

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines some aspects of the novels of Alex La Guma. These aspects are evaluated as they relate to the author's vision, in ideological terms, of the national liberation struggle in South Africa. In the novels, the society portrayed is one which is highly developed. At the same time this society is plagued with internal tensions and contradictions revealing themselves at social-political as well as the economic levels. It is these tensions and contradictions which form the main content of La Guma's novels.

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The centrality of the working class in the matrix of social tension and strife in South Africa is revealed in the works. La Guma's And a Threefold Cord forms a starting point, a key, to interpreting the pattern which his novels form. Starting from a portrait of the condition of a working class family, La Guma expands to the macro-environment of the working class in general in the two novels A Walk In the Night and The Stone Country. The family and the working class district form the background to which the political movement in In the Fog of the Seasons' End can be understood. The underground liberation movement is portrayed as a working class organisation fighting against racist oppression and exploitation.

La Guma in dealing with the daily pressures of life in South Africa shows those trends and developments which reveal political and social conditions in South Africa. Unlike other parts of the African continent, where the peasantry has played an important role in national liberation, the South African political scene is dominated by the urban working class.

In dealing with those historical, political and social trends and developments obtaining in the condition of South Africa, La Guma reveals the national liberation struggle in portraits which are at once clear and credible. The place of violence for example is seen in In the Fog of the Seasons' End as arising from the material circumstances of South Africa, just as the centrality of the working class in the liberation process is seen as a consequence of the social and historical actualities of South/Africa.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to educe the salient features and tendencies which combine in the novels of Alex La Guma to reveal his perception of the struggle in South Africa. We shall do this being aware that before us this author's works have been evaluated within and in relation to the historical development of political consciousness of the people of South Africa. We are also aware that the writer's contribution to the understanding of the problems of apartheid and its effects on the peoples of South Africa, has also been studied. Although both approaches and others are without doubt useful in the understanding of the writer and the various perspectives from which his literary works can be perceived, this study will evaluate the novels of Alex La Guma with the intention of drawing out some of the features and characteristics which aid the author's literary articulation ,of the social and political themes that form the content of his works.

The social and political problems that the author deals with in his novels are undoubtedly numerous and even complex and cannot be exhaustively covered within the space of this dissertation. For the purpose of our study we shall isolate some aspects of the novels

of Alex La Guma and point out how these aspects relate to and aid or obfuscate our understanding of the author's portraits of struggle as they occur in his four novels: A Walk in the Night,³ And a Threefold Cord,⁴ In the Fog of the Seasons' End,⁵ and The Stone Country. From reading these works it is at once noticeable that there is in all of them one common feature that catches our attention, that is, there emerges in all the portraits an atmosphere of struggle.

Here we shall need to define what we mean by the terms "portraits" and "struggle" as we shall use them in this study. For our purposes "a portrait" is a verbal picture or illustration. In the instance of the novels of La Guma his novels use language to create verbal images or illustrations which assist us as readers to readily perceive what the writer is communicating. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines a portrait as "a verbal picture." Literature, as the art of the word, employs images to articulate the thoughts and emotions of the writer. The above broad definition is however not completely accurate since it leaves out certain aspects of literature besides its verbal nature. The Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors gives a more illustrative definition.

The form the artist chooses depends on the need of his situation and for a writer "in the thick of battle and struggle" his form will necessarily depend on the pressures of his situation. To express the vastness of Russia and the mass of the people with their conflicting emotions and doubts during the revolution Sholokhov needed an expanded form to articulate the reality of this time. For La Guma, caught in the thick of battle, and illustrating the smallness of the organisation, the difficulties the few committed activists face, and the general atmosphere of violence, the employment of terse forms is applied. These at the same time reveal the deep feelings of frustration, anger and pain, and illustrate the atmosphere of squalor, injustice, violence and privation. Freed thus from the cumbersome distractions, La Guma's novels are concise artistic statements which rely more on economy of language than on the expansion of it. While his novels have depth, this remains greater than their width.

The term "struggle" also is going to be used in this study to refer to those social and political tensions which exist in society. In the novels of Alex La Guma these tensions are viewed in terms of class struggle, that is, the struggle between the

working class and the capitalist. In this respect we have economic struggle, that is the struggle by the working class to improve its conditions in economic terms, as we see for example when La Guma narrates the "big strike" in the novel In the Fog of the Seasons' End. Political struggle, within the context of class struggle is the struggle for the demolition of the mainstays of the capitalist system and for the capture of state power by the workers. The "movement in In the Fog of the Seasons' End is involved in such struggle.

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To take a dictionary definition of "struggle": the term is defined in Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language as "To make violent, strenuous, laboured or convulsive exertions or efforts against difficult or forceful opposition or impending or constraining circumstances."¹⁰ Within the context of antagonistic social interests in class society, the working class struggles or strives to overcome the constraining pressures of capitalist exploitation. In the novels of La Guma these constraints are portrayed as the inhibiting and corrupting influences of capitalist exploitation which consigns the working class to deplorable living circumstances, which in their turn, deforms their

character, turning the youth, as in A Walk in the Night, into a violent and anti-social existence.

The social and political portraits in the novels of Alex La Guma reveal the struggle against the social and political realities of apartheid as the main truth that each character has to contend with. We are aware here that emphasis on apartheid exposes us to the risk of reducing La Guma's novels to mere anti-apartheid portraits whose value and pertinence would expire as apartheid comes to an end. This is why we shall adopt an all-encompassing definition which gives a broader vision of the struggle against apartheid as being significant although not the most

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fundamental. The complex socio-economic and political order which the author reveals through his portraits illuminate not only racism as a terrifying social reality in South Africa/but also general human suffering which arises from socio-economic formations which consign human beings to privation and squalor. The struggles in the novels of La Guma are therefore artistic demonstrations of the general human struggle against social systems and contradictions, but these are given as they apply to South Africa. In this respect La Guma's¹ portraits are pertinent to a larger audience. The profundity of

La Guma's artistic and moral vision links the struggle of South African peoples to the universal struggle of men to improve their lives, countries and societies.

The thematic relevance of the novels cannot therefore be restricted to South Africa or to apartheid. Nor can they be made less relevant to a broader conception of struggle that encompasses that complex and diverse heterogeneity that is human life and social development. In his short stories, which are not dealt with in this study, La Guma tersely deals with and dramatizes single incidents or perceptions drawn from contemporary issues, situations and the flood of contemporaneous social occurrences. In his novels the slightly enlarged canvas makes possible the integration of events which relate in a more diversified way to the main ideas in the novel. The novels permit the writer a larger framework which expands the narrative, therefore giving them a wider and more generalized portrait of life. The expanded canvas of the novel, as opposed to the short story, accords the writer a larger platform from which his social vision can be more articulately developed artistically through broad narration and an expanded structure of the works.

La Guma's fluency in revealing through his works the squalor and appalling human and physical landscape, which is linked with the general atmosphere of injustice and violence, is at once a mode of his artistic characterization of the situation and of the actors as well as a distinctive feature of his creative method. His characters (or his mode of characterization) do not aspire to a certain complexity of characterization, which one finds in writers like Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky or Dickens and which most critics think of as an essential element in the creation of character. Such elements, like the detailed exploration of the physical as well as the psychological details of a character to reveal him at the psychological as well as at the physical plane, are in La Guma's novels noticeably toned down. This has the unfortunate consequence of making these characters appear to some critics opaque and flat.¹²

La Guma himself seems aware of this. In one of his writings he has the following to say about the writer, and what his role is in the use of forms and artistic methods generally accepted as traditional ~~or~~ proper models for emulation by writers choosing to employ them:

Traditions we know have a majesty which demands respect, yet if we realise that they are the fruits of long experience

and the process of trial and error, they might prove to be an aid and a support rather than an obstacle and a hindrance. The writer's talent, his own experience and knowledge, together with his sensitivity to the trends of his time and the needs of his public, all play an important part in helping to differentiate between bowing submissively to traditions on the one hand, and summoning courage to renovate on the basis of those traditions, on the other.¹³

Thus, the relationship that is forged between the writer and his audience has at its centre the fundamental capacity of the writer to forge a unity between tradition and those contemporaneous forces and needs that he aims to challenge or serve. It is this which A.A. Roscoe in passing judgement on South African writing and South African authors, sees that these writers, faced with a common problem of appearance and reality in the South African image to the world, constantly aim to paint in the gaudiest colours the grim reality behind the facade erected by the Nationalist
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Government. According to Roscoe, therefore, the South African writer, writing under pressure of immediate response to provocation enjoys little time for a slow, steady fictive reworking of raw material into the realms of literary art.¹⁵

While it is true that La Guma's novels lack that complexity and width of portraiture that one finds in other writers using the novel as a form, his writings

are not necessarily therefore purged of artistry; in summoning courage to innovate, to express himself, his reality and the "traditions" of his country using the novel as a form in a manner departing from the traditional, we still can extract artistic modes of expression made necessary by the evolution of society from the novels of Alex La Guma.

We can say that the assertions that La Guma's characters are opaque and flat, or that his novels contain material yet to be elevated to the realms of literary art are due to an unfortunate lack of recognition of the fact that it is possible to depict or portray a character that is neither static nor opaque in a developmental and rounded manner without presenting his inward life in much detail. In the novels to be examined below the characters are portrayed as they relate to society and how that same society in turn relates to the characters. Through this mode of artistic portraiture emphasis is placed not so much on the psychology of the character but more on his sociology, that is, the relation of the character to his social environment as it influences him variously and as he in turn relates to this environment and influences it. In the novels A Walk in the Night and The Stone Country this shift in emphasis is visible, so that change in character is seen against a background or a

confluence of social circumstances which affect the actor. A good example of this is the gradual moral degeneration of Michael Adonis in the novel A Walk in the Night. Adonis' fall from a position of strength and moral uprightness to that of lowly moral weakness can only be appreciated not so much from the study of Adonis' psychological make-up but from the social factors and influences which condition and give life to his psychic state of being, that is the social impulses which compel him down the moral ladder. These factors and influences are artistically brought out in the novel A Walk in the Night.

La Guma in his novels presents types. There are social, intellectual and even political types. But in as far as these characters are broadly typical, can they be said to be lesser artistic creations? If we draw from the artistic rendering of character in the works of other writers we can say that Mr. Jagers for instance is certainly a social as well as a professional

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type. But the same character is created with an air of reality which has the consequence of heightening his individuality, his strengths and weaknesses, which draw him apart from the general typical horde from which he is lifted. In Great Expectations therefore this character is concretised in the manner in which he relates to and forms part of a larger artistic order

or the larger and dynamic sequential scheme created

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by the writer. In as far as we view La Guma's characters, and this will be clear in the chapters that follow, their individuality is concretised within the environment in which they are artistically created. We cited above an assertion to the effect that South African writers tend to be less artful in the presentation of their material. With regard to La Guma we have numerous elements which can be isolated and used to contradict this assertion.

Aesthetic elements such as plot, symbolism, imagery, characterization, and other stylistic features such as the adoption of point of view, creation of dialogue, the use of language in the creation of captivating narrativev are used in concert with other linguistic elements. These elements of style, structure and technique are fundamental to the portraits of struggle in the novels of La Guma but in this study we' do not hope to dwell much on them. Given the scope of this dissertation we shall draw generally from them as they reveal those elements of the total portrait of struggle. It will be sufficient to mention that in as far as a writer makes patterns with language, he also fabricates or fashions situations and makes patterns of them. In this study we will be more concerned with the latter as the former extends much beyond our present topic. La Guma's

portrayal of urban people's lives, their work and daily rounds can be considered a salient feature of his works. It is this rather than any purely quantitative aspects, such as the number of themes or stylistic trends, which will be central in this study. This being a literary study we shall view this central concern within the context of La Guma's artistic method - how he weaves differently motivated elements so that the development of his stories trace a recognisable and artistically whole pattern.

The fact that La Guma has to-date concerned himself with the theme of urban life in South Africa, which is in no way an indication of his artistic weakness or lack of variety, is to a large extent the author's desire to reflect a specific feature of the South African situation. Besides the objective significance of the urban people in South African politics, the fact that La Guma was born and bred in the city may have contributed to his concern with and connection to the urban South Africa. This subjective bond, creating innumerable threads of kinship between the writer and the urban dweller in South Africa, may be responsible for his devotion to this group. The main characters in La Guma's works are by and large ordinary urban people responding in their various ways to the pressures of urban life and the overall pressure of

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living in the mould of apartheid. In the context of struggle the choice and centrality of the working class in the novels of La Guma perhaps points beyond the simple fact that he was born and bred in the urban setting. Its recurrence perhaps is linked up with his vision of this class in the process of liberation struggle in South Africa.

This becomes clear if his technique of relating character and circumstance, which is an aspect of the novels of La Guma, is more closely considered. The correspondence between character and circumstance is a broad aesthetic technique which emerged in the twentieth century and was developed by socialist artists. Socialist realism which was a creative method of these artists, emphasised the centrality of the working class in social transformation. From their vision of the distinctive features of the
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twentieth century, such as the' development of industry, the rise and expansion of the urban industrial class of workers, etc., the socialists saw the main content of the century as being the' transition of mankind from capitalism to socialism. The motive force of this transition was in their conception the expanding working class. In art and particularly in literature this was revealed through a conspicuous socialist content of socialist art. La Guma's socialist

orientation thus is revealed, as we said earlier, in his emphasis on the centrality of the working class in the struggle in South Africa which is portrayed in his works.

We said that La Guma's works explore a wider area than it is usually supposed, and that his writings aim at a larger exposition of those contradictions that apartheid is but a possibility, a peculiarity which identifies South Africa. In reading his works one notes the care with which La Guma depicts the social environment, the socio-economic aspects of that environment and the character's who act in it. This careful depiction of the circumstance, and the situation of character in it, is derived from the philosophical belief that a character is a product of the social environment the society in which he lives. The confluence of environmental factors, from the macro- as well as the micro-environment together with the individual's personality traits and character, link up to create an endless combination of personalities acting in any given situation. The individual, who is an active being in this conception, has personal qualities which combine with his experiences to guide his life in keeping with his interests, requirements and aims.

The proximity of the workers to the industrial base of South Africa, their position in the production process and in the social and economic structure of that country puts them in a position not only to feel but to comprehend most particularly the effects of the social and economic environment. This situation is artistically illustrated in the novel A Walk in the Night. In this novel the condition of the worker is examined. The contradictions and tendencies of this environment, the uncertainties and deforming qualities are put out with the intention of showing how the characters within it respond to its influences. Michael Adonis for example stands out as a character with a consciousness that does not serve his best interest, but this weakness is basically as a result of those social forces which he has as yet not come to grips with.

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His moral degeneration, rather like Grisha Melekhov's is as a result of his inability to come to grips with the actualities of his time in the sense that his anger and frustration with life, which lead him to murder, make him visualize his plight in

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limiting terms. But even this moral degeneration into a life of violence and robbery is socially induced. The micro-environment, the District, is rife with violence, privation and moral decay, the tragic social

consequences of the larger socio-economic environment.

La Guma's portraits of struggle are unequivocally directed towards those deforming social and economic relations in South Africa. His depiction of an abhorrent system of apartheid includes therefore his abhorrence of this irrational social arrangement and those economic arrangements which have the capacity to accommodate a system of racial supremacy, exploitation and brutality. In the novel In The Fog of the Season's End Elias Tekwane makes this conception come out as follows; that the South Africans are:

"... not only humbled as Blacks, but also as workers",

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their blackness is only a pretext. Just as the pretext of inferiority of the black man in America was employed to sap his labour, apartheid employs the pretext of blackness, inferiority, and inadequacy to humiliate him through a diabolical and violent racial supremacist ideology of/the National Party government.

Speaking of violence leads us to another feature of La Guma's portrait of struggle. This is the link that is forged between his artistic portraits and his political views, and more directly, the partisan link of these portraits to the programmes and aims of the African National Congress. Partisanship in literature

is a trend which presupposes a close link between literature and the political process. Through the guidance of a political party, literature articulates the ideas and programmes of the party with the aim of providing political education through the aesthetic medium. This trend in literature first started in the Soviet Union. In the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in August 1934 this trend in literature was defined as "socialist realism." This referred to literature which enjoyed a "new relationship with its readers and the reality, a literature actively involved in the process of revolutionary reshaping of the

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world." The Congress thus laid emphasis on the artists' active participation in socialist construction and education of the people, the working people, in

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the spirit of socialism. Partisanship in literature has however been criticised on the score that it robs the artists freedom and artistic individuality.

In the case of La Guma, is his close link with the political programmes of the African National Congress an inhibition to his artistic process or his individuality? It has been said for example that La Guma due to his commitment to the political is bound hand and foot by a limited and prescribed catechism of attitudes, postures and explanations for every human situation."^{2?} This however is an unfounded claim.

In evaluating In the Fog of the Seasons' End, Emmanuel Ngara points out that La Guma in reflecting the realities of South Africa is not satisfied in portraying the activities of the underground movement and those of the police in the abstract. These antagonistic social forces, those of progress and those of reaction, are depicted within the context of specific historical conditions:

La Guma gives us a glimpse of the conditions and relations of production which gives rise to the social unrest and the resultant police repression, for just as the agitation of the masses is the outcome of relations of production, police brutality can only be the physical manifestation of an ideology which, when challenged resorts to the use of force.²³

From the above, we can say that La Guma's conception of violence can be seen as relating to a broader conception of the relations of production in South Africa which, like those in other exploitative societies, are relations of exploitation, domination and subordination. The African National Congress (ANC), formed in 1912, was banned in 1960 under the Unlawful Organisations Act. (ACT. 34 of 1960). Before this Act there was The Suppression of Communism Act (ACT. 44 of 1950). This latter Act forced the Communist Party of South Africa underground just as the former forced the A.N.C. and other prominent organisations to go underground. The banning of the A.N.C. was followed by a wave of arrests and subsequent political trials

which stretched into 1966. These lengthy trials ended with nearly all the prominent leaders imprisoned on Robben Island.^{2^} La Guma went into exile in 1966 after being imprisoned at various times, evidently for this political activities. We know for example that Alex La Guma's father Guma was an active member of the Communist Party of South Africa. In 1927 La Guma's father visited Moscow. Through his influence Alex La Guma was to join the Young Communist League of South Africa: "When I joined the Young Communist League my father lectured me on the honour and importance of being known as a communist." La Guma was later to join the Communist Party of South Africa. There is no evidence that he changed his political views in exile where he died in 1985.

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Although the A.N.C. went underground in 1960, it fashioned various party organs dedicated to the violent overthrow of the apartheid state and the seizure of power by the majority. The political struggle in South Africa is visualized by the ANC as being a struggle in which the use of force is inevitable:

... the main content of the struggle (in South Africa) is the national liberation of the largest and most oppressed section of the African people. The overthrow of the apartheid system must therefore result in a transfer of political and economic power from the white minority to the black majority.

To achieve this aim trained cadres instructed or trained outside South Africa are sent into the Republic to

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prepare and train political and military units.

This process is clearly illustrated in the novel In The Fog of The Seasons' End where these political units organise passage for members from their underground ranks to go for military training. In the novel we are only informed of "the movement" around which a pervasive atmosphere of secrecy is so complete that the members have to adopt code names. La Guma's writings are thus partisan in the sense that they are an artistic expression of the ideals and programmes of the A.N.C., programmes which he clearly embraces.

Our interest while having the above in mind is to see how this partisan orientation is artistically articulated in the novels. In the novel, In the Fog of the Seasons' End, the subject of violence or force as a tool for attaining power is unequivocally stated. Here La Guma, unlike Alan Paton, another South Africa writer, holds the view that the use of arms is an eventuality unavoidable in the South African situation. In an address to the South African Institute of Race Relations Paton asserts:

We are unable to adopt the view that only violence can achieve (a more just order of society) ... We are temperamentally averse to violence, destruction and v/ar

If it could be proved ... that only violence, destruction and war could achieve the just order, we could be paralysed.²⁸

Paton who is "temperamentally averse to violence" perhaps turns blind to the fact that it is violence that led to the Nationalist rule in South Africa, and that violence has ever since 1948 maintained the National Party government in power. The possibility or viability of violence as a means of attaining victory over an unjust order- is a probability that obtains given the specific configuration of forces in a given situation. For instance, we recall that violence was used against an unjust order in Europe during 1939-1945; it has been used in Africa, Asia and elsewhere to dislodge intolerable social systems. Force, as in these situations, is an instrument with the aid of which social movements force their way through and shatter social and economic conditions intolerable to them. y

Besides this, the state as a special force, is directed against the majority, the black peoples of South Africa. In this arrangement land, the Africans only source of security, has been massively plundered under the Native Land Act which allocates 12.7 per cent of the land to millions of black men and 87 per

cent to the two million whites. With all avenues for a non-violent transition sealed by the use of

forceful means directed at a fictitious "swart Gevaar" (black danger), force becomes the only possibility left through which the majority can seize power and convert state power to their advantage. In the novels The Stone Country, A Walk in the Night and And a Threefold Cord La Guma portrays the action of state violence and exploitation on the characters and how this affects their lives. In And a Threefold Cord the atmosphere of squalor and utter wretchedness together with state violence create a fertile breeding ground for violent scenes in which the people are involved. The central issue of the struggle is the seizure of state power, the transition of state power from the supremacist domination to the patriotic national forces in South Africa.

South Africa as we know is a highly developed industrialised country. One major feature of expanded industrial development is urban development, and the emergence and expansion of the (urban working class. This expansion of the working class is reflected in the literature of South Africa most of which has an intense urban orientation. But this is not just a question of emphasis on the urban scene, it is a clear admission that the urban South /African is the focal point in political and social terms.

The size of the working class in South Africa has put it in a position in which it has become the motive

force of the struggle in that country today. This is unlike most countries in the rest of Africa where the peasantry was the motive force of the freedom struggle. The centrality of this class in La Guma's portraits of struggle spring from its centrality in the social and political arena of South Africa. La Guma however does not ignore in his portraits the participation of other social classes or groups nor does he spare the working class itself. He brings out as effectively the weaknesses and limitations, its errors and failings as he demonstrates its successes, its strengths and its historical centrality in the politics of South Africa.

In La Guma's novels, therefore, one sees innovations which in articulating the realities of South Africa do so in a strange but profound way: in his works is a fusion of realism, a profound historical content and ideas. The task of a writer committed to socialist ideals as La Guma demonstrates is the creation of man striving to improve his life. In bringing out the typified circumstances and typical characters, La Guma affords us glimpses of the tremendous tensions and passions that is South Africa of today and of the recent past.

This dissertation will be divided into four main

chapters. In Chapter One we shall discuss with more detail the literary context in which we shall view the works of Alex La Guma. In the chapter we shall point out that although the art of criticism should provide a critical evaluation of content and form of any work, we have chosen to deal more particularly with La Guma's treatment of the social struggle in South Africa. This emphasis on the content and the toning down of the more formal aspects of these works will be justified in chapter one as follows: that is knowing what the author is writing about we are put in a better position to investigate how he does it by isolating those formal (stylistic) features which enhance our understanding of the works; and, that given the subject and scope of this dissertation, a stylistic study would necessarily expand this work beyond its proposed limits. Besides this, Chapter One will provide some working definitions which will guide our
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 discussions of the novels in chapters two, three and four.

In Chapter Two we shall discuss the condition of a working class family in an exploitative and violent social environment. In this chapter the novel And a Threefold Cord, will be discussed.

In Chapter Three, the condition of the working class in general will be discussed drawing from the short novel

A Walk in the Night and a microcosmic recreation of District Six, The Stone Country. In this chapter we shall see how La Guma, apart from showing the working class District, isolates the youth on whom the incidence of exploitation heavily falls, with joblessness and idleness having very distorting effects on this social category in some cases, and providing for other cases an inspiring atmosphere to think and act against the oppressive and exploitative social order.

In Chapter Four we discuss a portrait of struggle in the novel In the Fog of the Seasons' End and how the author's vision of this struggle accords the working class youth a central role in the liberation struggle in South Africa.

In the Conclusion, we shall point out that while an artist has the freedom to create characters and situations as he chooses, he is however not free to create in abstraction if he is to offer his talent to society. In reflecting life and professing realism, the writer is inextricably bound by history, that is, his portraits must of necessity articulate his concerns in a manner reflecting the truths of life and society. La Guma in his novels takes this into account as he reveals the South Africa of the historical period he portrays.

NOTES

1. H. Hoeana "A Literary Reflection of Historical change: A study of the Novels of Alex La Guma" M.A. Dissertation University of Nairobi, 1982.
2. E.W. Siwela "Alex La Guma and His Use of Art in illuminating the South African Situation" M.A. Dissertation University of Nairobi, 1980.
3. Alex La Guma A Walk in the Night London, Heinemann African Writers Series 35 (1967) Reprinted edition 1981.
4. Alex La Guma And A Threefold Cord Berlin, Seven Seas Publishers, 1964.
5. Alex La Guma In The Fog of the Seasons' End London, Heinemann African Writers Series 110 (1972) Reprinted edition 1982.
6. Alex La Guma The Stone Country, London Heinemann African Writers Series 152 (1974) Reprinted Edition 1978.
7. J.B. Sykes The Consise Oxford Dictionary, London, Claredon Press 1983 reprint pp 799.
8. The Oxford English Dictionary Department The Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors London, Claredon Press (1981) pp. 317.
9. Alex La Guma Lotus Tashkent, Afro-Asian Writers - October, 1978, p. 3.
10. P.B. Gove (Ed) Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Massachusetts, G and C Merriam Company (1967) Unabridged Edition, p. 2267.
11. II. Indangasi Alex La Guiaa 's "In the Fog of the Seasons' End" Nairobi, Heinemann Educational Books, (1984) p. 31.
12. L. Nkosi Tasks and Masks London, Longman, 1981.

13. Alex La Guma Lotus Tashkent, Afro-Asian Writers - October, 1978, p.3
14. ibid,, p. 3.
15. A. Roscoe Uhuru's Fire Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1977, p. 225.
16. Dickens in creating Mr. Jaggers in Great Expectations was obviously drawing from and giving his opinion on the legal profession as it was in his time.
17. The fabrication of situation and the creation of character and the resulting moral evaluation are the writers purpose and this purpose cannot be divorced entirely from dynamic process of creating a literary world in a work of art.
18. The reference here is on Mikhail Sholokhov's character Gregory Melekhov in the novel And Quiet Flows the Don, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1973.
19. Alex La Guma In the Fog of the Seasons' End London, Heinemann, African Writers Series 110 1982 reprint p. 131.
- . Talking about the same subject Biko (1973) observes:
- There is no doubt that the colour question in South African politics was originally introduced for economic reasons. The leaders of the white community v had to create some kind of barrier between blacks and whites so' that the whites could enjoy privileges..
- Steve Biko Black consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity in Black Theology edited by Basil and Moore, London, C. Hurst and Company, 1973. p. 36.
20. Y. Kuzmenko, Soviet Literature - Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, Moscow, Kaduga Press 1983. p. 136.
21. ibid. 137.
22. A. Roscoe Uhuru's Fire, Cambridge University Press, 1977. p. 233, 234.

23. E. Ngara Art and Ideology in the African Novel. London, Heinemann 1985 p. 187.
24. J.D. Jackson, Justice in South Africa, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1980. p. 37.
25. Quoted in Masitha, H., (1982).
26. D. StoHe and C. Widstrand (eds) Southern Africa, Uppsala, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1973.
27. A. Paton Towards Racial Justice, Johannesburg/ South African Institute of Race Relations, 1979.
28. M. Benson Nelson Mandela, Harmondsworth, Penguin" 1986 . p. 20.
29. P.M. Gerhart Black Power in South Africa The Evolution of an Ideology. University of California Press, (1978) p. 25.

Here Gerhart citing 1948 population statistics reveals that: out of a total of 6,597,241 Africans 2,371,208 were workers (221,980 in farms and the rest in cities) while 3,226,033 were living in the increasingly impoverished reserves; that out of a total of 2,003,512 whites, 1,307,285 were in the cities while the rest were in farms. The statistics are obviously not accurate in 1980s, but they give us a general picture of the general process of the proletarianization of the black South Africans. It is to be noted that the above figures do not give the numbers of "coloureds" or the population of South Africans of Asian Origin.

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C H A P T E R O N E
T H E L I T E R A R Y C O N T E X T

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C H A P T E R O N E
T H E L I T E R A R Y C O N T E X T



In this chapter it will be appropriate to explain our position with regard to a problem in modern literary criticism. This is important in view of the fact that the literary context in which we shall view the works of Alex La Guma demands that we explain our approach particularly relating to the question of "form" and "content". While acknowledging the absurdity of art for art's sake, it is also important to point out that literary art is capable of instructing and appealing only in as far as its form provides the aesthetic dress to the concerns (sociological or otherwise), which form the content. In dealing mainly with the content of La Guma's novels, i.e., his portrait of struggle, we are aware of the shortcomings of our approach but hasten to add that given the space of this study and the sociological concerns which shall be central to it, an exploration of the content of these works will provide us with a knowledge of the social

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essence of these works. This should form a good starting point for the analysis of the formal aspects of these works and how these fulfil the aims of expressing their content. Together with this, partisanship, realism and commitment are also discussed in this chapter. In their discussion a connection is arrived at linking realism and commitment in La Guma's novels to socialist thought and socialist realism as an artistic mode of expressing reality and life.

In this regard the focal point of La Guma's art is the working class which plays an important role in the portraits of struggle in the novels. In this study the term "working class" will be used to denote the labouring social category involved in production in an industrial economy. This implies a contrasting social group, a hostile class, the bourgeoisie, which, unlike the working class, owns property. Although the actual counter term for "bourgeoisie" is "proletariat", within the context of this study we shall prefer working class, having in mind the fact that the term proletariat has a more specialized meaning and is used often to mean a working class in the actual process of struggle as an ideological and political force fighting against the bourgeoisie.

In Marxist literary criticism the form of any work plays a subordinate role to content, this being a close analogy between base and superstructure, the latter which is subordinate to the former. On the relationship between base and superstructure Raymond Williams has the following to say:

Any modern approach to a Marxist theory of culture must begin by considering the proposition of a determining base and a determined superstructure.¹

This is derived from Marx's 1859 Preface to "A Contribution to Political Economy" where Marx outlines

this central definition as follows:

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitute the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determine their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness ... with a change of the economic foundations the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed.^

In literary terms this often translates into criticism in which the primacy of content is acknowledged most often with noticeable neglect of the formal part of literary articulation, that is, the craft involved which arises from the determining content. Ngara talking"of the same asserts: /

There is indeed a sense in which the primacy of content must be conceded, and that is the fact that artistic forms are socially conditioned and issue from historical circumstances. Proceeding from the premise we are bound to conclude that a new content gives birth to a new form, meaning that form lags behind content. ^

Observing that artists do not set out to write about formal aspects of art but set out to write about life, reality, Ngara points out further that it is this

same reality, drawn from life and society, which is transformed into art. According to La Guma it is this external reality which is reflected in the works, which determines the form in which the writer employs. He further points out that:

There is always a danger of total surrender to that which our forefathers bequeathed us; the danger of silence in the face of awesome antiquity, the danger of forgetting conscious watchfulness when blinded by the brilliant light of the past.

Traditions we know have a majesty which demands respect, yet if we realise that they are the fruits of long experience and the process of trial and error, rather than an obstacle and a hinderance. The writer's talent, his own experience and knowledge, together with his time and the needs of his public, all play an important part in helping to differentiate between bowing submissively to traditions on the one hand, and summoning courage to renovate on the basis of those traditions, on the other.

La Guma goes on to point out that the relationship between the writer and his reader depends on his capacity to blend tradition with contemporary need. The need to reflect these contemporaneous pressures and demands, these historical experiences and behaviour, compels the writer to adopt certain forms through which to express the new reality, content corresponding to base and form to superstructure.

It has been pointed out that Marxist criticism exaggerates the subordination of form to content. This deficiency was pointed out by Engels. But we can say here that just like in literary art, which at different times and periods shuns worldly strife and agitation thereby becoming essentially conservative, and at others becomes the very organs of strife, agitation and revolution, literary criticism too responds to these impulses at different periods. All these arise because of the social conditions which obtain at varying historical periods. Literary criticism is not beyond or over and above the tensions in society. It is not to be supposed that Marxist critics in emphasizing on a content-centric approach to literary evaluation have neither the capacity, nor the analytical tools to integrate the evaluation of the formal aspects of art in their analyses. For, if we consider Marx's passage above, - is it not true to say that criticism, which is an intellectual activity, i.e. superstructural, springs from the society itself, that is the base? And if the base determines the superstructure, is it not proper to seek an explanation for this neglect of form in the trends that have obtained in society itself? This would call for a historical tracing of how this came about, an exercise which is far beyond the scope of this study.

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On this problem of Marxist criticism and the treatment of form and content A. Lunacharsky points out that since the content of a work strives of itself towards a definite form, it can be said that there is only one optimal form which corresponds to a given content:

A writer is able to a greater or lesser extent to find for the thoughts, events and feelings of concern to him those modes of expx-ession which reveal them with the greatest clarity and which make the strongest impression on the readers for whom the work is intended.⁶

The Marxist critic thus should take first of all as the object of his analysis the content of the work, the social essence which it embodies. He then determines its connection with this or that social group and the influence which the impact of the work can have on social life- and it is after this exercise that he then turns to the form, primarily from the point of view of explaining how this form fulfils its aims, that is, serves to make the work as expressive and convincing as possible.' In this regard it is impossible to ignore the analysis of form.^g

In dealing with the works of Alex La Guma it is also necessary to acquaint ourselves with the idea of partisanship in art. This is important in the sense that it fundamentally ties up with two other basic ideas:

commitment and realism as they are conceived within socialist art. The basic principles of socialist art, as V.G. Afanasyev points out⁵

are truthfulness and profundity in the reflection of reality, close bonds with the people, partisanship, and bold pioneering in artistic portrayal of life, combined with the use and development of all progressive traditions of world culture.

Socialism rejects the notion that art is an end in itself. To Plekhanov, for example, this notion, the belief in art for art's sake", arises and takes root whenever people engaged in art are hopelessly out of harmony with their social environment: art is a means of intellectual communication and as such there cannot

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be such a thing as an artistic work which is devoid of ideas.

But not every idea can be expressed through art.

Writing about writers and commitment to a social purpose, Engels points out that this purpose must become manifest from the situation and the actions themselves without being expressly pointed out

the author does not have to serve the reader on a platter the future historical resolution of the conflicts which he describes.¹¹

Realism to Marx and Engels as they point out

implies, besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters in typical circumstance.

However here a distinction has to be made between realism as defined above and a verisimilitude perhaps too closely associable with the art of photography. Art differs from photographic reproductions in its capacity to reflect a certain interconnection between things which goes beyond the superficial perceptions.

... writer is able to see an inner connection between things and to relate his description of objects to the essence of these objects and the complex reality around them.¹

Socialist realism as an artistic trend and as a theoretical framework through which the literary critic is able to point out the differences in literary perceptions and modes of creation takes into account the essential link between art and society. The purpose of art, its function, is to assist the development of man's consciousness, to improve the social "system on which this consciousness stands.

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The ideological orientation of socialist realism can be seen for example in Soviet literature where an author like Mikhail Sholokhov in his novels And Quiet Flows the Don and Virgin Soil Upturned examines the conflicts in society in terms of the class struggle as seen from the vantage point of the working class. In African literature writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his novel Petals of Blood, and Sembene Ousmane in

God's Bits of Wood have also operated from the fold of socialist realism, of course with differing degrees of success. In Ngugi for example we note that he reveals a certain impatience with history coupled with the urgent need to make an unequivocal political stand in the novel *Petals of Blood*. Operating from the same ideological wavelength as Ngugi and demonstrating similar social awareness, La Guma in his novels differs considerably from Ngugi not so much in terms of ideological clarity but in terms of the manner in which this clarity helps in moulding works of artistic excellence without necessarily offering on a platter the resolution of the historical conflicts which he deals with in his novels.

In the works of Alex La Guma three main aspects can be isolated which are essential to his artistic technique and which also are indications of his ideological orientation. The first is his relation of character to circumstance. This springs from the materialist view that circumstance, like the base determines character. The second is the broad emphasis in the portrait of the working class and the central role the class is given in the novels. Tied closely to this is La Guma's emphasis on the youth of this social category which indicates his faith not only in the working class as the motive force in the

national liberation struggle in South Africa, but also his faith in the youth as the bearers of hope for the future. Thirdly there is in La Guma's narrative technique the implicit expression of optimism in all his novels which shows his firm belief in the future.

As we mentioned above, socialist art or socialist realism, is identifiable from its socialist content and typical artistic images. The artist creates artistic images, reveals typical and essential features of reality and conveys these through characters, circumstances and situations which he imaginatively conceives in his novels. Characters are individuals who belong to a historically determined social formation, class, nation or tribe. An individual is a product of the social environment, of the society, in which he lives and develops. Numerous manifestations of life, and qualities of an individual are formed under the influence of social relations. This is by no means a repudiation of the reality of the existence of personal qualities and traits. Society or the environment, however plays an important role. For example some individual members of the working class in South Africa as portrayed in the works of Alex La Guma have developed such qualities as collective consciousness, the need for organisation, integrity and a keen intolerance to apartheid, capitalism and racism and have developed a

strong will to fight. Of course this is not true of all the members of the class portrayed by La Guma. Characters like Roman, Butcherboy, The Casbah Kid, Tommy and the others do not aspire to any ideals as Beukes and others do. Society being complex and heterogeneous gives rise to a heterogeneity of individuals embodying the different features of life around them. In the novels of Alex La Guma the technique of relating character and circumstance, the individual and his environment, takes into account not only this heterogeneity of life but also its infinite variety.

The treatment of the working class is important in the novels of La Guma. Classes as they are defined are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labour, and, consequently by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of Requiring it. In communal systems there are no classes as such by this definition. Classes arise only when this communal system disintegrates with society gradually splitting up into groups with disparate interests in relation to the means of production which then is no longer

communal but held by a certain section of society. The antagonism between these various groups for the possession of the means of production is what is referred to as class struggle:

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf ... oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes.^

Here Marx outlines the course of the class struggle between the basic classes in history. In society there are basic classes which are directly connected with the mode of production. In capitalist society for example the capitalist and the proletariat are the basic classes. Besides these basic classes are the non-basic classes, which are not directly connected with the prevailing mode of production for example the peasantry, the intelligentsia, clergy etc., in capitalist society. The class/struggle in an antagonistic society takes place above all between the basic social classes, the non-basic classes often vacillate but usually link up with either of the basic classes in defence of their own interests. In the novel And Quiet Flows the Don Grisha's vacillation can be said to relate to and illustrates the above. In La Guma's novels an example can be seen in a character like old man Hlangeni who acts contrary to his best

interests in order to maintain his petty position as chief in the novel Time of the Bucherbira.

In the novels of La Guma the working class then is given a central role and position within the context of the political struggle. There is no doubt that La Guma visualizes this class as the potential motive force in the national liberation struggle in South Africa. The national liberation struggle in South Africa unlike in other parts of the African continent can boast of a large working class, which has become with years an important motive force of the struggle rallying the progressive forces around itself. This is illustrated in the novel In the Fog of the Seasons' End where the movement, which all indications in the novel suggest is a working class movement, is linking up with other progressive non-basic social classes (teachers, traders, intellectuals, etc.) in its liberation programme. It is also significant that La Guma in all his novels gives a central position to the youth. La Guma seems in this choice to have been to some extent anticipating Soweto in 1976 and the emergence of the youth as an active political force in the struggle in South Africa, a reality which is still an active fact in the 1980s. In the novels however we see that the centrality of the youth as a special category indicates the author's

faith in it as well as designating for it a role as the future bearers of the social revolution.

Another aspect which reveals itself in the novels of La Guma is the implicit expression of optimism which one finds in the novels. We noted above that socialist art is conspicuous for its socialist content. This content would not be meaningful in the process of uplifting and educating the people politically if pessimism became part of socialist art. Socialist art has the task of elevating the people's feelings, thoughts and will.

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Towards the end of In the Fog of the Seasons' End we read:

The sun was brightening the east now,
clearing the roofs of the suburb and
the new light broke the shadows into
shattered shapes.¹⁵

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In the novel we note the interplay of light and darkness with darkness and coldness, symbolizing oppression and terror of the racist state against the organisation. The courageous work of Beukes and the others at the end of the novel comes to fruition. By creating passage for the guerrillas, they anticipate the beginning of hope. In a novel published in 1964 eight years before In the Fog of the Seasons' End this technique is also present. And a Threefold Cord,

a novel which presents a slum dwelling steeped in darkness and chilly wetness, also ends on an optimistic note:

As he (Charlie Pauls) looked at the rain, he saw to his surprise, a bird dart suddenly from among the patchwork of roofs of the shanties and head straight, straight into the sky.

Once again the optimistic vision of a flight from the greyness of the oppressive slum dwelling into better circumstances is seen. This" vision of Charlie of course is seen within the context of his earlier optimistic stance within the novel.

Having stated the context in which La Guma's novels will be examined and having stated that La Guma in his novels indicates a vision of the working class as the social category at the centre of the liberation struggle, it will now be necessary to see how this is artistically brought out. In our analysis in the next chapter, in which we shall examine the condition of a working class family, it will be seen that the novel examined gives a particular illustration and typification on which a broader, more general, sequence can be seen and brought out.

NOTES

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2. K. Marx Marx Engels, Lenin on Historical Materialism Moscow, Progress publishers, 1972, p. 137.
3. E. Ngara Art and Ideology in the African Novel London, Heinemann 1985, p. 4.
4. Alex La Guma Lotus Tashkent, October 1978. p. 3.
5. F. Engels Marx, Engels On Literature and Art Moscow, Progress, Publishers, 1978. p. 66.
6. V.G. Afanasyev Marxist Philosophy, Moscow, Progress Publishers. 1980. p. 388.
7. G. Plekhanov Art and Social life, Moscow Foreign Languages Press, 1974.
8. F. Engels Marx, Engels On Literature and Art Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1978 p. 88.
9. ibid., p. 90 I
10. G. Lukacs Writer and Critic, London, Merlin Press. 1978. p. 75
11. See G. Plekhanov Art and Social Life p. 5.
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14. W. Mandela Part of My Soul Middlesex,
Penguin, 1985. p. 112 ff.
15. Alex La Guma In the Fog of the Seasons' End,
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16. Alex La Guma And a Threefold Cord. Berlin,
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CHAPTER TWO

AND A THREEFOLD CORD:

A portrait of the Condition of
a Working Class Family.

I

In this chapter we shall examine the condition of a working class family in South Africa as it is portrayed in the novel And a Threefold Cord. Our intention is to show how the micro-environment of the family is affected by the exploitative and oppressive society around it. The effects of exploitation and the extent of other social pressures which confound the family to a daily existence of misery, privation and general squalor are **brought** out by the author in this novel. The Pauls are shown as a typical working class family, a unit struggling to live within a broader class of people already far removed (expropriated) from all means of production. We see idleness, joblessness, lack of proper shelter and medical attention, and a general absence of all those amenities and conveniences that would make life passably comfortable. The incidence of all these inadequacies falls on the family as the smallest unit in society. The results are disastrous,
I as the pressures lead to an internal disintegration - where the members of the family cannot stand these tensions emanating from society.

The examination of the family therefore provides a starting point towards a general understanding of the larger social category, i.e., the working class in South Africa. This will be reserved for the next chapter.

The novel And a Threefold Cord tells the story of a rain drenched ghetto in South Africa. At the centre of this ghetto, pulsating with hate and love, despair of poverty and a passionate strife for freedom from squalor, whose clutch is as real as the rain that pours incessantly, is the Pauls family: there is Charlie, Ronny and Johnny, their sister Caroline, their mother and an aged and ailing father. The Pauls are pitted against nature, harsh and unrelenting on the one hand, and on the other, there is the harsh and brutish action of the police. The rain, and later the police, are portrayed as competing to submerge the ghetto and the people living in it into darkness and pain:

On the north-west the rain heads piled up, first in Cottony tufts blown by the high wind, then in skeins of dull cloud and finally in high climbing battlements like a rough wall of mortar built across the horizon, so that the sun had no gleam, - but a pale phosphorescence behind the veil of grey.^ /

Beneath "the rough wall of mortar" the Pauls and other ghetto dwellers are forced - a shivering horde crudely improvising to keep away the chill and the wetness. In spite of their efforts the darkness still engulfs them with the blankness of a sealed cave. With this coldness and darkness of nature is the metallic coldness and violence of the police who lurk in the shadows and the swamped door-yards, their boots "sucking and belching"

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Beneath "the rough wall of mortar" the Pauls and other ghetto dwellers are forced - a shivering horde crudely improvising to keep away the chill and the wetness. In spite of their efforts the darkness still engulfs them with the blankness of a sealed cave. With this coldness and darkness of nature is the metallic coldness and violence of the police who lurk in the shadows and the swamped door-yards, their boots "sucking and belching"

in the mire. We are shown how the police rudely interrupt the dreary and rain drenched lives of the ghetto settlers:

The house was in darkness, Van Den Woud ordered one of his men to knock. The man stepped forward and banged on the door. The whole house seemed to shudder. The man banged on the door again and Van Den Woud shouted, "Come on, open up. Open the door"³

But beneath this uninspiring gloom of the oppressive situation there is the passionate desire for freedom and life which is constantly poised against the vicious cycle of want and the endless feeling of siege. This feeling, of being trapped, is artistically illustrated when the Pauls and the other slum dwellers are equated to a trapped fly:

A fly trapped by winter crawled along a length of splintery planking and hesitated at the dusty edge of the sheer cliff to the floor far below.⁴

In the novel the helplessness of the situation is enhanced by the monotony of occurrences; it never stops raining, the sky is permanently grey, the slum is murky with mud and patches of water, and nothing seems to happen. This however does not mean that nothing happens. Through Charlie Pauls, and through the other members of his family, we learn that there are under-currents of passion and life. The relationship between Charlie and Freda, Ma Pauls and Daddy Pauls, Caroline and her husband and later between Ma Pauls and

and old Nzuba all indicate a warmth out of place in the dreary and vicious coldness of the ghetto.

The same thing cannot be said of the relationship between Ronny and Susie Meyer or the fateful triangular relationship between Ronny, Susie and Roman. Looking at the Pauls' household, Ronny is a cold and rebellious character living an atomised existence. Charlie on the other hand, is warm and lovable. It is through Charlie that we get a glimpse of the desire to be free. In his conversation he is obsessed with the ideas "a burg", who remains anonymous, who had a vision of the poor uniting:

There was a burg working with us on the pipe. When he was laying pipe up by Calving. Know what he say? He said to us, the poor don't have to be poor. This burg say, if people all got together and took everything in the whole blerry world, there wouldn't be poor no more. Funny kind of talk, but is sounded awright.^

Charlie is a restless character when it comes to the way he considers his situation. When he contrasts his wretched existence to the life of Freda's employer his uneasiness can be noted:

Hell, that people got a house mos, big as the effing city hall, almost, and there's an old bitch with purple hair and fat backsides and her husband eating off a table a mile long, with fancy candles and dingus on it. And a juba like me can't even touch the handle of the front door.⁶

The contradictions that Charlie sees are not given in the abstract in the novel. Although La Guma in this novel focuses on the Pauls family, as a typical unit from the working class, the inclusion of brief statements about the rich white South African family serves the purpose of illuminating two things. First it tells us that on that on the other side of the rain drenched, chilly and depressing slum is a well ordered, comfortable and rich haven of the rich. The workers who live in the dreary atmosphere of the slum have contributed to the beauty of the rich by working to set up those conveniences that the rich enjoy. Charlie's reference to "laying pipes by Calving" is an indication of this. Although the workers create the beauty, they live in wretchedness and perpetual want. Although Charlie lays water pipes leading to the big mansions, the Pauls can hardly find water to bath the dead Dad Pauls or Caroline's new born baby. Secondly, Charlie's statements referring to the whites bring out the reality of apartheid: "Jubas like me can't even touch the handle of the front door." This is later seen in the relationship between Charlie and George Mostert. Mostert would like to strike a friendship with Charlie, but we learn that he chooses to do so under cover of darkness. Although the rendezvous between the two is not kept, their conversation reveals the uneasy relationship between black and white.

In the novel however, the focus is on the effects of economic deprivation on the lives of the inhabitants of the ghetto. For the Pauls it means an inadequate diet, poor living quarters, poor sanitation, non-existent health facilities, joblessness, and a generally insecure livelihood. Old Dad Pauls is compelled to live in a damp environment in his poor health. He eventually dies without proper medical attention. Caroline is compelled to have her baby on a bed of newspapers and rags. And Freda loses her house and children in a fire accident which guts her shack. In the novel we see that the people, shut in this vault-like situation, live a precarious existence. The bad situation is worsened by the added terror of the police who patrol the ghetto, interrupting whatever little peace there is. The occurrence of violence at the slightest provocation, seems to indicate that the pressure on the people is unbearable.

Ronny for example, seeks to prove himself through a frightening carelessness, just as the other youth find satisfaction in petty rivalry and gangsterism. The encounter between Charlie and Roman and his bunch of cohorts illustrates first, the immediate results of idleness - the youth having no work to do hang around doing nothing in gangs which find pleasure in senseless

fights and drink. Secondly it reveals the general condition of the other inmates of the ghetto. We see this when Roman's cohorts are described in the novel:

There were five of them, a motley collection of scarecrows, dummies stuffed with the straw of poverty, clad in the unmatching tatters of jackets, trousers and head gear.^

While the precarious existence in the slum awakens in the youth an itchiness and a yearning for fights, booze and sex, it poses real danger to the rest of the people in the slum. The accident at Freda's which is given in horrid detail in the novel, serves to illustrate the fact that the living conditions are so bad that all can be lost at the drop of a hat:

The girl picked up a knife and started to saw at the bread. The table shook on the uneven dung floor. The shaking upset the match box prop, and the stove toppled over with a clang. Then it exploded.®

Besides the accident, the story of old man Pauls is also revealing in this respect. To Uncle Ben, Dad Pauls is just one of the poor "shivering and shaking themselves to death." From the novel we gather that the government is not concerned with the likes of Dad Pauls. They are mere slaves within the fabric of exploitation. The only enduring relationship between the dwellers of the slum and the state is through the police force.

In depicting the various aspects of life in the slum, viewed mainly through Pauls¹ family members, La Guma presents a picture of exploitation and oppression and the recurrent cycle of death, birth and life and then death. This cycle is at once monotonous, as the gloom of the slum, as it is vicious. Through Charlie Pauls however a flicker of hope can be discerned.

Charlie Pauls in the novel is an epitome of optimism, a love for life and a humble determination sets him apart from the other characters. He is shown as having a dream for a better tomorrow: "if the people all got together and took everything in the whole blerry world there wouldn't be poor no more." Although Charlie's education is rudimentary, gathering from his use of English, one sees that he believes in the feasibility of the poor taking "everything in the blerry world" in the future and thereby eradicating all poverty. Charlie's wish may be a pie in the sky that may never be had, but his optimism, which is carried throughout the novel, not only reveals his character but also reveals the stand point of his creator, the writer. La Guma moulds Charlie in a positive and compassionate light so that we do not fail to see that he, in creating him, intends to induce into the audience similar optimism. At the end of the novel we read:

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Charlie Pauls stood there and looked out into the driving rain .., The light outside was grey, and the rain fell steadily, like heart beats. As he looked out at the rain, he saw to his surprise, a bird dart suddenly, from among the patchwork of roofs of the shanties and head straight into the sky.¹¹

Besides La Guma's familiarity with the lives of the slum dwellers, he also shows a remarkable sense of realism in delineating the peculiarities of speech in this novel. Through the use of language La Guma reveals for example that the characters he is dealing with are basically illiterate. In his use of English Charlie Paul Says: "When we was laying pipe." This departs from the proper, i.e., literate version: "when we were laying pipe." This reveals two things. First that the inhabitants of the slum are not only economically deprived, they are also socially denied, in terms of education facilities. Secondly the use of English tainted with Afrikaans shows that here / La Guma is not so much concerned with the peculiar speech styles of the characters as much as he is concerned with showing that he is dealing with a social group that is urban-based and whose language is influenced by groups with which it is in contact. Afrikaans, the language of the ruling Boer community is taught alongside English. The characters in this novel, particularly the young, are neither proficient in one nor the other*

The result is a blend of the two, which occurs when characters of a working class background, particularly the "coloured," are portrayed.

From reading other novels by the same author, and works by other South African writers, one notices a certain urban South African diction or verbal style. This is always present whenever characters of the working class are presented. In this novel we see an example of this when Charlie speaks to Roman:

"You and your brother," Roman sneered, pushing the matter. He did not want this to drift from his original principle. "You mos reckon you can just take a jubas girl off."

"You talk crack," Charlie told him. "God, man, she's not your blerry wife. You got mos a wife."!²

In the novel The Stone Country we remember a conversation between George Adams and Yusuf the Turk:

"Ja, maybe is for jubas like me and Butcher boy and the rest of these skollo-boys hoodlums." He laughed. "People like you, we got to look after mos." "Thanks. Dankie," George Adams said. "But Bucher boy will murder you, man. He talked big to you, man." ^^

The above examples may need a more detailed stylistic examination, a matter beyond the scope of this study. It will be sufficient to mention here that the comparison of the vocabulary, syntactic groups and grammar employed by South African writers in depicting

working class characters points to a distinct social group which has evolved a distinct mode of speech. In depicting characters from different backgrounds, for example, South Africans of mixed, racial parentage ("Coloured") and Black South Africans La Guma in the novel In the Fog of the Seasons' End varies his language to suit each character. Elias speaks formal standard English when communicating with Beukes, while Beukes switches to a different register when speaking to characters of the same background as he. In this novel, And a Threefold Cord, we do not see much of these variations since we are dealing with a small area with very little interaction between the various social groups. The only exception is the exchanges between Van Den Woud who speaks a mixture of English and Afrikaans rife with vulgarisms. When this language question is viewed from the wider social and political vision of the arrangement of South African society, we see that it is possible for groups of the same class background to have diverse speech styles. In a situation where apartheid sets up Group Areas Act as a barrier against the interaction of people, each racial category evolves its own peculiar speech styles. Thus language in this case becomes more a question of social class and status within the hierarchy of apartheid than a mark of an individual character's speech habit.¹⁴

The author employs the omniscient narrative technique. By "omniscience" we draw an analogy between the narrator, as creator of the artistic cosmos, and omniscient God. This technique involves another god-like attribute, omnipresence. The writer or narrator however does not "know" simultaneously but consecutively. Shifting the reader from scene to scene, the narrator in fiction is time-bound and space-bound

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as God is not. Omniscience however allows the narrator freedom to employ a variety of perspectives on his cosmos, to create separate incidents and situations which are then brought into a single authoritative denouement. The final resolution of "the tensions that are created in the various incidents, and those which arise from the various situations, in a novel, marks out a good novel from the one that is artistically unrefined.

In the novel And a Threefold Cord the exploration of the-characters as they relate to their environment is effectively done. By shifting the focus from one scene of action to the next in a consecutive fashion the author accords us an overall picture of the ghetto and the circumstances in which the various actors are steeped. Since the narrator can only give us a consecutive account of events, it is necessary that he employs the flashback, as another

technical resource, which details and explains events in the novel. The arrest of Ronny, which follows shortly after he murders Susie, occurs simultaneously with Charlie's encounter with the policemen at Freda's. But Charlie's action comes before Ronny's which is revealed in a flashback. In this way La Guma links his chapters so that the separate incidents are brought together to form a flowing story.

A common labourer, Roman had drifted from one job to another, earning a few shillings here, a few shillings there. Finally, despairing perhaps, about the upkeep of his offspring he took to petty thieving, robbing the weaker ones around him. Now and then he robbed out of bounds and found himself in jail. Between terms of imprisonment, he took to drinking and blamed all his miseries on his wife. Having no capacity for any sort of advanced thought, he struck at those nearest to him, and he went for them like a drowning man clawing madly over the heads of other drowning shipwrecks, in order to reach the dubious safety of a drifting oar. 16

The flashback technique is therefore useful when employed to reveal character or substantiate events which are in focus but whose previous circumstances are not yet fully explained or clear.

We have seen how the author builds an implicit suggestion of optimism through Charlie Pauls, even though the situation he depicts is clouded and gloomy

with the chill of poverty and exploitation: "those who owned the plumbing and the taps sold water to those who lacked such amenities. Because a man's got
17
to live, hasn't he?" The technique of developing through narrative an optimistic view point is something that is recurrent in his novels. In showing the condition of the working class family in this novel La Guma seems to be indicating that even though the situation is hardly bearable, the condition is not permanent and that it is the "people themselves who can reverse the order of things. Charlie's references point in this direction as much as Old Nzuba's: "We all got to stand by each other," she says.¹⁸

The central message of solidarity is carried throughout the novel, and in relation to the title, it is important if it is considered in greater detail. The central message is drawn from a biblical verse - Ecclesiastes (4:9-12): "Two are better than one; because
/
they have a good reward from their labour, for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again if two lie together, then they have heat, but how can one be warm alone?" This is worked out in the novel in the pairing of characters; Charlie and Freda, Caroline and Alfie, and Ma Pauls and Daddy Pauls, later Ma Pauls and Missus Nzuba. On the

On the other hand we have lonely characters. Uncle Ben, Roman, Susie Meyer, and Mostert. When Ronnie is arrested he is alone with no one to help him. When Freda's children are killed in the accident, Charles stands by her and comforts her.

The "Threefold Cord" of the title therefore refers to the bond between people which is the basis of their eventual triumph over the wretchedness and conditions of their environment. —

In this chapter we have seen a portrait of a working class family and how it is conceived within the matrix of economic exploitation, segregation and an oppressive social arrangement. The family, the smallest social unit was examined first here as it relates to the pattern discerned in the works of La Guma. In understanding the place and condition of the working class family it will be easy to understand the condition of the working class in general. This is considered in the next chapter. La Guma, in starting from the particular (the micro-environment of the family) and building towards the general (macro-environment of the society) builds a relationship

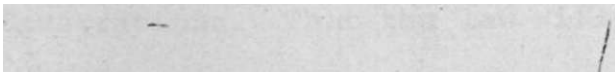
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CHAPTER THREE .

A WALK IN THE NIGHT AND THE STONE COUNTRY

The Condition of the Working Class in South
Africa



In the last chapter we dealt with La Guma's treatment of a working class family. In this chapter we shall attempt to bring out his treatment of the condition of the working class. Here District Six is being shown as a typical condition of the life situation of the working class in South Africa. Perhaps one sees an artistic rendering of almost similar circumstances outlined in Engels' The Condition of the Working Class in England, although here the focus is on South Africa. The youth particularly feature prominently in the portrait of the District and it is for this reason that we shall deal with another novel which microcosmically examines the effects of privation, joblessness and idleness outlined in A Walk in the Night¹ but more elaborately presented in the novel The Stone Country." These two novels seem to logically flow into each other. At the end of A Walk in the Night Adonis joins gang of criminals as a way of getting away from his frustrations. That the law will most certainly catch up with him is a matter of time. This will invariably lead to his being jailed as the others are in The Stone Country.

The two novels A Walk in the Night and The Stone Country, although written at different times within the sequence of La Guma's novels, show similarities which compel us to treat them together in this chapter.

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The two novels A Walk in the Night and The Stone Country, although written at different times within the sequence of La Guma's novels, show similarities which compel us to treat them together in this chapter.

A Walk in the Night was first published in 1962 v/hile The Stone Country was published in 1967. It is possible here to say that the characters in A Walk in Night have close affinities with those in The Stone Country> excepting for the fact that their situations are different, these affinities are so strong that it is possible to imagine that the characters in the prison situation are actual transplants from the District in A Walk in the Night. Lewis Nkosi (1966) sums up the action in A Walk in the Night as follows:

La Guma follows the progress of Michael Adonis, a coloured boy thrown out of his factory job for talking back to the white foreman; and a supporting cast of thugs, derelicts, spivs, neurotic cops "doomed for a term to walk the night," By the end of the night Adonis has killed under an impulse a harmless old man; a neurotic policeman has shot a small-time thug; a penniless man has been "rolled" for money; but incontestably life has also been celebrated in the cheap bars, speakeasies and wretched slum houses along the Harlem-like ghetto of Cape Town's District Six.³

I

The novel The Stone Country is set in a contemporary South African city jail. Here as Gerald Moore (1969) observes:

prisoners of every type are indiscriminately mingled, under the joint tyranny of warders and long-term "trusties" of the most depraved type. George Adams is a lone political prisoner herded together with a motley gang of criminals which includes the

condemned teenage murderer, the Casbah Kid. The approach of death for the Casbah Kid has hung over the whole story since its beginning, and the efforts of George Adams, the hero, have been bent precisely upon wringing some meaning from this apparently random act of cruelty, one of thousands enacted every day up and down South Africa.⁴

In considering the short novel A Walk in the Night, S.A. Gakwandi says that La Guma in this work avoids preaching the sermon of despair or advocating sentimental resolution of the conflicts that he portrays. The conflict is the absence of communication between the white world and the black world:

Alex La Guma portrays nothing but hostility between the world of the whiteman and that of the black man.⁵

This evaluation of this novel is not only unfortunately shortsighted, it is also misleading. In limiting his vision to this aspect of the novel the critic misses the wood for the trees, misreading the novel in the process. This is evidenced by another observation which the critic makes:

Michael Adonis the protagonist is described as "trailing his tattered raincoat behind him like a sword-slashed, bullet-ripped banner just rescued from battle." ⁶

This is an obvious instance of misreading on the part of the critic; the reference is made on Joe since as we read earlier:

Joe was short and his face had an ageless quality about it under the grime, like something valuable forgotten in a junk shop. Over the trousers he wore an ancient raincoat that reached almost to his ankles, the sleeves torn loose at the shoulders, the body hanging in ribbons, the front pinned together over his filthy vest.⁷

Besides this glaring deficiency, Gakwandi concludes by observing correctly that: the crossing of the different lives in the novel creates memorable impressions of urban life in South Africa and through these impressions the author bears witness not only against the apartheid system but against the oppression of class rule everywhere. La Guma's technique of attempting as closely as possible to achieve a simultaneous narration of events, from a God-like point of view, gives the novel A Walk in the Night its fast pace. In addition to the flashbacks, there is created in the novel an electric suspense and irony. When Willie boy is shot, for example, he does not know. Meanwhile Adonis, who hears these shots, does not know the victim, nor does he care - he finally decides to join up with the gang of thugs. This technique of narration also reveals another dimension to the story. As the characters are shown in their various situations our store of social detail is enhanced and it is against this background of oppression, squalor and privation that the author intends us to see the characters more elaborately as it aids our understanding of their position vis-a-vis the system that oppresses and exploits them.

In the novel The Stone Country, since the restricted area of the prison does not allow the creation of separate scenes and episodes running concurrently as in A Walk in the Night, the pace is much slower. Here the exploration of the individuals and their relationships is done with more care. In this novel we experience a different narrative technique:

La Guma comes closer to presenting internal development, development in the relationship of human beings and their discovery of one another 9

These relationships and their development, mainly between the hero Adams and the Casbah Kid, are augmented by the employment of the flashback as a technical resource which enables the author to shed light on the material world from which the characters have emerged. It is through this that we learn that the Casbah Kid has known nothing in his short life but squalor and brutality both from his micro- and macro-environments: J

He was nineteen years old and all his recollections of life were a series of pictures of dirty scenes.¹⁰

The Kid's secrets remain with him. Due to his suffering he has shut himself within his being, but as his relationship develops with Adams, perhaps the first person he had ever said "This John was okay" about, we see him beginning to thaw. At the end though he

still mistrusts these around him he even says farewell to Adams as to Adams as he is led away to die.

The Casbah Kid's deformity is shown against a background of his life experiences, which are more exhaustively portrayed in the "real" life situation of the District in A Walk in the Night. It is true that labour produces marvels for the rich in a situation of industrial growth and prosperity like the one existing in South Africa. But it provides privation for the workers who live in hovels and derelict tenements. Labour produces beauty for the rich, but produces deformity for the workers. These contradictions come out when we are shown the general atmosphere of shabbiness of the District:

In the dark corners and the unseen
-crannies, in the fetid heat and
slider dampness the insects and
vermin, maggots and slugs, 'roaches
in shiny brown armour moved
.mysteriously.11

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While the District is in darkness which provides cover for vermin and thugs the city is alight with wasted energy:

A half-mile of sound and movement
and signs, signs, signs: ~~Coca-Cola,~~
Sale Now On, Jewellers Grand
~~Picnic to Paradise Valley,~~ Luxury
Buses 12

and the shop windows are crammed with all manner of appliances and good things beyond the reach of the worker: "electric irons, plugs, adaptors."¹³

In the two novels therefore we can say that the inmates of District Six are examined first as they relate to one another, to society and the state in the external world of A Walk in the Night, and then as they relate to each other more closely in the microcosmic world of The Stone Country. The prison is representative of the larger outer society and state of things:

And around (George Adams) was a composition of faces, young faces, middle aged faces; faces burned with stubble or cicatrized with scars; bloated depraved faces; vicious faces and kind faces, faces hopeless, impersonal, happy, frightened, brutal. It was as if all the experiences of mankind had been thrust into these few cubic yards of steel-confined space.¹⁴

This microcosmy is drawn from the larger outer world - the rich and mean outer world that District Six is part of.

In the novel A Walk in the Night we are introduced into a "ghostly nightmare, a world in which privation, moral and psychological deformity are revealed by the author. But how does La Guma achieve this ghastly portraiture of the urban scene? How is this situation related to the condition of the characters? A Walk in the Night is set in Cape Town's working class district. What you see is the author's attempt, through Adonis, to capture the reality of urban life, where brutal indifference and unfeeling isolation of

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each individual in his own private thoughts and actions, is a characteristic trait. The urban world is the world of atoms, where though people are crowded together, they pass-by one another as though they had nothing to do with one another. In the text this is put as follows:

Standing there, near the green railings around the public convenience, he lighted a cigarette, jostled by the lines of workers going home, the first tickle of a stream that would soon be flowing towards Hanover Street. He looked right through them, refusing to see them, nursing a little growth of anger the way one caresses the beginnings of a toothache with the tip of the tongue.¹⁵

Throughout the novel, Adonis does not depart much for this depressing and repulsive position; he is a thoroughly indifferent and atomized being, nursing his anger and humiliation. It is as though he has declared a silent war against all, even against

¹⁶
nature.

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From this particular rendering of isolation La Guma goes to the general portrait of privation; its various manifestations, through the characters, is revealed through a general portrait of idleness and shabbiness:

In front of the restaurant the usual loungers hung around under the overhanging verandah, idling, talking, smoking, waiting.¹⁷

It is not yet clear what they are waiting for but this is revealed later in the narrative.. The restaurant is an outpost for idle jobless youths, bums and derelicts:

There were taxi-drivers too and the rest of the mould that accumulated on the fringes of the underworld beyond Castle Bridge: loiterers, prostitutes, fah-fee number runners, petty gangsters, drab and frayed-looking thugs .18

From this general mould, lurking on the fringes of the underworld, La Guma isolates few particular cases for our consideration, and to portray the level of moral and psychological deformity to be found in them. Of Willieboy we are told:

Willieboy was young and dark and wore his kinky hair brushed into a point above his forehead. He wore a sportscoat over a yellow T-shirt and a crucifix around his neck, more as a flamboyant decoration than as an act of religious devotion. He had yellowish eyeballs and big white teeth and an air of nonchalance like ~ the outward visible sign of his distorted pride in the terms he had served in a reformatory and once in prison for assault.19

Willieboy has learnt through his experience that in this narrow self-seeking environment one must struggle as best as he can, in or out of work, be use even when one has a job who vouches for it? If for any reason, or no reason at all, his master discharges him, who guarantees that willingness to work shall

suffice to obtain employment? Williebov seems aware of these contradictions, when he says:

Me, I never work for no white John.
Not even brown one No, man, me
I don't work. Never worked a
bogger yet. Whether you work or
don't you live anyway, somehow.
I haven't starved to death have I?
Work. Eff work.²⁰

He is vaguely aware that every whim of his master, white or brown, may hurl him back into the fierce whirlpool of squalor and want; that operating within the system, uprightness and honest industry are virtues that do not pay. This forms the morality that Willieboy's life is centred on. His distorted pride in the fact that he can "eff work" and live illustrates his moral and psychological deformity.

We can therefore say that it is from the same moral position that the other scarred, brutal, frayed looking characters can be understood. In chapter one however we see that Adonis, whose deep anger and sense of isolation is so real, has however not succumbed to the force of this vicious morality:

"I dont give over what you boys do", he tells Foxy. ²¹

Adonis* moral uprightness is however short-lived. It is so completely transformed by the events in the following few hours that make the novel. These events are confined to the quarter known as District

Six. District Six is a separate territory where the workers and their families are crowded together..

Poverty^dwelis in its alleys, its doorways and in its pavements, everywhere there are people:

Crowds streaming by, jeering, smoking,
joking against th3 noise, under the
balconies, jn doorways, around the
plate-glass windows.²²

And above this cacophony of sound and movement, there reigns an equally crowded world of signs, advertisements, fiercely battling for a place.

In chapter two the lack of cadence in the environment of District Six, the crowded streets, the ill situated vegetable market, the noise from the music shops, youth and "snot-nosed boys in ragged shirts and horny feet " is shown within a background not only of squalor but of terror created by the state:

Michael Adonis turned towards the pub
and saw the two policemen coming
.towards him. They came down the
pavement in their flat ^aps, khaki
shirts and pants, their gun harness
shiny with polish, and the
holstered ~~p~~pistols heavy at their
waists They strolled slowly
and determinedly side by side,
without moving off their course,
cutting a path through the stream
on the pavement like destroyers
at sea.²³

Through the description and the use of similes identifying the police, the representatives of state power are portrayed as being in a state of war. As they zero-in on Adonis we read:

They came on and Michael Adonis turned aside to avoid them, but they had him penned in with a casual, easy, skilful flanking manoeuvre before he could escape.²⁴

From their tone (hard and flat with the snap of a steel spring), it is obvious that these agents of the state are here to intimidate the inhabitants of the district through the language of force. Their poise clearly indicates that they are on the war-path. A vicious and violent relationship is thus established between the people and the police.

Later in the novel we see how Adonis panics and runs on realizing that he has killed Doughty. The fear of the police is so real that in his confusion and state of panic he joins up with a gang of robbers. The interesting thing here is that Adonis' fear of the police leads him into a situation which exposes him even more to the police.

There is also a pervasive atmosphere of want and squalor. Here La Guma gives us a picture of the dwellings:

(Adonis) turned down another street, away from the artificial glare of Hanover, between stretches of damp, battered houses with their broken-ribs of front-railings; cracked walls and high tenements that rose like the leftovers of a bombed area in the twilight.²⁵

Further we read:

The floor of the entrance was flagged
with white and black slabs in the
pattern of a draught-board, but the tramp
of untold feet and the accumulation of
dust and grease and ash had blurred
the squares so that now it had taken
on the appearance of a kind of loath-
some disease.²⁶

In return for his labour the working class individual receives nothing in the form of dwelling. He is penned away in alleys removed from the sight of the happier social categories. Here he lives side by side with rodents, stray cats, and cockroaches. In this novel the environment created is clearly that of a society lacking harmony.

One of the salient features of La Guma's works is his deliberate attempt to relate his characters to their environment. This as we know is one basic feature of socialist realism as a literary method. The relation of the macro- and micro-environment as they influence character is of great importance in this respect. The macro-environment creates broad social categories as they relate in society. The most notable division in modern society is the social division of people into classes. In literature these broad social categories are normally portrayed using certain basic features which characterise them. In the characterization of a worker for example, a writer takes note of this to create realistic characters

typical and true to their function in society. In the description of Adonis for example we are told:

He was a well-built young man of medium height. His hands were muscular, with ridges of vein, the nails broad and thick like little shells, and rimmed with black from handling machine oil and grease. The backs of his hands, like his face, were brown, but the palms were pink with tiny ridges of yellow-white callouses.²⁷

This contrasts with the description of the policeman's hands:

The second policeman stuck his thumbs in his belt and smiled distantly and faintly. The backs of his hands where they dropped over the leather of the belt were broad and white, and the outlines of the veins were pale blue under the skin, the skin covered with a field of tiny, slanting ginger coloured hair. His fingers were thick and the knuckles big and creased and pink, the nails shiny and healthy and carefully kept.²⁸



The place and function of these two characters in society reveal themselves from the description of their external features such as, their hands.

i

But these broad categories that emerge from the macro-environment also have to relate more directly to their micro-environment. The street, or the living quarter, the family, friends, working place, and so on form part of the micro-environment which interact with the individual to mould his character. In this process it is important to note, individuals respond not in a

uniform pre-determined way. Personal traits (will power, etc) play an important part in this interaction, with the consequence that the heterogeneity found in society, even within a single broad social category, is possible. The general statement that social being and the various manifestations of life shape the attitudes and orientations of characters find meaning in this context. It is with this in mind that we proceed to discuss characterization in the novel A Walk in the Night. So far the portrait of the general environment, or the macro-environment, in the novel as we have seen is one of nightmarish disarray, with the general picture of privation outstanding from the description of the physical features of the District. How do the characters respond to this environment, and how is this captured in the novel?

The morality of Adonis' environment, reflecting the interests and morality of *the* ruling forces in his society, comes into conflict with his moral standards and principles and so he is fired from his job. In the text he recounts:

The white bastard was lucky I didn't pull him up good. He had been asking for it a long time. Everytime a man goes to the piss-house he starts moaning well, he picked on me for going for a leak and I told him to go to hell.²⁹

In hitting back at the foreman or overseer Adonis reveals his moral position. He abhors the injustice of his work environment, which is based on a morality that categorises people on racial lines and treats them with contempt. "A juba's got to live", he says, meaning that the imperfections in his society are not conducive to life.

Adonis as we learn from Greek mythology was the beautiful boy beloved of Venus. In this novel, however, La Guma brings him down from the Olympian heights to the lower depths of injustice and violence of apartheid society^ turning him into a common thug and killer. His anger against his tormentors,_whom he sees as the whiteman in South Africa, _leads him to kill a white man, Uncle; Doughty, who for some curious reason lives in the District. From then on his (moral strength^, seen at the beginning of the drama, ebbs away fast to be replaced by a vicious indifference as he joins the gang of robbers. This change in Adonis is illumined through his interaction with the character Joe.³⁰

The character Joe, like Uncle Doughty, is as mysterious as a ghost dug up from the Shakespearean dram-, of Hamlet:

Nobody knew where Joe came from,
or anything about him. He just
seemed to happen, appearing in

the District like a cockroach
emerging through a floorboard.
Most of the time he ~~wandered~~
around the harbour He
had a strange passion for things
that came from the sea.³¹

It is this strange passion that has made it possible for him to have life in this otherwise vicious environment, but even the beaches are soon going to be declared for whites only, an eventuality which will certainly snuff out Joe's vital link with nature, his means of existence. Once again the pervasive influence of apartheid leads yet another character on the road to uncertainty. As he walks "trailing his tattered raincoat behind him like a sword-slashed, bullet-ripped banner just rescued from a battle " Joe looks ghostly indeed. From the story we see that he is yet to enter the real battle-field, the struggle to survive.

The most striking thing about Joe in the novel besides his outlandish appearance is his concern for Adonis in particular and his aversion to vice:

"Please, Mike," Joe said. He looked as if he was going to cry. "I'm your pal. A man's got a right to look after another, man. Jesus, isn't we all people?"³²

Joe's problems seem to melt into thin air as he considers other people's predicaments. But even as he talks to Adonis, Adonis does not seem to be

interested: he is "suddenly pleased and proud" of his new found status. In the idiom of the District he is now a "hard case" capable of looking squarely back at Foxy and his gang with distorted pride: the fact that he dared not declare his "newly acquired status" irritates him. This is after he has killed Doughty.³³

Another character central to the drama of the novel is Willieboy. He is a "hard case", which states simply what his peers respect him for. His violent environment has hardened him and deformed him to accept warped philosophy of life:

To hell with work. Work, work,
work, where does it get you?
Not me pally.³⁴

Honest labour is not for him. In his society
©*«. work\$, ©fc* still lives in hovels and in perpetual
privation. You are subject to every whim of your
employer who may discharge you as he pleases. "Work.
Eff work" ^Willieboy concludes.: The general atmos-
phere of discord-and violence, and the partj.cular
micro-environment of Willieboy's family, have played
a part in the formatio_n_ojLhis negative attitude.
His conception of the good life, moulded after those
of screen heroes watched from eight penny galleries
at the bioscopes, does not correspond to his actual
existence. In real life he is. "part of the blurred
face of the crowd, inconspicuous as a smudge on a

grimy wall."³⁵ This feeling of inferiority is made up for by the affectation of the style and manner of the "hard cases" of the cinema. There is no doubt that Willieboy's screen heroes are of the gangster kind, the gun-totting, liquor-swilling cowboy or mafia mobster, v/h, in the fantasy world of the screen, triumph and lead comfortable lives from their mean cut-throat existence.

This fantastic world in which Willieboy sees himself is a model which has been used by others in the District to rise to some sort of power in the confined underworld. It is an escape route from his family. From the age of seven Willieboy had been _i selling newspapers. But he was not allowed to spend any of the money he earned from his job. If he used any he got a beating from his mother:
His mother beat him at the slightest provocation and he knew that she was wreaking violence upon him for the beating she received from his father. His father came home drunk most nights and beat his mother and him with a heavy leather belt.³⁶

His father, unable to defend himself against the injustice of his work place, wreaks vengeance on his family. The transmission of violence ends up with the boy being at the receiving end of the chain. With the incidence of the violence falling squarely on Willieboy at home, he turns to an insecure life:

years of treacherous experience
and victimization through suspicion
had rusted the armour of confidence,
reduced him to the nondescript entity
which made him easy prey to a life which
specialized in finding scapegoats for
anything that steered it from its dreary
course.³⁷

Willieboy, who has been a scapegoat all his life, has his youthful existence cut short in circumstances which blend with his vicious background: he is gunned down for the deeds of another. "They's always kicking a poor bastard around," he says as he lives his last moments of a life lacking in affection and without a proper sense of justice.

In the character of Constable Raalt we see the personification of a destroyer, an image created earlier in the novel. As he cuts his path in this ghostly district, he too is tormented by troubles of his own and would like something to happen to blot this out. He finds a perfect scapegoat in the person of Willieboy. Constable Raalt's malicious satisfaction in possessing unbridled power to kill is derived from the larger context of racist terror which sets aside the humane administration of justice. As opposed to his young companion, Constable Raalt is itching for blood to erase the bitter thoughts centred on his wife.

She won't get away with it
The bitch. He was thinking of
his wife and it angered him that
she was the cause of such thoughts.
He eased his gun harness and
scratched himself through the
front of the tunic.³⁹

Later we read the flow of murderous thoughts of
Raalt:

It's enough to make a man commit
murder. It's a sin. The way
she carried on. If I ever
find out something definite she shall
know all about.⁴⁰

and later:

I wish something would happen.
I'd like to lay my hands on one
of those bushman bastards and
wring his neck.⁴¹

The transference of his anger, to "bushman bastards",
as he calls the residents of the District, is indicative
of his need to find a scapegoat to waste his anger
on. On the scene of crime this desire even blots out
his ability to think straight. Earlier we see how
Raalt intimidates and assaults Chips at the Jolly
Boys Social Club. He even takes a bribe. In this
scene Raalt appears as a gangster in an organised
crime syndicate, collecting protection money from
the petty-racketeers of the district:

(Chips) drew out a fistful of
greasy crumpled notes. He counted
off five pounds, put the rest
av/ay, and smoothed them carefully
arranging them with all their faces
up, folded the sheaf neatly down the

middle and passed it to Raalt.
Raalt took it without word and
slipped it ~~into~~ the top pocket of
his tunic, then said: "Well,
you bastards are lucky I'm on
this beat."⁴²

This portrait of the law makes us understand Adonis'
reaction after he accidentally kills Doughty:

Maybe I ought to go and tell them
You know what the law
will do to you. They don't give
any shit for us brown people. They'll
hang you, true as God. Christ,
we all got hanged long ago. What's
the law for? To kick us poor brown
bastards around.⁴³

From the young policeman we learn that the force has
rules and regulations but these regulations do not
hold; the larger framework of apartheid makes these
rules and regulations superfluous paper monuments as
C
Constable Raalt demonstrates.

Uncle Doughty whose death is the centre-pin
of the drama in the novel is a character who has
been brought down by the strong sweep of human
affairs, which has left him" broken and helpless
as wreckage disintegrating on a hostile beach."
He is a tragic figure tossed into the flood of
human inconsistency and moral tempests. From his
disjointed drunken testimony, he was once some-
thing, and was married to a coloured woman: "My
wife, God bless her soul, was a coloured lady. A
fine one too."¹¹ Perhaps it is his heroic battle

against the gigantic sweep of apartheid that broke Uncle Doughty. He turns to drink and a life of a recluse surviving on old age pension. Uncle Doughty too turns into a scapegoat. Michael Adonis' frustrations, and his bitterness, his general conception of the whiteman as an enemy, leads him in a moment of drunken anger to strike Doughty dead.

It is through these characters mainly that the general symbolism of the novel reveals itself. The nightmarish environment of the novel, portrayed through the darkness of the District, its ghostly appearance as bombed remains of a battle, its outlandish brutal and ghostly characters, reveal levels of physical or psychological deformity. The general darkness and pervasive terror of the state also combine to reveal a ghastly moral darkness, where foul crimes are committed. The experiences of the people in the foul night, the foul moral darkness, is equated here to the existence of ghosts. Each major character appears to us with one form of deformity or another, physical or mental, and this corresponds with the horror of the environment in which they live.

But this is but one facet of the symbolism of the title which is derived from the epigraph at the beginning of the novel:

I am thy father's spirit;
Doom'd for a time to
Walk in the night,
And for a day confined
to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes
done in my days
of nature
Are burnt and purged
away.⁴⁵

In the play Hamlet, from which the lines are drawn (Act 1, Scene v), Prince Hamlet's mind is full of unrest following the disgraceful conduct of his mother, and his uncle Claudius, who marry in less than two months of Hamlet's father's death. Thoughts of vengeance, and the encouragement of his father's spirit, lead to his resolve never to rest until the usurper, his uncle who poisoned his father in order that he may marry the Queen and sit on the throne, pays for his crime. To carry out his plans he feigns madness. The culmination of this strange and sad tragedy is a litter of dead people, the guilty and the innocent, including the chief actor Hamlet. Within the dark moral world of A Walk in the Night, as vicious and as treacherous as the Castle of Elsinor, the guilty and the innocent must suffer in a world whose social constitution and morality stand heinous and opp[^]ressive over them. But unlike in the play Hamlet, the vice of the morally dead, and the guilt or innocence of the physically dead, is finally contrasted to the living spirit beating beneath the oppressive umbrella of oppression:

Franky Lorenzo slept on his bnck
and snored peacefully. Beside him
the woman, Grace, lay awake in the
dark, restlessly waiting for the
dawn and feeling the knot of life
within her.⁴⁶

This dawn, when contrasted with the nightmare of the night in the novel, holds a hope of life, a new life purged of the foul crimes that make life ghostly and unbearable.

In The Stone Country the political factor emerges but is still subdued. The working class though large in size is still disorganised and treacherous, as Adams and Jefferson discover. In this respect A Walk in the Night forms an important preamble to La Guma's portrait of the urban setting and of the portrait of the working class as the motive force in the struggle against oppression and exploitation in apartheid South Africa. The size of the working class is clearly illustrated in A Walk in the Night as we have seen above. The novel The Stone Country is an illumination of the other side of District Six. Those who survive the terror and irrational justice of Constable Raalt end up in prison. Prison, unlike the outside world, is fun "like taking a bath" in the slang of the underworld. But the values and rules of the external world are an active reality in the gaol-house too; segregation of races, and the pass, still apply:

Jefferson said, "You got your card? Listen, look after it. Anywhere you go in this place you got to have that card with you. You lose it and these Dutchmen give you the works its like a pass."⁴⁷

But what makes this novel appear as a continuation or extension of the shorter work considered above is that its characters are familiar echoes of the loungers, number runners and thugs with their flamboyant airs in A Walk in the Night. In describing Yusuf the Turk for example, we read:

This was the gentleman gangster, a member of the underworld aristocracy - not the street corner lounge, but a frequenter of the upstairs billiard rooms along Hanover and Caledon streets, where plots were hatched against a background of clacking cues and drifting smoke.⁴⁸

Apart from the familiarity of Hanover street, there is transferred to this novel the brutal atmosphere of the District as we saw it in A Walk in the Night.

Adams observes:

In this half-world, heigned in by stone and iron, there was an atmosphere of every-man-for-himself which he did not like. He had grown up in the slums and he knew here were the treacherous and the wily, the cringers and the boot-lickers, the violent and the domineering, the smooth talkers and the savage, the bewildered and the helpless: the strong preyed on the weak, and the strong and brutal acknowledged a sort of nebulous alliance among themselves for the terrorisation of the underlings.⁴⁹

In this the summary of the characters in the novel is achieved. Talk of the "resistance" is distant to them, blinkered as they are by their moral deformities, their private quests to dominate fellow inmates by constructing power alliances which reflect their existence outside gaol. In A Walk in the Night, beneath the depressing atmosphere of privation and insecurity we hear vague talk of political meetings, and discussion about "the capitalis¹ system" but this kind of talk is considered not only with suspicion but also with fear:

"Cut out politics," Greene said again.
"Those bastards all come from Russia."
"What's wrong with Russia?" the
taxi-driver asked. "What do you know
about Russia?" "Have a drink and cut
out politics." Greene said.⁵⁰

In The Stone Country Adams is in gaol for political activity, under the Illegal Organisations Act. That he is' in for political reasons makes Adams appear to most of the inmates as a curious oddity:
"The three paused in their silent game to look at him with curiosity, and the man broke into a chuckle."⁵¹
Besides the unveiled glee, the other inmates' treacherous instincts are aroused. They would turn him into "business" by betraying him at the slightest indication that this would be gainful to them in material terms: for it is just such treachery that

led to Adams' arrest. This is narrated in a flashback in chapter six.

Although the size of the working class as illustrated in A Walk in the Night is formidable, their organisation and ideological unity or level of consciousness, which is being explored in The Stone Country, is basically undeveloped. In these two works, therefore, La Guma is making us aware that though the working class had emerged in South Africa, it has so far not attained a level of consciousness and unity to play a leading role in the liberation struggle.

In the novel we see the difficulties of the organisation to which Adams is a member, and which is trying to forge awareness in the people through the distribution of pamphlets. That the organisation is weak is evident, and this is as a result of the unreliability of some of the members. But as Adams says: "You got to take a chance with what you go people volunteer, so you got to accept them."⁵² This acceptance, which has dangerous consequences, is a necessary one for the organisation. This organisation must accept and work with volunteers, even though they may not be known, thus taking the risk of infiltration by informer and adventurers.

The working class, as La Guma has portrayed it so far, is not wanting in people who would inform on the organisation for money. We must here insert a parenthesis to account for a certain oddity, the apparent indication of a possible contradiction. We have said above that La Guma sees the working class as the motive force of the liberation struggle in South Africa. In this novel however it is depicted as not only being politically lacking in consciousness but also as being treacherous and undependable. As a writer La Guma is in his novels directed by a need to provide a realistic portrait. The air of reality seems to be the supreme virtue of his novels as narrative forms. Socialist realism as a creative literary method emphasises a conspicuous socialist content; but this content must be presented based on certain principles, the most important of which is truthfulness in the reflection of reality. But on what does this truthfulness depend: on the writer in whose mind this "truthfulness" arises or is it on the environment which his art reflects?

A truthful depiction reflects the objective environment and its content is therefore not dependent on the consciousness of the artist. The content of La Guma's works for example is determined by the objective processes they reflect. The process of trying to win the working class over, to convince

it of the need for unity, and to make it aware of its role in society, is not an easy one. It is not easy given the various social influences that have moulded each one of them as an individual who forms part of the social group. In this novel then La Guma seems to be pointing out that in South Africa, in the historical time he was writing The Stone Country, the working class was its worst enemy in relation to the struggle. This for instance would not hold true for a depiction of South Africa in 1985 as objective processes have no doubt become different. In the sequence of La Guma's novels this fact becomes clear. The "movement" in In the Fog of the Seasons' End, is clearly of a different kind, J : from the organisation we find in The Stone Country. In 1972 the objective realities in South Africa had changed and as a consequence La Guma had to reflect these changes in the content of the novel In the Fog of the Seasons' End. Coming back to the novel The Stone Country, the presentation of the working class as a class in itself, that is, as a social category which had emerged within the social fabric of South Africa, but which so far did not play a leading role in the liberation struggle does not invalidate the fact that it existed, and that it was still a latent force.

Through the portrait of characters like Adams with their lofty political and moral ideas and commitment, La Guma attempts to foist in his audience the

same qualities and to inspire optimism. Although Adams has had the same life in the slums, his development as a man conscious of himself and of the tensions in his society is noticeably higher than that of his fellow inmates. This disparity can be understood from the context of seeing the position of the individual in society and the role of the individual in history.

An individual is a product of the social environment in which he lives, in which he is socialised and becomes aware of himself as a person with human qualities (power to think, speak by means of language, and work). But numerous manifestations of life which influence the individual are also formed under the influence of social relations. For example concrete production and economic relations in society generate social types. To be a member of this or that social category, for example a worker, a peasant or a slave, is not dependent on the consciousness of the individual but on the objective economic relations in existence in his society, i.e. concrete production. Although the individual is an expression of the totality of diverse social relations, he is a concrete man, that is, an individual's personal qualities, experiences, psychic qualities and so on reveal themselves. Thus besides being a social type, i.e./in relation to his role in

production and the existing economic relations in his environment, the individual, even within this typical casting, has personal character traits which separate him from other men in the broad social typification. It is in this light that we admire the will-power of Joe and Doughty in A Walk in the Night just as much as we do the character of Adams in The Stone Country.

In this latter novel La Guma seems also to be discussing the role of the individual in history. Each individual plays a role in history, as a conservative or subversive element. The Stone Country indicates that the role of characters, like Adams and Jefferson, as leaders of the organisations which they work for, consists in organising, forming political parties, rousing the people and mobilising them so that the tasks of the organisation are carried out. Although Adams says casually that his work involves "just organising and things,"⁵³ the meaning of the statement can be read within the context of his role as a leader who, in order to forge a link with fellow workers, is engaged in a wide range of activities "distributing pamphlets, sabotage and other underground work. When Adams receives news that some of his people have been released on bail, he does not show any excitement. But this knowledge, that the organisation for which he works is still active, that even when he is remanded without

bail things are still bound to happen, makes him the next most serene character in the novel, besides the Casbah Kid.

Kid's placidity derives sustenance from his total and unequivocal resignation of fate. From his experience in life outside gaol he has evolved a philosophy of life where man is an insignificant and passive actor:

"Crack. Look mister, you going to die someday, don't I say? We all got to die. " Hear me, mister, I put a knife in a Quba. He went dead. Is put out like. Everybody got his life and death to put out, reckon and think You can't change things, mos."54

- And as if to prove this philosophy of every-one-for-himself and tragic abandonment to fate, he kills Butcherboy as a reaction against his interference with his life. Life is to kill, or be killed, "be put out like", as he puts it. This dog-eat-dog environment of the District is reproduced in the novel in some detail. The inmates' techniques of armed combat are skilful and precise. To survive in the District they have evolved deadly techniques of survival:

The Casbah Kid sprawled, but only for a second, then bounced to his feet like a ball, snarling. The next second he was launched like a projectile across the cell, head down and aimed directly at Butcherboy's stomach. Had he landed, his hard skull, propelled by one hundred and twenty pounds of weight, would

have knocked the surprised Butcherboy doubled-up, winded, perhaps nelpness. But the giant was ready and he did the right thing at the right time. He grunted and his knee jerked up and crashed into the mouth of the butting youth.⁵⁵

This puts the Kid out cold, but in their next encounter Kid triumphs, but not before the savage encounter between Yusuf the Turk and Butcherboy:

With a lightning speed Yusuf the Turk seized the extended hand, gave a swift jerk and released it before Butcherboy could free it. The swift tug swung the giant half left and before he could recover the Turk drove at the side of his face with a chopping blow of the edge of his flat and rigid hand, laying open the flesh along the check-bone. the giant reeled, and like the skilled master of innumerable street fights, Yusuf the Turk gave him no chance to recover.⁵⁶

Later, in this battle of the underworld aristocracy for supremacy and power, we read:

Butcherboy stumbled away, bellowing in a hoarse, breathless voice
— He reeled and half fell into the middle of his silen,t knot of henchmen. ⁵⁷

Kid takes this chance to plunge into Butcherboy, with a swift movement of his hand, a sharp implement that he has been sharpening slowly after the first encounter with Butcherboy, before withdrawing into the crowd with a visible sense of satisfaction: "In another part of the crowd, the Casbah Kid's tongue flicked momentarily over his swollen lip."⁸ Butcherboy,

the gang-leader and cell boss is thus killed by the Kid who now has two murders on his hands, but whose reactions betray nothing of his deed. Albert March alias "The Casbah Kid" has had a rough nineteen years of his life. This he reveals to Adams after a "last meal" received from a parcel brought for Adams:

To the Casbah Kid, that afternoon meal had been very like the one served to a condemned man, and he considered himself already condemned.⁵⁹

Kis father was once hanged for the murder of his mother: "He was hanged for it mister." By which he means that his father was not the actual murderer: "I could have saved him."⁶⁰

What seemed a simple case for the Judge was not: the Kid had actually witnessed his mother commit suicide to escape his father who was a dreadful bully:

~ For as long as I can *****W^my old man he was a drunk and a bully. So many times I have seen him beat my ma without mercy, with a bucklebelt or his "fists. Sometimes he hit her with a chair. He could knock her senseless with one blow and then kick her while she lay there. So many times he also whipped me. Most of the time for no reason.⁶¹

The **Kid's micro**-environment which moulded his character is one of violence. Like Willieboy his father unleashes his vengeance on the family, through whom he finds a scapegoat to vent his frustration with his miserable and deprived life.

In the story of The Kid there is however an ambiguity which his pose may perhaps reveal. His mother's death could well have been at his hands:

(George Adams) did not know whether to look upon the Casbah Kid with astonishment, contempt or pity. "But-but," George Adams asked, stuttering. "Is this story true?" The Casbah Kid looked at him and chewed a thumb-nail.⁶²

His silence on the subject may perhaps point guilt to himself. However we have to accept his story like the Judge at his father's trial.

In these two novels La Gumas has, as central to the drama, the atmosphere of privation, the environment of violence and startling contradictions that represent the picture of the condition of the working class in South Africa. He demonstrates moreover that in a condition such as the one he portrays, the people are their worst enemies and the organiser must therefore take into account all the numerous
/
heterogenous types-of individuals and understand them besides the general background of squalor. This makes his task all the more difficult, but this is an unavoidable necessity.

The works coming after A Walk in the Night have
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been seen by critics as lacking in style. The characters are viewed by Nkosi for example to be

shadowy and elusive. But this conception comes from the abstraction of character, i.e., that a character becomes rounded and concrete only through the revelation of his thought and emotions. This as we have seen is not necessarily so. Characters, rounded and alive, can be created through their relation to their social environment, which essentially is to state that their essence, which is social, is emphasised, although, as we have seen in the two works, the individual (e.g. The Casbah Kid, Adonis, Adams etc) does not dissolve in society. The characters actively form the environment as much the environment forms them. It is in this relationship that characters acquire life, shape, and concreteness in the novels of La Guma.

If in these two novels we were steeped rather deep in the mire of working class treachery, as revealed through the story of spivs and vagabonds of District Six, the novel In the Fog of the Seasons' End which we are going to deal with in the next chapter explores the changes which have Occurred since these frustrating portraits of the struggle in South Africa. In the two novels discussed in this chapter we have examined the condition of the working class in South Africa as typified by the two novels A Walk in the Night and The Stone Country. In these two

novels La Guma has illustrated the social and economic conditions in which the working class finds itself in South Africa. The jobless youth are particularly isolated for greater examination by the author. Concluding from this we can say that the author here sees the youth as falling at the lowest level of life in South African society and therefore bearing the fullest impact of exploitation and oppression. The example of the Casbah Kid illustrates that the family environment in an oppressive and exploitative situation breeds violence which is at once corrupting and socially deforming. The Casbah Kid's aloofness from society and life is shown as arising from the larger macro-environment where capitalist exploitation and racist oppression combine to mould anti-social attitudes and trends in the youths from the working class. In the case of South Africa this working class is mostly composed of the black and coloured section of the population. Since the incidence of oppression falls squarely on this class it is no wonder that *lit* is this class which, in the next chapter dealing with the novel In the Fog of the Seasons' End, is at the centre of the portrait of struggle as conceived by Alex La Guma.

NOTES:

1. Alex La Guma, A Walk in the Night, London, Heinemann, 1972
2. - The Stone Country, London, Heinemann, 1967
3. L. Nkosi, African Writers on African Writing, London, Heinemann, 1973, p.117
4. G. Moore, The Chosen Tongue, London, Heinemann, 1969. p.201
5. S.A. Gakwandi, The Novel and Contemporary Experience in Africa, London Heinemann, 1977, p.8
6. Ibid., p. 23
7. Loc. cit., La Guma A Walk in the Night
8. S.A. Gakwandi, p. 9
9. G. Moore, p. 201
10. La Guma, Op. cit., A Walk in the Night, p.128
11. Ibid., pp. 34-35
12. Ibid.", p.8
13. Ibid., ~ v p. 8
14. Op. cit The Stone Country, p.16
15. Op.cit A Walk in the Night, p.1
16. Ibid., p. 16
17. Ibid., p. 3
18. Ibid., p. 3
19. Ibid., p. 3
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21. Ibid.,	p. 6
22. Ibid.,	p. 0
23. Ibid.,	p. 11
24. Ibid.,	p. 11
25. Ibid.,	p. 21
26. Ibid.,	p. 21
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27. Ibid.,	p. 2
28. Ibid.,	p. 11
29. Ibid.,	. P.4
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ⁱ 30. Ibid. _f	see pp.9-10;
31. Ibid.,	P. 9
32. Ibid.,	p. 75
<hr/>	
33. Ibid.,	p. 66
34. Ibid.,	p. 4
35. Ibid.,	p. 72
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36. Ibid.,	p. 84
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37. Ibid.,	p. 48
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38. Ibid.,	p. 93
39. Ibid.,	p. 31
40. Ibid.,	pp. 38-9
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41. Ibid.,	p. 39
42. Ibid.,	p. 42
43. Ibid.,	pp.43-44
44. Ibid.»	p. 25
45. Ibid.,	facing 1
46. Ibid.,	p. 96
47. The Stone-Count£2	P- ²⁴ •
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48. Ibid.,	p.38 i

49. Ibid., p. 37
50. A Walk in the Wight, p. 17
51. The Stone Country, p. 38
52. Ibid., p. 46
53. Ibid., p. 38
54. Ibid., p. 14
55. Ibid./ p. 35
56. Ibid., p. 84
- i 57. Ibid., p. 88
58. Ibid., p. 88
59. Ibid., -p. 139
60. Ibid., p. 146
61. Ibid., p. 142
62. Ibid., p. 145
63. See for example Lewis Nkosi¹s
Tasks and Masks.
London, Longman, 1981. p. 85

CHAPTER FOUR

IN THE FOG OF THE SEASONS' END

A PORTRAIT OF CLASS STRUGGLE

In Chapters Two and Three we have examined the condition of the working class in South Africa. We have shown the circumstances against which the national liberation struggle arises. This process of national liberation is seen in terms of the class struggle.

In the Fog of the Seasons' End¹ can be said to be a novel in which La Guma reveals his partisan view of the situation in South Africa. In it we see a combination of 'the separate seasons', from which arises the resolve to make the final political standpoint in view of the relentless and violent apartheid order. The working class, as represented by Beukes, Elias Tekwane and Isaac have organised themselves into a movement to fight the repressive state. The police force, representing the state, is characterised by its violent reaction to the movement. These two antagonist.' : forces are seen as opposing each other and competing for the control of society. From the portraits of the plight of the 'working class, the families, individuals and their squalid living conditions in the previous novels, La Guma, in this novel, traces the activities of an underground movement, particularly through Beukes. The movement is acting against the state, portrayed as a police state. In the prologue this harshness is a fortaste of the torture to follow later in the novel.

Evaluating the development of La Guma as a writer Lev;is Nkosi observes that the writer, since the appearance of A Walk in the Night, has lost his style, his artistic ability to produce passages of succinct power, and that he has lost himself in a maze of structural difficulties which characterise his laier works, so that by the time we get to In the Fog of the Seasons' End, the deft characterization, which was the most startling feature of A Walk in the Night, has increasingly given way to cliches in which La Guma struggles valiantly with the portraiture of Tekwane. Nkosi's evaluation, in spite of the mass of detail which La Guma provides, Tekwane*s character remains shadowy and elusive. La Guma, Nkosi points out, is a socially committed writer, and in this respect, In the Fog of the Seasons' End is a competent work by a dedicated communist writer who still finds the metaphor for the cancer which is eating away at the country's entrails.³ This is oddly contradictory if not confusing viewed from his essertion that:

"It is generally true that La Guma has written nothing

(4

since the appearance of A Walk in the Night." In Uhuru's Fire Adrian Roscoe also points out that in In the Fog of the Seasons' End the writer's trouble seems to stem from the fact that he sets forth with a "clutch of aims" so that he ignores his established practice of building a book around one "central idea."

Later in his analysis the same critic asserts that La Guma, in this novel, draws up a picture encompassing various aspects of life in South Africa. These pictures have gradually turned the people into an acceptance of violence as a means of asserting themselves and enforcing their struggle against the terror of the racist regime:

From pointing out human economic injustice, injustice to attacking the regime by way of ugly pictures of it and suggesting that the victims of oppression ought to band together, there emerges, tiredly and hesitantly, the idea of violence as the only course of action that holds out hope, the only course of action the regime will respect.⁶

In suggesting that La Guma follow his "established" practice of building a book around one central idea Roscoe fails to understand that La Guma in the novel In the Fog of the Seasons' End is dealing simultaneously, as he himself outlines above, with a set of complex ideas, a variety which demands new techniques and modes of articulation. As La Guma himself points out: "The writer's talent, his own experience and knowledge, together with his sensitivity to the trends of his time and the needs of his public, all play an important part in helping to differentiate between bowing submissively to traditions on the one hand, and summoning courage to renovate on the basis of those traditions, on the other."⁷ This sums up his manner of operation; his forms are a result of those contemporaneous needs

and pressures which compel him to choose one form and not the other.

The destruction of apartheid so that a democratic and humane social order may be created, the central theme of the novel, illuminates two important aspects of the liberation struggle. First, the centrality of the working class in the movement for national liberation is given prominence; the movement is shown as interested in the education of the workers. Its main activists in the novel are of working class background. Secondly, the place of violence as a means through which this movement can attain its set objective is shown.

In his vision of the working class as the motive force of the liberation struggle in South Africa, La Guma seems to be informed by the historical realities of his social environment, and environment clearly illustrated in his previous novels. In these novels - A Walk in the Night, The Stone Country and And a Threefold Cord - we have seen how La Guma paints the picture of a suffering working class. In A Walk in the Night for example the sheer size of this class is constantly referred to; we are made aware of this through the repeated reference to "the crowd" or the human "stream" of workers going home from work. In In the Fog of the Seasons' End this is shown in chapter five:

Crossing the motorbridge, Beukes saw the train pull into the station and the next moment the platform was crowded with passengers streaming towards the subway. Around the police block the stream swirled against the dam of blue uniforms and the jerking flashlights, then slowly trickled through accompanied by shouts and curses.⁸

This passage illustrates not only the existence of a working class but of a highly developed country where the "subway" and "motorbridge" are technological indicators of the advancements attained in the country.

The task of the movement which Beukes is working for is to unify and develop the consciousness and political awareness of this working class. The organisation however has the whole "authoritarian state" ranged against it:

The movement writhed under the terror, bleeding. It had not been defeated but it had been beaten down.
~The leaders and cadres filled the prisons or retreated into exile.⁹

In chapter one we see Beukes and Isaac discussing the movement's progress. Beukes is more concerned about the "factory connections" through which the organisation can operate.¹⁰ Later in the novel Abdullah talks of the "faktry" canteen where leaflets are to be deposited so that the workers can find them.

These references to the workers, which recur, and the fact that the main actors are from the working class are strong indications that the working class is central

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in the liberation struggle in the novel. In the novel *La Guma* therefore concentrates on the movement, and how the sociological and political realities of South Africa have combined to lead to an acceptance of violence as a means of fighting for freedom. The evidence in the novel suggests that it is set in the South Africa of the 1960s. This was after the Unlawful Organisations Act was passed. In *In the Fog of the Seasons' End*, political organisations have been banned and a wave of arrests made.

The movement is equated to a dazed boxer:

(The movement) crouched like a slugged boxer, shaking his spinning head to clear it. Life still throbbed in its aching arms and fingers; wholesale arrests had battered it.¹²

Act 34 of 1960, together with a previous Act (Act 44 of 1950), The suppression of Communism Act, were used in the 1960s mainly to quash lawful opposition to the apartheid government. As outlined in the novel, this had the consequence of precipitating a more violent orientation by these organisation which were forced underground. A detail in the novel which also indicates the times of the story can be arrived at by calculating the age of Elias Tekwane. We see that Elias was a young man of fourteen at the time of World. War II. At the time of the

story he is: "just over forty,"¹³ although by "official" calculation he is almost fifty having had three "bonus" years added to his age by some pass-book issuing clerk. Assuming that Tekwane is forty-four at the time of the story, and knowing that he was fourteen around 1939, we can say that the story is set in the late 1960s or thirty years later, that is 1969.

Through Abdullah, who is an older member of the movement, we are also reminded of the events at Sharpville, of March 1960. This is the time of "the big strike" which Abdullah refers to.¹⁴ The novel is therefore set in the violent period following these events. Tekwane, Beukes, Abdullah and Isaac form part of those individuals who escaped the net: " (And) still moved like moles underground trying to link up in the darkness of lost communications, and broken contacts."

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In the novel, Buekes is charged with the responsibility of organising his unit, distributing the movement's literature and organising safe passage for the movement's activists for military training outside South Africa. The experience is such that the viciousness and violence of the racist state must be met by violence. La Guma seems to say that the movement, just like the characters, is a creature of the circumstances: "(It was) what the enemy himself had created."¹⁶

The secret nature of the movement is portrayed with skill. For example we see that due to the harsh conditions, the contact between the members of the movement is kept very secret. After the flight of Isaac we learn that:

Returning to the present, (Isaac) realized that somehow he had to let Beukes know that he was on the run. The trouble was that it was Beukes who contacted him, not vice versa. Also he had a rendezvous to keep a week from now, which meant that he had to hide out somewhere in the meantime.

The operation of the organisation's cell is kept as secret as possible. This aura of secrecy pervades the whole novel. The movement has thus grown by force of the circumstances into a complex network of secret links designed to defeat the massive secret police network which occasionally penetrates its cells.

The story apparently starts on a Wednesday and builds up giving details which go back in time through flashbacks. The flashback as a technical device is employed to shed light on the characters, the movement, and the general background to which these two fit. In this regard, the prologue, in which there are details which we read of later in the novel, performs two functions as Indangasi suggests:

In keeping with the nature of its subject it gives particularly to the general. The general conceptual content is the horror of -apartheid, but this horror in specific terms is human pain, both physical and psychological. It is not a general metaphysical anxiety: it is the actuality of human suffering in this morbid socio-economic formation. This is why, from a structural standpoint, the prologue seems to perform the function of both a prologue and a first chapter.

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It is difficult to disagree with this view since the details in the prologue, which are revealed in the novel later, give it the prominence of a first chapter. The main body of the novel would in this case take the role of substantiating flashback, i.e., revealing the circumstances from which the mysterious "he" in the prologue came to be where he is, in the hands of the torturers. The prologue thus performs the function of giving in a brief sketch the circumstances that lead to the formation of the underground resistance. In this regard the mysterious "he" would stand for a later reference in the novel, that: "The movement writhed under the terror, bleeding. It had not been defeated but it had been beaten." The prologue in this instance would seem to be giving the pain, in the individual and physical terms, which the activists have suffered in their fight against apartheid in the past. This suffering is made to blend with the suffering of Tekwane later in the novel in which he sees visions of the past:

But the ghosts waited for him on some far horizon. No words came, only the screaming of many crows circling the battelfield.

This would seem to confirm that the prologue is structurally part of the novel, infact a chapter. The rest of the novel can be treated as a flashback, where other

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flashbacks are also employed. In the temporal sequence of events in the novel therefore the arrest of Tekwane, on Friday night, is at the beginning. On Saturday morning his interrogation and torture starts, but this is deep in the body of the text. Beukes appears on Wednesday, two days before the arrest of Tekwane, i.e. on Friday, where he is wounded as he flees, Isaac's flight seems to occur on Wednesday night. Also, after resting in the afternoon at Tommy's Beukes tries to make contact with Isaac but finds that he has left word of his flight with his sister. Concluding from the informatics from Isaac, about his,"rendezvous in a week"²² we can say that the novel's time span is two weeks in which the author effectively employs the flashback technique to give us details about the characters and the vicious political climate. The characters are selected from the working class as the central social group in the struggle. Elias Tekwane is a worker with a peasant background. He is appropriately code-named Hazel.

The hazel of the plant kingdom is a hardy plant.

The leaves of the plant remain, on the plant until almost

every other tree is stripped of its leaves in winter. The tree is not completely bare even after it has lost leaves, the catkins expand and remain all winter. Drawing from nature, La Guma portrays the hard willed tenacious Tekwane who is a leader of the underground organisation's cell. Tekwane's moral strength and commitment to the cause is illustrated when he is undergoing interrogation.

You are going to torture me, maybe kill me. But that is the only way you and your people can rule us. You shoot and kill and torture because you cannot rule in any other way a people who reject you. You are reaching the end of the road and going down hill towards a great darkness.²³

Tekwane's strength, when he is face-to-face with his torturers-enables him to resist the temptation to betray his comrades even though the physical and psychological torture he experiences is immense:

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Talk, talk, talk his mind told him while his body jerked and jiggled like a broken puppet on badly-manipulated strings. But far, far, far away the ghosts gathered, the feathers bobbed and swayed, the leopard tails swung, the sun, like a yellow lantern in the resistant sky, glanced like lightning from the hammered spear blades.²⁴

The experience of Elias from his childhood is the experience of suffering; it is also an experience of learning through the various humiliating processes

present in apartheid society. At the age of fourteen
-lias is already employed by Wasserman, a white shopkeeper.
Nasserman is a rural merchant on whom the villagers depend.
From the meagre harvest eked from the scrubby land, the
impoverished peasantry surviving on the fringes of commodity
production obtain their basic necessities, sugar, salt,
tea:

When the crop was poor there
would be debt with the white
shopkeeper.²⁵

At the shop Elias observes the different treatment white
and black people receive:

The White people went in and out of
the store as they pleased, but the
Blacks could only be served through
a square hole cut in the side wall.²⁶

This is puzzling to young Elias who has learnt from a
book from Wasserman's pile of dump and mouldy books and
junk that white and black men are Essentially similar.
Their histories suggest similarities rather than
differences:

There were pictures here and there
/in the book⁷ of white men in
heavy masks on horseback carrying
shields and spears. Others were
firing arrows in the distance. The
pictures puzzled him: he had always
identified spears and shields and
field battles with his own people.

"In young Elias' environment the black man is made
different from the white man by design and force of an
irrational ideological frame at the core of which
exploitative social realities thrive: we are as they
are, except that their lands are bigger and they have

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more money . Young Elias¹ father is killed in a
mine accident and the family is awarded a compensation
of forty pounds in total. On the other hand

the widows of the white miners
killed alongside /his father/ had
been awarded fifteen pounds a month
for the rest of their lives.²⁹

At seventeen, Elias, like all African people of South
Africa is "accepted into the mysteries of the Devil's
mass, confirmed into the blood rites of servitude
as cruel as Caligula."³⁰ This is the process of acquir-
ing a pass. For Elias it turns out to be a humiliating
experience "and, besides the insult, Elias earns
three more years: ,
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They could give you a name and
an age, all nicely ready-made, like
a hat or a coat.³¹

With all these experiences behind him Elias moves
to the city. Like his father before him his links with
the country are severed by the force of a system which
puts asunder members of a family, thus making it difficult
for meaningful family life. At forty Elias is still
single. To him marriage is impossible under apartheid:

it works against it in one way or another:

What difference did it make? There were men living in the Location who were married and had families, but because their families had not been allowed into the city to live with them, they were considered bachelors by the authorities and consigned to these barracks.³²

The Influx Control Laws, in Elias' view, are against meaningful matrimony.

Isaac, whom we first meet at the museum, is also a prominent member of the organisation. Unlike Elias he has an urban background. We are told of his "old instinct of the slum dweller" which helps him
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escape the secret police at his place of work. Although his outer physical appearance, particularly his "permanent look of surprise" which makes him look idiotic, is nothing remarkable, we learn that he has a reputation for having brains: !

He was considered to "have brains" because he understood many things others in his circle did not, he also "had nerve" because he challenged every little incident of unfairness of injustice.³⁴

At his work place, an American oil firm, Isaac feels dissatisfied and permanently humiliated:

Boys, boys, boys, he thought, you could grow to a hundred and they would still call you a boy because you were black.³⁵

Isaac yearns for freedom from this humiliation and the poverty of his background where he and his young sister live with their mother. Or This need for freedom, symbolized by him looking out of the bus window, gives him a sense of pride and self-confidence. This enables him to burn his boat in order to go into hiding in preparation for his rendezvous. Later we learn that Isaac, to the surprise of Beukes also, is the one code-named "Paul". "The significance of the code-names "Peter", "Paul", and "Michael", within the context of the novel, illuminates something of each of the characters personality traits.

Peter in the Bible has the reputation of being the most impulsive and headstrong of Christ's followers. Paul has an equally impetuous and reckless predisposition besides being fiercely contemptuous of loose ideas and ignorant men. We note these same qualities in Isaac when he contemplates the position of white men:

The silly bastards, he thought,
they had been stupefied into supporting
a system which had to burst one day
and take them all down with it.,.,38

The significance of Michael is however not very clear in the novel. In Hebrew, it translates as "who is like God" suggesting perhaps that the character has been distinguished for his role in the organisation, which has been angelically faultless.

Beukes, the central character in the novel, is an orphan who has been brought up and cared for by his aunt and uncle since his parents died in an accident when he was a child. He has worked in a factory, but in the novel it seems he is engaged permanently in the work of the movement. The most interesting thing about Beukes is his relationship with other people around him. Except when he is shot in the raid at their meeting place, when we see him panic and lose his composure, Beukes remains calm. But this we learn is only outward show; he undergoes psychological torture, and is anxious for himself and his wife:

After that had come the dreams. He remembered waking in the night, shivering and France's voice beside him, caught between anxiety and surprise.³⁹

Although externally composed and serene, Beukes' life is filled with anxieties and worries which reveal themselves through his subconscious¹ mind. Beukes' background which has moulded his awareness and made him sensitive to his position is narrated in the novel's chapter **seven**. Beukes is a "coloured" South African. As a child he attends a school for coloureds, where he is still unaware of the complex order of his society.- At school this complexity breaks to him:

They had been told that they would be giving a special performance of their

concert for a white school. That was really the first time the little boy had realized that children called "white" attended separate schools.⁴⁰

Later in life he experiences the horror of labouring at a factory: "There was girls at our factory who lost some of their fingers under the die stampers.

Boss offered them jobs for life."⁴¹ But his Aunt Maudie gave him his political education, as he # relates to Frances:

My Auntie used to be damn hot about the Union in her young days. I remember one day she came home angry as a bugger and saying, "Those damn scabs, here we are on strike and picketing the gates, and the blerry bitches tried to break through the line. But us girls," she said, "We gave them what for, alright." She showed me the broken heel of her shoe where she'd hit one of them with it.⁴²

Like Isaac who "longed like a lover for the time he ⁴³ would be able to turn from theory to practice," e^u has developed a collectivist and humanist perspective on apartheid society. This enables him to relate to characters like Tommy, without being haughty. In this regard he vaguely reminds us of George Adams in The Stone Country. In contrast to Elias, Isaac and Beukes are portrayed to illustrate the complexity of the situation. The Bennetts, Arthur and Nelly, are portrayed as people too attached to their immediate comforts, "polished furniture and brass", to think about the future. Beatie Adams, unlike the Benetts,

is a house servant blissfully unaware of her situation. The deceptive serenity of the "pink and white" house where she works has obscured totally the ugly and vicious world where people like Beukes and Isaac operate. Her isolation at the back of the master's house has made her preserve her rural narrow-mindedness. Her portrait invokes pity rather than hatred. This cannot apply to the Bennetts. In describing Nelly in the novel the narrator says:

She was small and fine boned and pretty as a garden snake.⁴⁴

And in a description of the husband, Arthur, we read:

He was a short man, younger than Beukes but already balding, his brown skull under the few thin hairs, shiny; as the furniture and brass in the room.⁴⁵

Here the narrator, in relation to Nelly, employs the

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archetypal image of evil, the snake. In relation to Arthur, he is described in terms associable with death. His head becomes "skull", which is immediately associated with the inanimate, "the furniture and brass in the room." The narrator's impatience with the Bennetts is thus brought out through the employment of apt imagery and neat description.

La Guma's use of language, to achieve desired effects, can be seen more clearly when he describes the forces of oppression, particularly the oppressive police. In creating these

characters we see the author use sarcastic language and employ animalistic imagery. In describing the Major for example we read:

He
was broad and seemed to be
• constructed of a series of ovals:
balding head and fat oval face, fat
neck that topped curving shoulders
which formed the upper curve of the
big oval that was his rotund trunk:
he could have been an advertisement
for good cheer.⁴⁷

This description of this awe-inspiring "construction" has a tinge of humour, which permeates its immediate function of stripping the Major of all human qualities. Indeed his very frame symbolically stands for the apartheid construction. Further on we read about the same major, this time he is transformed through the effective use of language into a gigantic rodent:

Only his eyes were small and round
and shiny like two glass beads; ^{4g}
-small bright conscienceless eyes.

The overall picture of the Major is that of an enormous structure with strong suggestions of a rodent - pink, fat, and enjoying the optimum of a comfortable labourless existence. The Major is the personification of apartheid as an exploitative social system. He has "a small prissy mouth" suggesting a mean, conscienceless disposition.

The detectives are also portrayed through the employment of **animalistic** references and associations. When one of the detectives laughs it is "a short bark",

immediately associating him with a dog.⁴⁹

The other policeman threw back
his head and laughed again, and
it sounded like the whinnying
of a pony.⁵⁰

Another instance when the brutal racist order is portrayed in cannibalistic terms, particularly in relation to the narration of the Sharpeville killings and to the torture and murder of Elias, is when the epigram at the beginning of the text is related directly to these events in the novel:

Banquets of black entrails
of the Black,
Armour of parchment of
wax,
Fragile and fugitive when
facing the burning stone
Will be shattered like
the spider web,
In the fog of the
seasons' end.⁵¹

The viciousness suggested here by the epigram and which is shown in the prologue and in the text is being challenged by the movement and those who are sympathetic to its cause. At the symbolic level this viciousness is the "fog" of past struggles, "the past seasons", which have now reached a culmination, where death will not be accepted without resistance: "You are reaching the end of the road and going downhill towards a great darkness, so you must take a lot of people with you, because you are selfish and greedy and afraid of the coming darkness."⁵²

There is a way in which the dedication, the epigram **and the** title find artistic substantiation **in the text.** The epigram, taken from a poem from a freedom fighter from Guinea, sees the fact of **colonialism and** oppression **in** terms of vicious **systems** feasting **on** the flesh of the oppressed. **The epigram's** cannibalistic imagery highlights more **particularly the** torture, pain and blood which the **system** unleashes **in** its bid to survive the pressures **of the people.** **But the** people, the martyrs must **rise and accept the** sacrifice, in order to strike **at the waxy facade of** invincibility that oppressive **regimes create** around themselves. This ties up with **the broader** symbolism of the title.

The title draws **from** nature to give meaning to **the tensions in** society where man's struggle with **and against each** other is discussed in class terms **in the novel.** **The** tensions in nature which the novelist **exploits can be** seen **as** they are made to symbolically **stand for the** tensions in life.' At the beginning the **description of the** climate sets the mood for the **narrator's tale:**

The night was still warm then in
the late summer, but far out in the
sky a thin mist frosted the stars
like a veil.⁵³

And later we read:

It was as if time had become
static and the earth lived
through a night without change.

these passages we see the use of contrasts, created between light and darkness, heat and cold. These contradictions in nature are used to elaborate in the text of the novel, the hostility and tension between the movement and the state, the antagonistic relationship between the workers and the police. The police force in this context is seen as a special detachment, a public power and an instrument of the exploiting classes whose power increases as the tensions and antagonism within society get more and more acute.

In the symbolism of the title, "the fog", which in natural terras is accompanied by chilly conditions, illustrates the increase in the viciousness and power of the public power, the police, against the workers and their movement. The "seasons" which are coming to an end are the previous thaws and frosts in the relationship between the workers and the state going back in history: the persistent challenge by the South Africans to the supremacist hegemony and exploitation.

Now that the writing had started
to appear on the wall, they either
scrambled to shore it up with blood
and bullets and the electric torture

apparatus or hid their heads in the sand and pretended that nothing was happening.⁵⁵

B u t beyond these illustrations of the increasing "tensions there is the strong undercurrent of optimism ^{lri} relation to the eventual triumph of the workers against the exploitative and oppressive social order: "The black sky pressed down heavily, so that the dawn strained to edge it back, like a man digging in his heels and thrusting with his shoulders to move

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a. heavy wagon." Here the connection between the -tension between the darkness and light is very quickly equated to the struggle by the addition of the simile: "like a man digging in his heels and thrusting with his shoulders."

The exploitative system is portrayed as a monstrous, distorted and gigantic shadow under which the movement and the workers and militants scurry like moles. The Major is the perfect embodiment of the gigantic terror. He is portrayed, as we said above, as an animal, a pink rodent without a conscience. The employment of contrasting colours is another stylistic feature of La Guma's style in this novel. The colour blue is a cold colour which illustrates the chilly and oppressive political situation. Green, orange, and yellow colours associated with warmth turn into grey, blue and other colours associated with chilly conditions.

if *** this novel La Guma articulates through the use
of stylistic and technical devices the struggle
South Africa. At the centre of this struggle is
the working class from which politically conscious
characters are portrayed in the process of fighting,
an organised movement, to improve their economic
and political situation. In the Fog of the Season's
is La Guma's portrait of a complex world in which
diverse interests are articulated and fought out. The
Portrait of this multiplicity and complexity also
reveals La Guma's moral and political commitment to
the cause of the struggling people of the larger world
outside South Africa.

In anticipating the role of the working class in the
liberation struggle in South Africa, La Guma foresaw
in 1972 what has become an irrefutable reality in
the South Africa of 1980s where the combined efforts
of the workers, students and progressive forces in
South Africa are slowly putting pressure on apartheid.
The youth particularly, who have a special spot in
La Guma's novels, have shown in recent years that they
are a political force important in the struggle
for a peaceful and secure future:

The determination, the thirst for
freedom in little children's hearts
was such that they were prepared
to face machine guns with stones.
That is what happens when you want
to break those chains of oppression.
Nothing else seems to matter. 57

This is aptly portrayed in this novel In the Fog of the Season's End. The optimism and courage of the youth in the novel echoes Winnie Mandela's observation of the young caught in a situation of struggle against oppression.

In this chapter we have seen that the overall portrait emerging is that of working class fighting against oppression and exploitation., The centrality of this class in the liberation struggle can be said to have been validated by recent political events in South Africa. With regard to the essential content of a work of art, the critic has to relate the work to the historical situation, as it is this historical relationship that lends a work of art its authenticity and a sense of realism. La Guma's works in this regard are authenticated by the historical trends obtaining in South Africa.

NOTES

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7. Alex La Guma Lotus, Tashkent, Bureau
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13. ibid. , p. 123
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21. H. Indangasi
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22. Alex La Guma
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23. ibid., P'
24. ibid., p. 173
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26. ibid., p. 75
27. ibid., p. 76
28. ibid., p. 79
29. ibid., p. 74
30. ibid., p. 80
31. ibid., p. 123
32. ibid., p. 122
33. ibid.,^{"J} p. 116
34. ibid., p. 114
35. ibid., 111
36. ibid., p- 107
37. ibid., p- 120
38. ibid., p- 114
39. ibid., p- 135
40. ibid., pp . 83/84
41. ibid., p- 42
42. ibid., p- 43
43. ibid., p- 119 /

44. ibid., p. 20
45. ibid., p. 20
46. Op. cit.,
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47. Op.cit., La Guma p. 3
48. ibid., p. 3
49. ibid., p. 1
- 50, ibid., **p. 66**
- 51 ibid., Epigram facing p. 1
Extracted from Martyrs by
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52. ibid., p. 6 -
53. ibid., p. 1
54. ibid., p. 97
55. ibid., pp. 114-5
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CONCLUSION

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In this study we have examined aspects of the novels of Alex La Guma in as far as they reveal the author's conception of the national liberation struggle in South Africa. The typification of the family, the District and eventually the portrayal of the worker's movement form a consistent sequence where each subsequent level finds substantiation in the preceding level so that the essential contents of the novel form a chain. It is for this reason that there are remarkable similarities which run through the novels: the characters for example appear to be moulded of the same material. Here we would be unfair to the author if we consider those characters as mere reproductions made to act in various environments. Beukes or Elias have similarities with Charlie Pauls, but it is however true to say that a particular historical and social environment produces certain similar traits in different individuals living in it.

In testing the hypothesis that La Guma operates in the socialist realist mode, we conclude that La Guma is clearly directed by a socialist orientation, and has mastered the stylistic stances and literary techniques of the socialist realists.

La Guma gives a view of life in its complexity without necessarily falling into the publicist pit. Creating

within the realist mode La Guma offers an artistic word whose historical authenticity, truthfulness and concreteness of the social detail can be tested if these works are read with the society they portray kept in mind. The actual society thus becomes the most accurate control, useful in measuring the accuracy, i.e. the extent of "realism" in the author's portraits. La Guma's works therefore show the trends and developments in the social, political and literary condition of South Africa: they represent artistic visions of the national liberation struggle in South Africa.

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