein kann. Untersucht werden auch die entsprechenden Grundbegriffe und die sozio-kulturellen Varianten der Nostalgie und zwar indem sie in den genauer betrachteten autobiografischen Romanen zur Diskussion gestellt werden. Die Interpretation der Nostalgie in den drei Romanen erfasst die unterschiedlichen Grundeinstellungen, die Visionen und Bestimmungen der Autorinnen in ihrem Streben nach Freiheit, der Suche nach Antworten und der Wiederherstellung der verlorenen Identität.

Ausserdem bildet diese Arbeit ab, dass die drei ausgewählten Autorinnen nicht nur den Begriff Nostalgie revidieren, indem sie die Begriffe der Herkunft und der Zugehörigkeit dekonstruieren, sondern auch zeigen, dass Immigration und Anpassung nicht mehr im Mittelpunkt der Begrifflichkeit stehen, sondern eine großartige Gelegenheit für die drei Autorinnen sind, ihr soziologisches Wissen zu bereichern und ihre psychologische Weiterentwicklung zu fördern.