

## **RESISTANCE AND REACTION IN ALEX LA GUMA'S AND A THREEFOLD CORD**

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As a prominent member of the South African Communist Party (CPSA) and the South African Coloured People's Organization (SACPO), the chairman of the African National Congress (ANC) branch in London and the ANC representative in the Caribbean (Cuba), Alex La Guma's contribution to the liberation struggle in South Africa was indisputably significant. As a consequence of his political activities La Guma was constantly harrassed by the South African authorities. He was one of the 156 accused in the Treason trial in the 1950s, he spent many years under house arrest, and he was detained several times until he was forced into exile in 1966. He died in Cuba in 1985.

La Guma's radical political position was due more to family background and personal experience than to the influence of Marx's *Capital* and other Marxist writings. His father, Jimmy La Guma, was a prominent trade unionist and communist and a pioneering figure in the resistance movement, and Alex La Guma's childhood was spent in District Six, the predominantly 'coloured' area in Cape Town, where the dire consequences of the oppressive apartheid regime were experienced daily. Even though he would not be defined as belonging to the proletariat of District Six, his experience with the oppressed people so close at hand was determinative of his ideological course of direction.

La Guma worked for many years (from 1956 to 1962) as a journalist in *New Age*, the unofficial mouthpiece of the ANC. In *New Age* La Guma reported critically on the political development in the country, but he also used the paper to publish his first short stories (in 1957). In 1962 La Guma

was banned and his first novel *A Walk in the Night* was published by a Nigerian publisher. The novel gained immediate critical acclaim, and is still regarded by many critics as his most important work of fiction. La Guma's other novels include *And a Threefold Cord* (1964), *The Stone Country* (1967), *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* (1972) and *Time of the Butcherbird* (1979).

According to J.M. Coetzee,

La Guma's achievement is to present a particularly lucid description of the resultants of white oppression in self-destructive black violence and to embody his novels a growing political understanding of the process in the consciousness of a developing protagonist (Coetzee 1992: 358).

A radical compatriot of La Guma, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, has classified him among the best African writers, and Wole Soyinka, with particular reference to *A Walk in the Night*, claimed that La Guma 'had managed to do in in 91 pages what African writers had been trying to achieve for years' (Soyinka 1978:133). Benita Parry, on the other hand, is extremely critical of La Guma, claiming that

the recycling of stale or purple language, of received narrative practices and exhausted modes of address, normalize the fictions' ex-centric material and defuse a confrontational stance (Parry 1987: 48).

Even though Parry's critical position represents the exception rather than the rule among La Guma's critics, her criticism relates to the very central question of what 'resistance literature' or 'oppositional discourse' actually is. Barbara Harlow, like Fanon, tends to invert the colonial version of Manichean binarism, and locates the concept of 'resistance literature' directly to the struggle against colonialism or apartheid oppression when she argues that 'resistance literature' reflects 'the resistance and national liberation movements

[...] and in which it can be said to participate' (Harlow 1987: xvi). Edward Said, on the other hand, sees resistance as another way of

conceiving human history [...] Certainly, as the title of a fascinating book has it, writing back to the metropolitan cultures, disrupting the European narratives of the Orient and Africa, replacing them with either a more playful or a more powerful narrative style is major component in the process (Said 1994: 260).

The book Said refers to is *The Empire Writes Back*, where the concept of resistance literature refers more to reconstituting the fragmented colonial self and subverting the colonial representation of the subaltern and, also, of remapping and redefining colonial worlds without necessarily insisting on the implacable enmity of Fanon's Manicheism and its location squarely within the liberation struggle. Here the emphasis is more on personal and social reconstruction and multi-faceted types of agency rather than a direct, uncompromising and one-dimensional reaction and opposition and struggle against the oppressor.

The aesthetic implications of 'resistance literature' are hotly contested. In his discussion of 'resistance literature', Fanon seems more to project an aesthetics which disrupts 'literary styles' (Fanon 1968: 239-40) and Parry postulates, as we have seen, the impossibility of 'confrontational discourse' within the parameters of referentiality or 'received narrative practices and exhausted modes of address' (Parry 1987: 48). Abdul JanMohamed, on the other hand, does not insist on a narrative style which necessarily breaks with Western aesthetics, emphasizing more the inversion of Manichean binarism as the important criterion for resistance literature (JanMohamed 1983: 3). This in turn has led to Parry's claim that JanMohamed has misinterpreted certain fictional texts because of his negligence of theories which 'have rendered mimeticism and referentiality problematic' (Parry 1987: 49). In Parry's view, this has made 'it difficult to sustain this assertion of an ideological break with

the hegemonic culture' (ibid.). Parry's uncompromising rejection of realist fiction as 'oppositional' is both fruitful and problematic: fruitful because her thesis questions if there are elements constituting 'oppositonality' in realist fiction, problematic since it both narrows down the concept of 'realism' in fiction and rejects ideological oppositionality within a realist framework.

The fictional texts of La Guma are historical, often linear, representations of the subaltern which can easily be contained within a realist fictional framework — this does not mean a mimetic representation of African culture; African 'reality' is only accessible as it has been represented by others. Rather, it is in line with Paul Ricoeur who, by reworking the concept of mimesis, shows how a narrative discourse 'can be both symbolic and realistic at one and the same time' (see White 1987: 148). This means that

narrative discourse does not simply reflect or passively register a world already made; it works up the material given in perception and reflection, fashions it and creates something new, in precisely the same way that human agents by their actions fashion distinctive forms of historical life out of the world they inherit as their past (ibid. 178).

By interrogating the colonial/apartheid world, ambiguities in representation inevitably surface, thus defying a simplistic design of resistance discourse. These contradictions and ambivalences in the representation of the colonial/subaltern, even though approached within the framework of a realist novel, thus offer, as I will try to show in my analysis, multi-dimensional representations of 'reality.' In this way these texts offer a different epistemological framework from colonialist discourses since they transcend the monolithic one-dimensionality of such discourses. Whether such discourses can be termed 'confrontational' (Parry's terminology) is another question, and in my analysis of *And a Threefold Cord* I want to investigate the 'resistance' aspect of La Guma's novel. In what way does La Guma employ his fiction as a tool in his political struggle against apartheid?

Many critics have noted that one of La Guma's aims for writing *And a Threefold Cord* was to act as a social historian. La Guma himself remarked that the novel 'is a matter of recording history or recording situation' (Abrahams 1985: 70).

I was interested in recording creatively the life of a community under various conditions. I thought it would help to bring to the reader an idea of what goes on in the various black areas of the Cape and that through a novel this would be done [...] (ibid.).

La Guma's creative recording of the 'here and now' of the Cape Flats functions in one way as a harsh indictment against the apartheid government (as he paints a very bleak picture of the socio-economic conditions under apartheid). But *And a Threefold Cord* avoids the pitfalls of 'illusionary' narratives by deromanticizing the oppressed characters of the apartheid regime and thus the struggle itself.<sup>1</sup> By shying away from a romantic portrayal of the oppressed and by refusing to reduce complex historical dynamics to a post-colonial binary opposition between the evil oppressors and the deified oppressed, between domination and resistance, La Guma avoids what Njabulo Ndebele calls 'spectacular representation' (Ndebele 1991: 39). By resisting the unflawed, idealistic and one-dimensional picture of the oppressed, La Guma has therefore managed to give credibility to the squatters. The question I am posing, however, is whether La Guma comes close to reducing the 'colonial' Other to a negative term in a system, not so much maybe of Manichean duality, but of complex ambivalence and ambiguity. If that is the case, what are the consequences for 'resistance' literature if it refrains from redressing the colonial imbalance by naturalistic description rather than revolutionary prescription?

*And a Threefold Cord* leaves no doubt about the oppression and depravity of the people in the shanties and *pondokkies* on the Cape Flats. This is expressed, for instance, in the severe spatial constraints under which the

central characters, the members of the Pauls family, live.<sup>2</sup> The physical spatial constraints enforce a certain pattern of interaction where privacy and the possibility of solitary reflection are effectively blocked. The dilapidated state of the restricted private physical space is paralleled with the squalor of the surroundings:

It could hardly be called a street, not even a lane; just a hollowed track that stumbled and sprawled between and around and through the patchwork of shacks [...] (21).

The private physical space is not even safe from intruders, blatantly shown in the apartheid regime's nightly raids where the police, totally unexpectedly, force their way into Charlie and Frida's place while they are asleep.

Charlie Pauls woke up slowly [...] Somebody outside was yelling, 'Open up, jong, or we'll break the [...] door down.' And Charlie sat up, disentangling himself from the woman, and shouted: 'Awright, awright, I'm coming. Beside him, Fred was whispering, frightenedly: 'What is it, Charlie?' 'Law', he growled. 'Got a blerry raid again' (86).

This lack of respect for private space and the verbal abuse following in its wake is a denial of human dignity and personhood:

(The sergeant) sneered at the woman (Frida), 'Blerry black whore' [...] He (Charlie) said, frowning, 'Hell, what you crying for? They didn't do nothing, did they?' [...] he said I was a whore' (88).

Impairing the inhabitants' self-image and self-esteem, such an environment is not conducive to encouraging an expansion of the squatters' expectations and aspirations in life or their potential as agents of transformation. In other words, there is a severe limitation on their psycho-

social space. As Ramphele claims: 'It could be argued that one is given certain cues by one's environment that encourage one either to expand or to narrow one's expectations and aspirations in life' (Ramphele 1993: 7). The problem is captured by the Marxist alienation thesis that 'the animal becomes human and the human becomes animal' (ibid.), and by Fanon who refers to the use of animal terms to describe the oppressed under certain conditions (Fanon 1968: 42).

Poignantly La Guma's description of the characters in *And a Threefold Cord* is very often linked to animal or robot imagery, thus underscoring the alienation and sub-human conditions of the characters discussed above. Not only are many of the characters described in animal-like imagery; there is also very little grace and solidarity in the squatter camp. When Drunk Ria appears 'as a sub-human shopwindow dummy' the children naturally laugh at her, but even the grown-ups seem mischievous as the evil, societal pecking order is in full operation: 'the inhabitants of the tin shanties [...] shoo-ed the children, scolding them when ignored, and then joined in the laughter at the woman's inebriated antics' (27).

This is a far cry from the threefold cord of the novel's epigraph<sup>3</sup> whose ideological content is antithetical to the general mood of the Cape Flats. The illusion of the threefold cord is reinforced in one of the 'interchapters' where, ironically, the struggle for water takes on an ominous note:

Water is precious, and in the yards of those whose sand-lots had been laid with plumbing, the queues of scarecrow children (note the description) form up with buckets and cans and saucepans. Those who owned the plumbing and the taps sold the water to those who lacked such amenities. Because a man has got to live, hasn't he? (71)

La Guma is extremely harsh on the exploiters among the shack dwellers: 'Water is profit. In order to make this profit, the one who sells the water must also use it to wash his soul clean of compassion' (72). It is furthermore

exceedingly ironic, albeit tragic, that the most deprived slum-dwellers have to pay for water when the sky pours down with rain almost every day in the winter.

Only Misuss Nzuba seems to come close to La Guma's ideal of solidarity ('There is no need to be thankful. We all got to stand by each other'). Ronald's stubborn individualism, on the other hand, is not atypical of the attitude of the community:

[...] Ronald had said, 'I'm not asking you to fight my battles, understand? You stay out of my business, hey?' [...] 'Leave my business alone, man' [...] 'Man, I can handle him myself,' Ronald had said and left Charlie (56).

That the question of solidarity is very critical in the community is again underlined when Charlie, after the death of the two children, resorts to his ideological hero, the rooker.

He said something one time, about people most of the time takes trouble hardest when they alone. I don't know how it fit in here, hey. I don't understand it real right, you see [...] Like he say, people can't stand up to the world alone, they got to be together. I reckon maybe he was right (111).

An analysis of the characters in the novel exposes, not primarily as Tennant claims, 'the ability of the human spirit to rise above hardship and denial' (Tennant 1989), but rather that the characters come close to how the representatives of the apartheid regime characterized the 'non-whites'. The narrative approaches the whites' characterization of the 'Cape coloureds' who, according to V.A. February, were 'refer(red) to [...] as children, indolent, ne'er do wells, happy-go-lucky, gregarious and shifty people' (February 1981: 167).

La Guma is at pains to 'explain' that the depravity in the squatter camp is the major cause for this attitude of negligence, as well as the deviant or delinquent behaviour among its inhabitants. Uncle Ben's ruined life through

excessive drinking, to Ma's big dismay, ('Uncle Ben kept out of Ma Paul's way as much as possible, because she was against his excessive drinking and was always lecturing about it' [46]) is, on a superficial level, self-inflicted, but can easily be explained in terms of escape mechanisms due to his hopeless existence. Uncle Ben himself tries to rationalize his own situation:

‘A man got to have his *dring*, don't I say? But with me is like as if something force me to drink, drink, drink. Is like an evil, Charlie, forcing a man to go on swallowing till he's fall-fall with liquor. An evil, man’ (48).

Ronald's sullenness cannot, however, be explained in terms of deprivation alone; in one way he is better off than the others in the Pauls family since he has retained some dignity by having a job. Nevertheless, his anger explodes in the murderous attack on Susie Meyer.

Fanon explains the idea of introverted violence:

The native is being hemmed in; apartheid is simply one form of the division into compartments, of the colonial world. The first thing the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits. This is why the dreams of the native are always of muscular prowess, his dreams are of action and of aggression (Fanon 1968: 41).

This destructive violence thus functions reactively among the squatters as the various encounters with the other inhabitants reflect their own misery, effectively distracting their attention away from the real causes of their poverty-stricken existence.

Charlie is the only one who consciously questions the status quo as he imports ideological ideas from the rooker (who proposes another consciousness level). Albeit tentatively and in a very fragile way, these ideas help Charlie look for alternative ideological interpellations. Charlie is clearly dissatisfied with his situation and refers repeatedly to the rooker with whom he worked at one time:

Know what he say? Always reading newspapers and things. He said to us, the poor don't have to be poor [...] This burg say, if the poor people all get together and took everything in the whole blerry world, there wouldn't be poor no more (49-50).

Charlie's worry about the haves/have-nots dichotomy surfaces again and again as he poses the crucial, existential questions: 'Is funny there got to be a lot of people like us, worrying about the blerry roof everytime it rain, and there's other people don't have to worry a damn' (54).

Bernth Lindfors is critical of how La Guma has integrated his political message in the last chapter: 'And again La Guma's message seems to be thrust upon his novel instead of springing from it. His attempt to focus on the message in the last chapter is labored and clumsy' (Lindfors 1966: 15). It is difficult to see how Charlie's references to the rooker in the final chapter are 'labored and clumsy'; on the contrary they are consistent with previous remarks about him throughout the novel. In this perspective, it is surprising that Charlie has not more fully developed the rooker's thoughts towards the end, particularly since the rooker's ideas comply with Charlie's feeling of injustice, given his own experiences with enormous economic disparities. Lindfors' misgivings about the message as political appendage must be seen in relation to his apparent misinterpretation of Charlie's final comments when he writes: 'The real significance of Charlie's concluding remarks lies in his new willingness to endorse political views which had attracted him earlier but which he had been unwilling to put forward as his own [...]' (ibid.).

Charlie likes what the rooker says, as he has done throughout, and he thinks that what he says may be correct, but he doesn't understand it fully: "I don't know how it fit in here, hey. I don't understand it real right, you see. But this burg had a lot of good things in his head, I reckon" (111).

The problem is, contrary to what Lindfors claims, Charlie has not turned into a politically active person and there is no indication that his praxis in the

future will be different. Charlie's arrested political development (and the other characters' complete lack of political awareness) can at least partly be explained by limitations in the political-economic space, implying that choices which La Guma's characters can exercise in the apartheid world within the political sphere are almost non-existent. This is of course due to the curtailment of public debate during the apartheid years which left little room for alternative ideological interpellations, but it is also due to the economic limitations which the apartheid regime imposed upon 'non-whites'.

The lack of political space leading to a low consciousness level is clearly closely related to the lack of intellectual space in the novel. Ramphele defines intellectual space as:

the capacity for intellectual awareness of one's environment and the position one occupies in the power structure of one's society. It helps individuals to demystify ideology and to limit the impact of the constraints of a hegemonic order in social relations (Ramphele 1993: 5).

This space sets the norms for 'legitimate' discourses — oppositional discourses being of course illegitimate by the apartheid regime — but they are also reckoned to be illegitimate by family members like Ma and Uncle Ben. As Uncle Ben says when Charlie refers to the revolutionary ideas of the rooker:

'Sound almost like a sin, that. Bible say you mustn't covet other people's things [...] I heard people talking like that,' Uncle Ben said. 'That's communi' things. Talking against the government' (50).<sup>4</sup>

Ma and Uncle Ben's reading of the Bible doesn't, as Charlie also implies, help them to understand their situation any better:

Charlie said: 'Ma read the Bible every night. It don't make the poor old toppy any better' [...]

'We got to trust in the Lord, Charlie,' Uncle Ben said. 'Your Ma read the Bible because she got troubles. She got family troubles. You, and your pa sick, and young Ronny going wild, and Ca'line with her body going to have a baby, and everybody poor' (49).

The hegemonical order so ingrained in the inhabitants of the squatter camp plays on the appeal to Christianity and government as non-negotiable, sacred, unchanging social realities and comes close to what Marx called 'fetishism': 'a belief that the existing society, its institutions and ideology were natural and unending' (see Swingewood 1975: 57).

Since the surface narrative is so bleak and devoid of optimism and resistance, critics have tried to elicit a less bleak message either by resorting to some sort of futuristic projection of what might happen next or by resorting to an analysis of La Guma's symbolism. Gareth Cornwell's contention that the novel 'dramatizes the hope that the instinctive loyalties among family and friends may in the course of time extend to the larger family of class, and thence to all humanity' (Cornwell 1995: 17) is carefully optimistic, but it is problematic since the novel says nothing about 'the course of time' apart from the bird imagery at the end (which Cornwell does not mention): the may's and the if's are thus only conjectures with no basis in the textual material. That the hope is very faint and uncertain is also underlined by Cornwell when a bit later he states that:

The only challenge to the reader's suspension of disbelief lies in the vague realm of probability — the likelihood of the development in Charlie Paul's consciousness, the likelihood of his interpreting and articulating his experience in the way that he does [...] (ibid. 19).

The point, however, is that what Cornwell calls La Guma's message, 'as it finds expression in Charlie's impassioned exhortation at the end of the novel' (ibid. 18) is not Charlie's exhortation, but a reference to the rooker's message, which Charlie reckons 'maybe [...] was right' (111). As Cornwell earlier

correctly states: 'he is wrestling with the more profound notion that the individual may find fulfilment only in community' (ibid. 17).

The critic Kathryn Balutansky elaborates the so-called optimistic vision most fully. She tries to establish a dichotomy between the surface narrative of the novel and the symbolism, writing:

In spite of the seemingly overwhelming pessimistic outlook of the narrative, the same bent which inspired the symbolic images of *A Walk in the Night* also permeates those of *And a Threefold Cord*. La Guma's symbols puncture the narrative to counter its pessimistic impact. Here, as in the previous novel, the images function as a reminder that a portrayal of the desperate condition of Black people under Apartheid is by no means a surrender to it (Balutansky 1990: 52).

The struggle of the fly in the puddle of wine pointedly illustrates, however, that there is no difference between the image and the surface narrative. When the fly at first is saved from drowning, Balutansky writes:

here the fly is like Charlie when he punches the policeman: the punch provides him with no real victory, but it allows Charlie to continue his search for the solution to the killing effects of Apartheid (ibid. 51).

The point, however, is that the fly is only temporarily saved, as shortly after it struggles helplessly on the floor — similar to Charlie's complete helplessness when he doesn't know how to transfer the gospel of the rooker into concrete action. The punching of the policeman is a temporary relief to Charlie; some of his pent-up anger is liberated through the punch but, as Balutansky correctly observes; it 'provides him with no real victory.' It is therefore not credible when Balutansky concludes the example of the fly by asserting that 'La Guma's symbols puncture the narrative to counter its pessimistic impact' (ibid. 52). Neither the image of the fly, nor the most prevalent symbol of all in the novel, the rain, gives any comfort as to the future. Balutansky correctly observes that

the rain is a symbol of Apartheid as the latter also permeates the lives of the poor people in every way: as surely as the rain, Apartheid has created muddy streets and leaking shanties, fostered illness and death with its accompanying grayness and dampness (ibid.).

The two most important symbols in the book, the fly and the rain, are thus consistent with the general sentiment of the surface structure, whereas Charlie's political reflections, which potentially may vaguely signal a new direction, can be associated with the symbols of the carnation growing on the dump and the bird flying into the sky. Whereas the very depressing symbol of the rain permeates the whole novel, the carnation and the bird appear as isolated instances, almost out of context — the carnation completely isolated on the dump and the bird appearing, to Charlie's big surprise, out of nowhere at the very end of the novel. As he looked out at the rain, he saw, to his surprise, 'a bird dart suddenly from among the patchwork roofs of the shanties and head straight, straight into the sky' (112). Admittedly, the imagery breaks the monotonous darkness of the novel and may symbolize hope, but the isolationist nature of the images cannot support Balutansky's claim that 'an indomitable optimism permeates the symbolic images set in opposition to the effects of the rain' (Balutansky 1990: 53). However, Charlie does not, as Michael Adonis in *A Walk in the Night*, completely give up a decent life by resorting to crime, and is therefore, as La Guma himself underlines, 'morally and psychologically higher than the characters in *A Walk in the Night*' (Abrahams 1985:84).

La Guma tells his story within an unrelenting realistic framework and the various characters are not reappropriated in reductive frames of reference to fit the simplistic, unambiguous resistance ideal. Most of the squatters seem to have succumbed to the 'colonization of consciousness' referred to earlier (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991: 18), whereas both Charlie and Aunt Mina have acquired some sense of 'consciousness of colonization'.

The intriguing problem, then, is that La Guma does not seem to engage in constructing a 'proper' counter-narrative, even if we account for the discursive complexity which a novel *per definitionem* is, as it may contain both contradiction and subversion. This does not mean that La Guma's novel is conformist in a colonial discursive sense; the anti-apartheid tone is indisputable. But by portraying a fairly tarnished version of the Cape Flats La Guma runs the big risk of deromanticizing the suffering people to a degree that leaves them victims of their own victimization.

It may seem that La Guma falls prey to another reductionism or simplification where the 'coloniser' by means of hegemony predominates and determines the 'colonised' and, where La Guma describes the successful attempts of the 'coloniser', to enforce hegemonical domination. The interesting point here is that La Guma in many ways parallels Fanon and exposes a terrain of oppression, but simultaneously a terrain also grounded in resistance to change, thereby exposing contradictions which are not easily solved in the real world of liberation and resistance politics and which La Guma refuses to solve fictionally. The immediate struggle against ideological, hegemonical domination is half-hearted and fragmentary, even though Charlie's reiteration of the need for solidarity offers methods for the redemptive transformation of the oppressed, but it is theoretical and devoid of praxis.

The question is if the disillusioned counter-narrative therefore functions reactively by exposing characters who are not 'organically bound to historical, political and economic change' (Swingewood 1975: 129) and where we witness a subjectification process which is already propelling towards the bottom. In a way La Guma may seem to resign, in this novel, to a description of the squatters who are passive, inert and animal-like and who take little or no part in the historical struggle against oppression. From a 'resistance' perspective, there is no easy way out of the problematic given the lack of mythologization of the ability or will of the oppressed to initiate change. The

only way out is La Guma's artistic honesty, which far from succumbing to the pressures of oppression, transcends the simplistic resistance discourse by acknowledging the complex heterogeneity of the internal colonial situation of the apartheid state at the time.

In one way La Guma's emphasis on the collectivity in the epigraph to underline the need for joint action to change the unjust situation may seem to modify the disillusioned narrative, not because of a strong correlation between the epigraph and the content of the novel, but because La Guma attempts to tone down the representation of the inhabitants of the Cape Flats as individualized characters (with the exception of Charlie) by focusing more on the description of the collective ordeals which the people on the Cape Flats face. In this sense, La Guma is more in line with other writers of 'minority literature' whose social formation, according to JanMohamed, 'has not sufficiently internalized the fiction of the autonomous subject' (JanMohamed 1984: 296). However this collective focus may be self-defeating, as it parallels the colonialist representation of the colonized which shies away from individual characteristics, stressing both difference and the generic as the only interesting aspects of the Other. What is important, however, is La Guma's insistence on raising the collective consciousness or, in JanMohamed's words, 'of bringing to consciousness the fundamental necessity of coming-to-consciousness' (ibid. 296).

By not being unambiguously involved in the struggle against dominant ideological formation, by highlighting the helplessness of the oppressed to reproduce anything but the structures of their own subordination, and by exposing the terrible consequences of apartheid practices, *And a Threefold Cord* resists simple categorization. In La Guma's fictional account, the inhabitants of the Cape Flats still walk in the night, the conscientization process has barely started and the voice La Guma has given to the people

who for so long were deprived of the right to speak for themselves is weak, contradictory and fragmentary.

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<sup>1</sup> Later, after independence in several African countries, many black writers were what Neil Lazarus calls 'illusioned' by possessing the illusion that 'the era of independence marked a revolutionary conjuncture in African societies' (Lazarus, 23).

<sup>2</sup> In this connection Ramphele's multi-dimensional concept of space is a useful parameter as she distinguishes between physical, political-economic, ideological-intellectual and psycho-social space. The line of demarcation between the various spatial categories are not, however, that clear-cut (which Ramphele herself recognizes).

<sup>3</sup> It is a quotation from Ecclesiastes IV:9-12, and concludes with the line: 'and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.'

<sup>4</sup> Only Aunt Mina dares to speak out against the policemen during the nightly raid: 'I'm not frightening for your magistrate, colonel. I paid seven fines already and I can pay seven more [...]' She possessed the ferocity of an old African buffalo' (90).

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