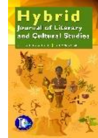
Masking for Survival: An exploration of Alex La Guma's *In the Fog of the Seasons' End*



Research Article

Published in Nairobi, Kenya by Royallite Global in the ***Hybrid Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies***, Volume 4, Issue 1, 2022

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Article Information
Submitted: 28th March 2022
Accepted: 13th May 2022
Published: 1st May 2022

Additional information is available at the end of the article

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ISSN 2707-2150 (Online)
ISSN 2707-2169 (Print)

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Abstract

The fiction of Alex La Guma is consistently, classed as "protest" literature. This is, presumably, due to his pointed political commentary, his focus on spectacular episodes of brutality, and his conviction that the reader must do something. His novel, *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* seems to be directed to a multiple audience. While clearly intended to raise consciousness and indignation in the non-white population of South Africa, it also clearly speaks to an international audience with less experience in the day-to-day realities of the system of apartheid. This paper therefore hopes to analyze and explain how La Guma uses the technique of masking the identity of his characters in an attempt to help them survive in a politically dangerous environment; South African apartheid era, and simultaneously respond to the harsh discriminatory policies perpetrated against the non-whites by the minority whites. The study presented to us the means by which Alex La Guma uses masking—concealing the identity of the characters, especially major characters—to enable them function in their underground movements to revolt against the apartheid regime. Most significantly, his narrative technique and characterization are what we clearly take cues from in order to understand his position for revolution.

Keywords: *Alex La Guma, Apartheid, Protest, Revolution, South Africa*

Essuman, J. (2022). Masking for survival: An exploration of Alex La Guma's In the Fog of the Seasons' End. *Hybrid Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies*, *4*(1). Retrieved from https://royalliteglobal.com/hybrid-literary/article/view/820

Public Interest Statement

It is an undeniable fact that resistance literature does not exist in our contemporary literary world. However, it is very much important to note that the African writer is a social realist and that he brings to the readership the very happenings in his society. During the apartheid era, there were several mechanisms that were adopted by revolutionaries and this paper offers to make readers aware of the many mechanisms that these people employed in fighting against the apartheid oppressions. The relevance therefore is to re-echo the African writer's duty to his society – painting a realist picture of his society.

Introduction

The fiction of Alex La Guma is consistently, classed as "protest" literature. This is, presumably, due to his pointed political commentary, his focus on spectacular episodes of brutality, and his conviction that the reader must do something. His novel, *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* seems to be directed to a multiple audience. While clearly intended to raise consciousness and indignation in the non-white population of South Africa, it also clearly speaks to an international audience with less experience in the day-to-day realities of the system of apartheid. In response to the needs of this audience, La Guma spends time explaining the rationalizations of the government as well as the resistance movement's response in the prologue to the novel. Using broad strokes, it serves to introduce the reader from outside of South Africa to the brutality of South African apartheid. However, the shocking introduction, designed to draw the reader in, does not signal that only "spectacles" are to follow. Instead, La Guma's characters—including those tied to the regime—are complex, conflicted and multi-dimensional: they both react to the oppression by learning to wear masks of complicity and act through undercover protest.

Because of the counter-intuitive way in which oppressed people must live to preserve the lives of their families and themselves, Frantz Fanon suggests that colonized groups (in particular, blacks) experience psychosis, where their actions do not reflect their desires. This novel dramatizes the alienation experienced by all those within the system. Because La Guma's point is to encourage the people to resist oppression, it is essential that he does not deify or demonize his characters; they must have the same concerns as his audience. By making use of Fanon's idea of the "wretchedness" of the oppressed people, La Guma ensures that his readers will understand and perhaps become motivated to act.

Within this framework of political commitment in art so as to sensitize as well as conscientize the down-trodden about the dynamics of apartheid, La Guma has adopted a peculiar style that juxtaposes and distances him from his contemporaries; that style is belief in the eventual rise of the oppressed. For him, politics must not be divorced from liberation. In fleshing this commitment out, Shava (1989:61) opines: "To La Guma, no other

activity is as important as political involvement in White-ruled South Africa. It is this unfaltering commitment that characterizes his polemical style in *In the Fog of the Seasons' End*"

In the wake of the above, we see characters like Beukes and Isaac making a serious effort to revolutionize and change the status quo for better, by indulging in clandestine meetings, distributing political pamphlets and trying to make the apartheid South Africa free from racial prejudice, brutality and violence, among others. The ultimate distinctive feature of La Guma's attempt, as compared with similar attempts by Peter Abraham, Lewis Nkosi and others is the emphasis he places on political organizations in achieving such a society, and his concern with the poorer sections of the society.

Again, in such a fractured reality, the colonized person becomes alienated. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon argues that the culture of colonialism creates native subjects who are out of touch with themselves. He contends that "the black man's alienation is not an individual question," but social disorder caused by unnatural state of colonialism (Fanon 1967:11). In fact, he goes on to state, "white civilization and European culture have forced an existential deviation on the Negro" (Fanon 1967:14). Because the gulf is wide between the national visions of the oppressed, and because of the nature of power relations, those with little power must live in the world imagined by the elite. The psychological drain of maintaining the illusion of satisfaction in order to avoid punishment, degradation, or exile in the face of brutal realities such as poverty, crime and starvation, creates a society harboring multiple interpretations of the world around them.

One sure way of knowing the dynamics of the entanglements of apartheid finds expression in the title of the novel: *In the Fog of the Seasons' End*. The "Fog" signifies twilight or the gradual disappearance of darkness. The "Season" as part of the caption of the novel symbolizes apartheid era—period of savagery, mayhem, brutality, chaos and unconscionable unjust social order. In effect, the title of the novel is suggestive of the disappearance of darkness in the apartheid era. In other words, it means bringing the atrocious moments of the apartheid era to an end. In totality, Alex La Guma's title reflects the age of apartheid.

Furthermore, La Guma's novel, *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* continues his fictional re-creation of events of the post-1960 period in South Africa. More specifically, the novel deals with events in South Africa after "The Rivonia Trial"[1]. The novel has many bridges to the real world of the period in the form of reference to actual places, legal practices and so on. Thus, among the places and landmarks specifically mentioned are Sea Point, Signal Hill, and the Noon Gun.[2] The restrictive laws affecting the Black population in the novel

[1] It's "the trial that changed South Africa". In the Fall of 1963, Nelson Mandela and ten other leading opponents of South Africa's apartheid regime went on trial for their lives.

[2] For more details of these landmarks, written from a tourist point of view, see Katzen, B. and Baker, S., *Looking at Cape Town*. Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1972.

resemble the laws in force in South Africa in the mid-1960s. Thematically, the issues that the novel raises, such as resorting to violence to overthrow institutional structures deemed oppressive, were topical during the mid-1960s in several parts of the world, particularly in the post-Sharpeville South African society, particularly the political underground. La Guma's involvement with the underground has, therefore, special significance in the discussion of the novel.

Discussion

Structurally, the action in *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* follows two sequences interspersed with a stylized account of the Sharpeville shootings. The first part of the action deals with 'the movement' distributing pamphlet calling on workers to go on a strike, and the second sequence shows the smuggling of three of the activists across the borders of South Africa for training in arms. In terms of the action in the novel, the arrest and the torture of Elias Tekwane described in the prologue is a part of the second sequence. By placing the account at the start of the novel, La Guma emphasizes the difficult conditions under which 'the movement' is operating; and indicates the violent nature of things to follow: 'behind the ugly mask of the regime was an even uglier face which he had not yet looked on. [. . .] behind the polished windows, the gratings and the government paintwork, was another dimension of terror' (p. 3).

One major way in which control over people's identities is mastered is through passbooks. These were mandatory for all non-whites during the apartheid era. La Guma's description of the procedure surrounding the assigning and use of passbooks also makes use of anonymous— unnamed characters. Fanon (1967:18) notes that "The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards". One of the most basic of these standards is presumably the use of written records. Because the colonial administration couldn't possibly keep track of all the natives without passbooks, they are a necessity to the functioning of the state, which (of course) has their best interest at heart. La Guma describes this process of becoming an official subject as kind of initiation:

> When Africans people turn sixteen they are born again or, even worse, they are accepted into mysteries of the Devil's mass, confirmed in the blood rites of servitude as cruel as Caligula, as merciless as Nero. Its bonds are entangled chains of infinite regulations, its rivets are driven in with rubber stamps, and the scratchy pens in the offices of the Native commissioners are like branding irons which leave scars for life (p. 80).

Where the initiation rites of many African nations serve to bring sons and daughters into the fold of the community, these initiatory rites create an underclass, a pool of resources,

hands for working. They have become a part of a community that they have had no part in forming or approving; they are truly objects. According to the universal administrator, without a passbook, " 'you will be nothing, nobody, in fact you will be decreated' " (p.82). With the passbook, you have a defined purpose and attendant right; without it, you are simply void. Fanon (1967:36) says it is natural that the oppressed person would react to such labeling with vehement refusal: "The first impulse of the black man is to those who attempt to build a definition of him. It is understandable that the first reaction of the black man is a reaction". Often, however, that reaction must simmer beneath the surface while the "show" of everyday complicity continues.

Again, homes have been torn apart because breadwinners—fathers—have to leave their wives and children at home to seek employment opportunities in different parts of the country where the minority whites have captured and named "Whites Only". It is only in that environment that they can secure for themselves menial jobs. Even in the times when African men were being recruited to the army, they "were needed to carry stretchers and to work as cooks and cleaners: . . . they were needed to do the menial work of the war" (p.78). The African is therefore seen as not capable of even fighting a war and thus "the Government did not allow them to bear arms" (p.78). This probably might stem from the reason that arming the African man is virtually spelling out the dooms day for the oppressor, in that the oppressed will be taught how to use the gun and in the long run turn to use it against the oppressor. It is therefore no surprising then that the African man was tasked to perform menial jobs.

More so, one of the characteristics of apartheid policy is the capitalist system. The blacks (peasants) are robbed of their resources, labour and brains—they sell their labour power to survive. In the very first volume of *Capital*, Karl Marx (1976:668) does argue that an aspect of the primitive capitalist accumulation rested on feudalism and pauperized mode of production where the labourers are made perpetual dependants on the feudal lords for survival. Fiefdom is being maintained in the apartheid South Africa against the backdrop of colour bar—the whites are seen as the feudal lords while the blacks are the vassals. To cite an instance, Elias Tekwane, one of the major characters who fight against the unjust ruling, works for a white man called Mevrou Wassserman (p.77).

The surreal feeling of living a part in a production directed by someone and something beyond your control is prevalent in the novel. Many chapters begin with a sense that the scene is being set. The first chapter, for instance, gives a strong sense of the strange effect of the English imposition of order on the African landscape; the effect is unsettling: "Among the trees were cultivated patches in the billiard-table lawns, the patches were grown with various plants and little sticks pinned with labels in front of each gave their names in English and Latin. Now and then a squirrel came face-down from the oaks and darted into the forest of carefully-tended flowers" (p.8). Later in the novel, prefiguring Elias' capture, the scene is of disrepair and neglect: "A slum hung on the edge

of the city suburbs like dirty plaster, cracking and crumbling away yet unwilling to fall apart" (p.141). It is difficult, for anyone with a sense of beauty, to resist the commonplace that those who live in beautiful places are good and clean while those in dilapidated flats are dirty and evil. Nevertheless, La Guma's characters challenge that assumption again and again, living daily the split between outward and inward reality.

Throughout the novel, both blacks and whites are spellbound with news of sensational murder story from the Afrikaner farm. The gruesome story serves as a gauge of the entire South African society's alienation from the truth of the war going on around them. Beatie Adams, in the first chapter, wonders "how people could be so nasty as to go around murdering each other" (p.13). Blind to the reality of political murder and torture, titillated by sordid details of the crime of passion, Beukes, the protagonist of the story, risks imprisonment and torture to deliver anti-government leaflets, while wondering how the taxi driver can be amused by the gory pulp fiction he is reading, when, for him and others in the resistance movement, "Life had become mysterious rides, messages left in obscure places, veiled telephone conversations" (p.25). Where Beatie Adams and the taxi driver remain actors in the theatre sponsored by the state, Beukes and his comrades star in a production of their own, created in response to the government, but with an ending that is still up in the air.

The different people Beukes comes into contact with during his week of underground maneuvering serve to represent the different ways in which people choose to deal with the reality of oppression. When Beukes meets Beatie Adams, the nursemaid, in the park, he sees that she does not recognize that she is playing a part in the white man's fantasy. Instead of recognizing her position as unfair, she simply says, " 'that's life, isn't it?' " (p.11). In accepting her fate as a servant, remaining comfortable in her room, she is able to avoid trouble. The only form of trouble that she experiences "came in the form of admonishments that the baby had a nappy-rash or that there was dust on the side-board" (p.12). Nevertheless, her safety comes at a price; while she blames her mother's overprotectiveness for her lingering country accent and her remaining single, she fails to see that her security is, in reality, a prison, a "fortress in the backyard" (p.12) where she lives isolated from others of her own race.

Where Beatie Adams remains secure in her fog because of the comforts of second-hand furniture, Arthur Bennett is even deeper into the deceptive security material possessions can bring. His middle-class position and fear of losing it causes him to renege on an offer of a bed for Beukes. His house shines with brass trinkets and the leftover glow from his family's weekend at the (coloured) beach. It is clear that his wife has objected to any involvement in the resistance movement, but Bennett tries to keep up a front for Beukes ; he is described as having "anxious, harassed eyes that fought to maintain the disguise of bonhomie, but it is kept slipping like a badly-glued moustache in a school play" (p.20). Bennett puts up little resistance, much like Beatie's "That's life" when Beukes

mentions his area will soon be declared white. Bennett just doesn't want any trouble, and moves uneasily between various masks he can wear as possible to prevent him from getting into trouble.

For Beukes' friend Tommy, life is too short to worry, so he makes life livable through music and dance, living in a fantasy world of ballroom dance and skimming the surface of the rest of the world. His mask is one of satisfied intoxication, and it is never clear whether he is an innocent of the world as he seems. To Beukes, though, it seems that "For Tommy, reality, life, could be shut out by the blare of dance-bands and the voices of crooners. From this cocoon he emerges only to find the means of subsistence, food and drink. Politics means nothing to him. He finds it easier to live under the regime than to oppose it" (p.53). Nonetheless, this appearance (perhaps reality) of complete ignorance serves Beukes and the resistance movement well. Tommy takes and delivers messages, never asking questions, not wanting to know the answers. In addition, his "cocoon" provides a safe place for Beukes to rest and hide out.

Others do not play the part of the ignorant savage, however. Mister Flotman, for one, is an educator, using his mask of respectability to help Beukes deliver the handbills that risk the lives of all involved. Flotman works from within the system; he knows all of the dearest tenets of the government and the supporting mythology by heart. He is described as "surrounded by the battlements of education: toppled rows of encyclopedias, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* piled and dog-eared journals, numerous school text books" (p.85). Flotman is on the front lines of culture wars, forced to feed the government propaganda to his student while secretly encouraging revolution on the other. He has learned to manipulate his position to make whatever sort of difference he can and still receive a paycheck. Likewise, Abdullah and his wife have learned ways in which to make their lives of oppression more tolerable through taking advantage of the trust placed on them because of their impenetrable masks of obedience. Abdullah gets special suits made for him on the sly, while handing out subversive information to his co-workers, and his wife tacks on extra charges for her white customers. The doctor Beukes visits after he is shot does his part, too behind the examination room curtains, treating the wound without asking questions, content to simply rail openly against the unjust system that he and the rest of the characters are trapped in, returning to his mask of benign neutrality once Beukes disappears.

Perhaps the most glaring instance of a mask being suddenly dropped once and for all comes when Isaac realizes he must leave his job. In the petroleum company, he is just one of "The coloured 'boys' who carried messages for this American firm" (p.110), and the only outward suggestion of his document comes from the sly way in which he avoids the secretary he most dislikes and the surreptitious drawings of firearms he doodles when on a break. When he realizes that the police have come looking for him, he discards his old life, his masks of obedient satisfaction: "He got up and went over to the cupboard in a

corner of the kitchen, opened and removed his white company jacket. He took down his own coat and put it on" (p.117). He steps off the stage, walks down the hall, "and after the coolness of artificial air-conditioning the heat of the summer day struck him like a blow" (p.118). In this moment, Isaac chooses sometimes-uncomfortable reality over a life of repressed hostility and alienation.

Nevertheless, those in the movement make use of their own set of disguises. Beukes blends into the sea of the brown faces in his inconspicuous brown suit. He never forgets the danger he is in, "But with his everyday brown suit, the anonymous hang of the shoulders, he was just somebody going somewhere" (p.61). It is very important for his purpose that he does not call attention to himself, and for this reason, he prefers to appear to be just one of the herd. Even in the middle of the night, Beukes instinctively protects himself: ". . . he moved with the caution of someone grown used to hiding, to evading open spaces; the caution of someone who knew that a man alone in the street was as conspicuous as a pyramid, but that in a crowd one could become anonymous, a voice in a massed choir" (p.107). Ironically, then, it is essential for the success of the movement that its functionaries remain unknown and invisible. Fanon (1967:60) notes that resisting the oppressor's assigned part means exposing oneself as an individual; for this reason, "In the man of color, there is a constant effort to run away from his own individuality, to annihilate his own presence". To neglect to do this means risking direct contact with the oppressor. While the effort to disappear or to blend in comes naturally enough for most people, to the resistance movement, it becomes a necessity upon which the safety of innumerable others rests.

Despite the ideal of spreading "civilization" and the colonial power's mask of paternal care, cracks appear in the disguise, revealing manipulative schemes rather than unconditional love. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon (2001, p. 170) says,

> On the unconscious plane, colonialism therefore did not seek to be considered by the native as a gentle, loving mother who protects her child from a hostile environment, but rather as a mother who unceasingly restrains her fundamentally perverse offspring from managing to commit suicide and from giving free rein to its evil instincts. The colonial mother protects her child from itself, from its ego, and from its physiology, its biology and its own unhappiness which is its very essence.

This is the mother who wants to do what she feels is "best" for the child, to keep it from embarrassing itself and her, to keep it from walking around in only a loincloth, to keep it forever in doubt of its own inner thoughts and being. Part of this control exerted in the colonial practice of giving names to Africans whose names are otherwise "unpronounceable." Elias remembers his experience with the colonial mother, when "the

missionary, who had always found it difficult to pronounce indigenous names, had said: " 'We'll call him Elias, that's a nice biblical name' " (p. 72). Ironically enough, for the movement, it has been necessary for Elias to adopt yet another name, Hazel, the name by which Beukes knows him. However, the commonplace experience of the state's renaming of Africans proves useful, and Hazel names the new recruits, about to begin military training, Peter, Paul and Michael. Having learned from the colonial mother, the resistance makes use of whatever scraps are available to it.

Nevertheless, La Guma shows some skepticism about the worth of names in the larger political scheme. In his description of labor strike and the massacre that follows (modeled closely on the Sharpeville incident), he reverts to the use of universal description. In his naming of the characters—the Washerwoman, the outlaw, the bicycle messenger, the child, and the sergeant—La Guma emphasizes their roles as workers or dependents of the state, rather than creating complex characters with which the reader could emotionally identify. Instead, the effect is that of pointless, confused, and surreal violence meted out on the innocent, and the ineffective means of protection which the regime offers its "children".

In portraying the victims of the massacre as workers, La Guma emphasizes the economic exploitation that lies behind the violent desperation of the oppressors. This type of struggle over goods and money affects both portions of society, however. The effect of colonialism according to Fanon (2001:58), is that "the native, who has seen the modern world penetrate into the furthermost corners of the bush, is most acutely aware of all the things he does not possess. The masses by sort of (if we may say so) childlike process of reasoning convince themselves that they have been robbed of all these things". However, in the South African reality of the novel, such fears are indeed grounded. Throughout the novel, there are portrayals of government-made ghost towns, areas that were previously integrated but that now have been emptied of residents in preparation for a new, all-white community, Tommy's neighborhood, for instance, is in transition. The narrator notes, "The sector had the look of a town cleared after a battle. Whole blocks had disappeared, leaving empty, flattened lots surrounded by battered survivors" (p.26). In the meantime, people are surrounded by advertising for things they don't need, with the promise of happiness that can only come through having what the pretty, smiling, white people on the billboards have. In the prologue, where Elias is first questioned by the Major, his disguise of friendliness makes him seem as if "he could have been an advertisement for good cheer" (p.3), linking the false promises of the regime with those of the capitalist corporations. The corporations of the world look on while the majority of a nation is subjected to random searches and relocations. In watching the police barricade at the subway station, it is impossible for Beukes not to notice that "Above them on a huge billboard a happy family drank coca cola, smiling down with merry faces" on all the accusation and insults being hurled (p.63).

The ironies of everyday life, especially the economic exploitation in the face of what's "best" for everybody, certainly cannot escape the consciousness of every person involved in it. How could ordinary life be more confusing and complicated? Elias cannot remember his father who was working in the far-off gold mines, where ". . . he was buried hundreds of feet below ground, deeper than any of his ancestors has been buried"(p.73). After being shipped out of their homes inside the city limits, ". . . Black people came into the White-proclaimed city each morning to do the menial work and left each evening to return to the Locations, the Townships, set aside for them like ghettoes" (p.112). The chief clerk decides to ask some of his "boys" to serve at a country club outing, paying ten shillings for the day: "After all, he thought, they'll probably pinch half the canapés and smoked salmon sandwiches; they're not used to such luxuries" (p.113). Many of the men who share rooms at the bachelor's barracks with Elias are actually married, but have been separated from their families in the interest of the economy. Elias, the most politically enlightened character in the novel, is able to articulate (internally, at least) the truth about the injustice surrounding him: ". . . he thought we are not only humbled as Blacks, but also as workers; our blackness is only a pretext" (p.131).

Nonetheless, there are some Blacks who serve as the intermediaries between the upper and lower classes: the educators, the police, the administrators. Fanon (2001:122) says that "The national bourgeoisie of under-developed countries is not engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor labor; it is completely canalized into activities of intermediary type". The "translation" services such people offer the powers-that-be are essential to the management of the nation. Their position of relative privilege makes such people ideal role models for the lower class. The others, in Beukes' words, are " 'We all good enough to be servants. Because we're black they think we good enough just to change their nappies' "(p.11).

Living in close, unpleasant spaces that smell of urine, garbage, and stale cooking is one of the adverse effects of non-white status; for Beukes, and presumably others in the movement, physical discomfort is a constant companion. Exhaustion due to wandering the streets at night, without a safe place to sleep, means that Beukes must intuitively resist his body's need for sleep. He moves on, despite his bodily needs, much like La Guma's description of the resistance movement in the years following the Sharpeville massacre: "The movement writhed under the terror, bleeding. It had not been defeated, but it had been beaten down. It crouched like a slugged boxer, shaking his spinning head to clear it, while he took the count, waiting to rise before the final ten" (p.48). Worry is also ever-present; Beukes must constantly be on the lookout for defects in the chain of sympathizers: loudmouths, idiots, traitors, and the fearful. Beukes thinks, "You did this work, taking a chance all the time, hoping the bugger behind you or the one ahead of you would play the game" (p.50). The rules need to be followed, the disguise worn: if not, the entire project is in jeopardy. Nerves leave Beukes with a "cold feeling in his stomach"

(p.52) and sweaty palms (p.58). Such a condition is not reserved solely for those involved in the underground movement, however. Because of the randomness of police checks and the labyrinthine nature of the law under apartheid, all non-whites feel the fear of "being caught." Because "there were a hundred and one crimes one might have committed without knowledge. Palpitations of the heart had become a national disease" (pp. 63-64). The system has created a sense of confusion over what's right and wrong.

There is confusion, too, over what makes a home, when homes can be commandeered and destroyed in order to build homes for others. Beukes must live without a home while he is working for the movement, simply for the security of his family. He sleeps where he can, sometimes with friends, sometimes in fields or ditches, sometimes not at all. He moves on the edges of existence, hoping not to be noticed. Despite his happy marriage and healthy daughter, Beukes finds himself standing "in the half-light at the street corner alone, like a lost traveller, holding onto the cheap cardboard case as if it contained all his worldly possessions" (p.106). Although he has only the best intentions, he must meet with Isaac's young sister, a "girl-child in the dark doorway, furtively, as if he was a child molester" (p.108). The sordid appearance of much of his activity depresses and confuses Beukes, leaving him with yet another layer of resentment for the system which forces him to live in this manner. Fear for his wife and child seem to be both the reason for his activity as well as the sad, but unavoidable effect of it. After he has been shot, "He thought, through the pain in his arm, I want to go home, I must go home, I want to go home to Francy. He still felt hollow but it was not the hollowness of hunger, and he realized, with tears pricking his eyeballs, that it was the hollowness of abandonment" (p.147).

Finally, however, he meets up with Henny April, the smuggler of rebels and arms who lives without worry. Beukes is in awe of Henny's ability to complete projects and to keep an optimistic outlook. When Beukes shares his worries about the plan to take the new recruits to the training station, Henny says, "Leave it to Brother Henny, hey. Jesus, me, I don't boast, but I get things done." He gestured again with his fork, taking in the crowded room, the unidentified boxes and suitcases, his big wife's numerous pregnancies, past and future" (p.168). Henny is populating the earth with replicas of himself, confident, easy-going and certain of victory. The innumerable children, who sleep all around Beukes, are the final image of the novel, "gathered in the sunlit yard" (p.181), waiting for the fog to clear.

To tell the truth, when man is confronted with this kind of circumstance, he is left with one choice—that of coming out from the impasse before venturing into other aspects of humanity. Unsympathetically, such situation rather infuses one with the survival choice, which detracts from healthy living, material accumulation and above all sane mind. In the phenomenological sense, this sort of social arrangement rather gives priority of consideration not to any pre-existing conceptual framework or idea but to the

intuitive and situational rapport between the subject and the object in question. (Anozie 1982, p. 2)

In another perspective, these contradictions in the South African society manifest through the alienation and relegation we notice among the blacks in terms of taking part in politics and leadership in South Africa—they are not considered in the scheme of things. They are thus alienated from the machinery of government. They are seen as people without initiatives, dim-witted and above all unimportant race. This amounts to the reason why the whites have embarked on the "separate" policy (apartheid) in order to maintain this status—as a superior people that have nothing to do with bohemians. Besides, Isaac, one of the unbending revolutionaries, whose reflective and haranguing speeches have always given us one of the truest pictures of the pains of apartheid, does give us the nature of tyranny prevalent in South Africa in the apartheid era. The narrative technique employed reveals to us his thoughts as he was 'sitting in the hot, steamy kitchen'. We are told:

> He thought that all this kowtowing to stupid idiots who cherished the idea that they were God's Chosen just because they had white skins, had to come to an end. The silly bastards, he thought, they had been stupefied into supporting a system which had to bust one day and take them all down with it; instead of permanent security and justice, they had chosen to preserve a tyranny that could only feed them temporarily on the crumbs of power and privilege (p. 114).

The above passage gives the indication that Isaac has come to the consciousness that his action of kowtowing to the White is no more of importance. The use of the phrases "stupid idiots" and "silly bastards" tell us how hurt Isaac is hence the choice of such harsh and unpleasant words. He again predicts the downfall of the White man in the near future. He tells readers that the White man has chosen to "preserve a tyranny that could only feed them temporarily on the crumbs of power and privilege." The word 'temporarily' as used in the sentence is suggestive of the fact that the tyrannical reign of the oppressor will never last and that there will be a time where the system will "bust" and "take them all down with it".

Furthermore, when we first meet Beukes, we see him as a worn-out and anonymous stranger (Wa-Belinge, 1991, p. 288) later he gets concerned with sleepless nights of meetings, underground campaigns and marathon speeches—these give us a kind of leitmotif about him: "He smiled again, in spite of fatigue, at the thought of wearing pyjamas among the daisies and pine needles" (p. 23). Beukes liking for the black peoples' welfare makes him leave his pregnant wife (who has her maiden pregnancy) to attend to the national cause. We equally notice this characterization in Mandela; as demonstrated

in this the soul-wrenching lines:

> I cherish my own freedom dearly, but I care even more for your freedom. Not only have I suffered during these lonely wasted years, I am no less life-loving than you are. But I cannot sell the birthright of the people to be free . . . Your freedom and mine cannot be separated (Benson 1980, p. 119).

Evidently, La Guma brings to the fore the compliments of a doctor. He employs first person point of view in the scene, where the doctor, who usually takes care of Beukes eventually looks unusual in his treatment and statement. Having seen the shot in Beukes' arm, the doctor engages in this harangue to tell Beukes that since he (Beukes) is fighting for a good cause, and that the non-white populace—in particular, he (the doctor)—are behind him. Besides, the doctor reminds Beukes to be alive to his conscience.

> 'If the community is given the opportunity of participating in making the law, then they have a moral obligation to obey it,' he said. 'But if the law is made for them, without their consent or participation, then it is a different matter.' He paused and sat back in his chair. '. . . If the law punishes a crime, murder, rape, then I could bring myself to assist it. I would consider reporting a murder, a case of assault but if the law defends injustice, prosecutes and persecutes those who fight injustice, then I am under no obligation to uphold it. They have actually given us an opportunity to pick and choose. Things happen in our country, Mister Beukes . . .' (p. 161).

There is in the above excerpt the presence of the personal pronoun, "I", which suggests first person point of view and distinguishes between "the narrative 'I' who is a fortuitous witness of the matter he relates" (Abrams 1981, p. 144). From the first person narrative point of view, we are made aware of the injustice that prevails in the community. The majority black people are not involved in law making but rather they are forcibly expected to adhere to every bit of the laws instituted. La Guma successfully uses this narrative technique in an attempt to allow readers to assess issues themselves as they read the novel.

Likewise, the novel offers us a classic case of epic martyrdom. This is brilliantly orchestrated through Elias Tekwane. Not only do we see this character, Tekwane, die in the novel but also La Guma uses him to paint very boldly the picture of doggedness, policy, steadfastness and resilience. Tekwane's revolutionary bent gets ignited when he is sacked from Wasserman's shop, which makes "anger grew inside him like a ripening seed and the tendrils of its burgeoning writhed along his bone, through his muscles, into his mind" (p. 79). Here, the simile as used in the sentence brings out the intensity of the comparison.

This comparison made, therefore, brings to readers' consciousness the image of a tree. Scientifically, seeds are put into the soil during planting. These seeds will then germinate, grow branches, flowers and then become fully matured to bear fruits. By extension, anger like a seed, germinates, grows branches; 'bone', flowers; muscles, and eventually bears fruit. Psychologically, the mind is the central point of every human being. Decisions are conceived in the mind and hence executed accordingly. This situation is no different from that of Adonis in *A Walk in the Night* who turned from good to bad after being sacked from his factory.

As a revolutionary hero/character, he never allows the agony of excruciating pain, depersonalization, physical torture and humiliation to rob him of his revolutionary commitment. Part of what sustains his commitment, is the scene where he watches his father die, digging gold for the oppressors. Also, the general atmosphere of poverty and destitution of his mother—all these are cases in point for his revolutionary resolve. He is thereby strengthened by these factors to fight oppression, despotism and racial discrimination to the last (Wa-Belinge 1991, p. 293). To exemplify his commitment, he says: ". . . Step by step our people must acquire both the techniques of war and the means for fighting such a war. It is not only the advanced ones, but the entire people that must be prepared, convinced" (pp. 143–144). Tekwane keeps on mastering this "step" to conquer the oppressor until he was martyred:

> He screamed inside the sack.
> The glossy-haired one cranked the handle of the magnets while the sportsman ran the electrode against the bare legs, genitals.
> Elias screamed. He had anticipated violence, but not this, not this . . .
> His flesh burned and scorched and his limbs jerked and twitched and fell away from him, jolting and leaping in some fantastic dance which only horror linked to him . . . (p. 173)

Tekwane undergoes serious torture before he finally gives up the ghost. This is to show that the black man is physically maltreated and humiliated from birth to death. He gets his legs and genitals electrified whiles he is tied in a sack. We are told through the narration that "He had anticipated violence, but not this". The intensity of the violence makes him scream. However, he endures this pain till death lays its icy hands on him which practically makes him a martyr—dying for the survival of next generation. Though physically dead, his deeds and loyalties to the cause of the downtrodden and his unshaken determination stand as moral condemnation against apartheid. Tekwane stood firm for his cause—not co-operating with the Whites—even until death. The horrible torture he undergoes before his death indicates how cruel the system of apartheid is.

Conclusion

In conclusion, La Guma has demonstrated that the foggy confusion in which the oppressed people of South Africa live and die must be cleared through violent resistance. Clearly, he is selling the idea to the rest of the world that such a step is necessary and desirable. Fanon (2001:117) argues, "Violence alone, violence committed by the people, violence organized and educated by its leaders, makes it possible for the masses to understand social truths and gives the key to them". As long as the people are wooed by the just-out-of-reach promise of the consumer security and kept in check through a vague fear that their very existence is offensive, no change is possible. Because he has demonstrated the importance of rejecting the world of fear, La Guma is able to cast Elias' death by torture as a victory. Elias does not waver, does not speak: he listens only to "his ancestors gathered on the misty horizon, their spears sparkling like diamonds in the exploding sun" (p.175). It is never assured, however, that Beukes, Elias, Isaac or any other resistance members must believe in the next step of violence. Although the flashback into the history of Beukes and Elias serve to give some basis for their later decisions to sacrifice all for the movement, it is clear—through the use of all the secondary characters—that the decision to oppose the government is not a simple one. All of the people of South Africa are affected by the frantic desperation of the apartheid system, which attempts to erase those challenge personal definition. Arthur Bennett and Mister Flotman are not the only characters who must contend with the conflicting fear and desires; so must Beukes and Elias. The government frames the situation simplistically, based on color; however, such a situation does not flatten out ethical dilemmas: it complicates them. The alienation of colonialism—and, by extension, apartheid—creates psychosis in the oppressed, according to Fanon (2001:203): "Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: "In reality, who am I?". This is the question being asked by all of the characters in La Guma's novel, whatever their degree of political consciousness. In recognizing the inner struggles of characters that nevertheless choose to resist, La Guma opens up possibilities for action in readers who may otherwise feel unworthy. When it is revealed that everyone questions their motives, action becomes possible for all. All in all, this study has revealed to us the mechanism of relying on a mask (disguise) in order for the non-white to survive in the apartheid era of South Africa. *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* has presented to us the means by which Alex La Guma uses masking—concealing the identity of the characters, especially major characters—to enable them function in their underground movements to revolt against the apartheid regime. Most significantly, his narrative technique and characterization are what we clearly take cues from in order to understand his stand for revolution. Characters are presented in a good way to reflect exactly what the happenings are during the regime of apartheid.

Funding: This research received no external funding

Acknowledgments: I acknowledge Dr. Faith Ben-Daniels for her support in ensuring that this work becomes a publishable material.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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