

A Thematic Study of Apartheid in Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night*

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Abstract

*This study explores the theme of apartheid as depicted in Alex La Guma's novella **A Walk in the Night**. Set in apartheid-era South Africa, the novella offers a poignant critique of the racial segregation and systemic oppression that defined this period. Through a close reading of the text, the research examines the ways in which La Guma portrays the brutal realities of apartheid, focusing on the dehumanization and marginalization of non-white characters. It also analyses the use of symbolism and narrative techniques that La Guma employs to convey the pervasive sense of fear, anger, and hopelessness that permeates the story. The research further discusses the implications of apartheid on the psychological and social dynamics of the characters, emphasizing how the author uses their stories to critique the broader socio-political system. In addition to a thematic analysis, the study situates **A Walk in the Night** within the larger context of South African literature and resistance writing, drawing connections between La Guma's work and the broader struggle against apartheid. The research underscores the novella's significance as a literary work that not only documents the horrors of apartheid but also serves as a form of resistance against the oppressive regime. Through this thematic study, the project aims to contribute to the understanding of apartheid's impact on South African literature and to highlight the enduring relevance of Alex La Guma's work in contemporary discussions of race, oppression, and social justice using dialectic school of thought which is an offshoot of Marxism by Karl Max.*

Key words: *Apartheid, South Africa, Blacks*

Introduction

Nationalism like patriarchy, favours singleness, one identity, and one growth pattern, it will promote specifically unitary forms of consciousness. The first problem any student of South African literature is confronted with, is the diversity of the literary systems. Robert Mossman (1990) says:

“One of the enduring and saddest legacies of the apartheid system may be that no one – White, Black, Coloured, or Asian – can ever speak as a "South African." The problem, however, pre-dates Apartheid significantly, as South Africa is a country made up of communities that have always been linguistically and culturally diverse. These cultures have all retained autonomy to some extent, making a compilation such as the controversial *Southern African Literatures* by Michael Chapman, difficult.”

Chapman raises the view that South Africa has 11 national languages; and that any definitive literary history of South Africa should discuss literature produced in all 11 languages. Part of the problem is that English literature has been seen within the greater context of English writing in the world, and has, because of English's global position, not been seen as autonomous or indigenous to South Africa. In 1990, President de Klerk announced the end of apartheid and

by 1991, all apartheid laws were repealed. In response to the end of this era, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established. Although the intention of the commission is noble, there is controversy over this effort to come to terms with South Africa's past. Is it possible to reach justice? Is it worth reopening old wounds? Can the truth truly be established when everyone has a different perception of the events that took place?

During the years before and towards the final years of the apartheid era and subsequent transition to democracy, South African writers responded to the ever-present political turmoil and its daily effects on the people of that country. The chronicled or satirised state-enforced racism and explored the possibilities of resistance. Now that apartheid is over, writers are questioning the conception of reconciliation and rebuilding.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The field of modern literature in South Africa dates back to the 19th century (Robert. 1990). Therefore, the genres of poetry, play and prose have been in existence in South Africa since the colonial days. It has been explored in most of the major indigenous languages and English language in South Africa. The beginning of the plight of black South Africans could be traced back to racism. The white settlers, though in the minority, ruled over the black majority. The Whites treated the blacks as sub-human beings.

Although most African indigenous writers only made their presence felt in the literary scene towards the middle of the 20th century; when many African countries gained independence from their colonial masters. Kenneth Harrow (1994) observes that the literatures of that period, be it poetry, drama or prose are better known as literatures of testimony. Writers like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'O and Flora Nwapa among others tried to recount the traumatic experiences that Africans had with the colonialists.

There are not many black South African Writers until the mid-20th century, when most African countries gained their independence. However, like most African society, there were oral literary artistes prior to this period. Most of the indigenous South Africans did not acquire the so-called Western education to compete favourably with their Europeans, hence, orature was the literature popular among the people. The oral artists composed songs in the indigenous languages to suit local context. Most of these oral poets sings to correct social ills that were prevalent in their society. It was during this period the modern South African authors begun to emerge. They attempt to write in the language that could be understood by the Europeans, the English language, in order to drive home their message. Isaac (1950) observes that:

“Many of these poets, particularly the anti-apartheid writers, suffered personally in forms ranging from exile, house arrest, detention and torture to the banning of their literature or their right to public speaking. This was because they questioned and opposed apartheid law, as well as raised national and international awareness of the injustices committed in century.”

Apartheid in South Africa is a government policy, premised on a system of racial segregation or discrimination. The term is closely related to and is synonymous with South African history. The term was formally adopted as a political policy by the South African government in 1948, under the leadership of the National Party. However, the roots of racial segregation in South Africa can be traced back to the colonial era, long before apartheid became the official policy. During the colonial period, racial discrimination and segregation were already prevalent, with European settlers implementing policies that favored white supremacy and disenfranchised the indigenous African population. The discovery of gold and diamonds in the late 19th century intensified these divisions, leading to the implementation of further discriminatory practices to control the labour force and resources.

The system became a conduit for institutionalised racial segregation and discrimination in South Africa from 1948, and persisted until the early 1990s when the policy was abolished. The word "apartheid" is derived from Afrikaans. It means "apartness" or "separateness" the word encapsulates the legal framework that established and maintained racial divisions. Understanding apartheid is essential in order to grasp the socio-political landscape of modern South Africa as a state, and how it impacts the lives of millions of individuals.

Apartheid's impact on South African society was profound and far-reaching, creating deep divisions and long-lasting scars. The brutal enforcement of racial segregation led to the displacement of millions, the destruction of communities, and significant psychological trauma. Education, healthcare, and employment opportunities were all segregated and unequal, reinforcing systemic poverty and marginalisation. Black South Africans were forced to live in designated areas called "homelands" or "Bantustans," which were often remote and lacked basic infrastructure.

Opposition to apartheid was widespread, with significant resistance from the African National Congress (ANC) and other anti-apartheid organisations. The government responded with repression, including the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, where the police killed 69 peaceful protesters, and the Rivonia Trial (1963-1964), which led to the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela and other ANC leaders. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, international condemnation of apartheid grew. Economic sanctions, cultural boycotts, and political pressure from the global community, including the United Nations, played a crucial role in undermining the apartheid regime. Inside South Africa, resistance continued to mount, culminating in widespread protests and civil unrest. By the late 1980s, it became clear that apartheid was unsustainable. President F.W. de Klerk initiated a series of reforms. In 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from prison, and the ANC was legalised. Multi-party negotiations led to the dismantling of apartheid laws. In 1994, South Africa held its first multi-racial elections, with Mandela emerging as the new president.

Literature, as always, serves as a powerful medium for exposing the ills of the society and critiquing injustices, apartheid was not an exception. Many writers lend their voice in fighting the hydra headed monster that apartheid was, using their works to highlight the human cost of this oppressive system. Through literature, the experiences of those who suffered under apartheid have been brought to light, providing a voice for the voiceless and preserving the memory of their struggles. Some South African Writers like Peter Abrahams, Nadine Gordimer, Dennis Brutus, Mazisi Kunene, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Oswald Mbuyesini Mtshali, J.M. Coetzee and Alex La Guma among others, used their literary creativity to challenge the apartheid regime and advocate for social change.

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the themes of apartheid and how are they portrayed in *A Walk in the Night*?
- ii. What are the social, economic, and psychological impacts of apartheid on individuals and the society?
- iii. To what extent did Alex La Guma use literary creativity and techniques to convey his message?

The aim of this study is to critically explore and analyse the theme of apartheid in Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night*.

The objectives of the study are:

- i. To identify the themes of apartheid as depicted in the fiction.
- ii. To explore how Alex La Guma portrays the social, economic, and psychological impacts of apartheid on individuals and society.
- iii. To analyse the literary techniques La Guma employs to convey the theme of apartheid.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a descriptive method and seeks to achieve a critical examination of the theme of apartheid in South Africa using Alex La Guma's text, *A Walk in the Night*. This work has two ways of eliciting information which shall include a textual analysis of the primary texts, others are rigorous search of relevant contributions on the subject matter by other scholars. For this study, two theories are used. These are the dialectical and the sociological theories of literature. The choice of these theories is informed by their relevance to the study. Dialectical theory helps the researcher to understand the conflict between the indigenous South Africans and the white oppressors on one hand, and the indigenous South Africans and other Africans on the other hand. The relevance of sociological theory to this research is that it gives the researcher the opportunity to trace the genesis of the plight of South Africans.

The dialectical theory is an off-shoot of the Marxist theory. Karl Marx, the founder of the Marxism school of thought believes that Marxism aims to revolutionise the concept of work through the creation of a classless society built on control and ownership of the means of production. Dialectical Materialism emphasises the relationship and contradiction that exist in a society. Therefore, contradiction and conflict are the major factors to be noticed in looking at the dialectical theory. It examines the contradiction in a society like black and white, right and wrong, male and female and so on. In apartheid South Africa, there was conflict and contradiction between the white oppressors and non-white South Africans. This serves as a motivation to many South African writers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Apartheid in Other Countries

Although Apartheid is prominently associated with South Africa, South Africa is not the only country accused of racial segregation. Apartheid is not only limited to South Africa, although, south Africa made the apartheid system of governance gain popularity among the nations, other countries have practice apartheid in many different fashions.

Seytoff (2014) explains that the China's Uighurs claim to cultural genocide is another form of apartheid by China. Lu (2014), on the other hand argues that China Is ending its 'Apartheid.' This Lu believes China is doing through its foreign policy drive. Teltumbde (2010) posits that the persistence of the caste system in India is a hidden form of apartheid, this he buttresses with the Khairlanji Murders. Furthermore, Chishti (2014) says the existence of the untouchable in India is an admittance of the reality of apartheid in India. Bhandare (2014) also agrees that "Casteism exists in India", and it is a form of apartheid.

Baconi (2021) writes on what apartheid means for Israel. He explains that the Israeli treatment of the Palestinians amounts to apartheid. Holmes (2021) agrees with this submission, insisting that Israel is committing the crime of apartheid. Zilbershats (2013) theorised that the continued occupy of Palestine by Israel and the handling of things by Israel is tantamount to apartheid under international law.

Apartheid in South Africa

The word "Apartheid" is almost synonymous with South Africa. It is the system of racial segregation based on skin colour. During this period in South Africa, the black South Africans were subjected to inhuman treatment that relegates them to a status of second-class citizens. Though racism exist in different forms in almost all the countries of the world that of South Africa was more pronounced.

People from different walks of life; poets, playwrights, novelists, essayists addressed the issue in diverse ways. In a speech, the then South African President, Jacob Zuma, said, the

effect of apartheid on the South Africans is so devastating that it renders most people psychologically imbalanced.

In analysing the level of inhuman treatment, the black South Africans received during the system, Nesther Albert Alu captures the image thus:

“The deliberate massacre, imposition and infliction of bodily and mental torture, as well as the infringements on the freedom of its victims, has had adverse effects on them; alongside the degradation of the blacks racially. These, among many unprintable others, have been some of the pressing charges against apartheid. Furthermore, there are blatant denials of all forms of freedom, expropriation of landed property, exploitation of labour and persecution of individuals or organizations that oppose apartheid.”

One sees how the blacks were subjected to brutal treatment because of their skin colour. They were more or less slaves to the whites. A white authority figure would kill a helpless black man without provocation and the authority would not do anything to sanction him. The situation is horrible that it can only be compared to that of a beast and its prey in the animal kingdom as described by Oswald Mtshali in his poem, “Nightfall in Soweto”.

Apartheid in South African Literature

In the play *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, Athol Fugard, though not really black in the real sense of the word, the apartheid system categorised him as a coloured person. He dramatises the plight of the black South Africans by using his principal character in the play; Sizwe. As a result of the laws in his society, which segregate people based on skin colour, Sizwe finds it extremely difficult to get a job in Port Elizabeth, a cosmopolitan city after he leaves his village.

The law prescribes that, an African cannot move freely in the city without securing a passport to get a so as to a job in order to cater for his village family. Therefore, he finds the passport of a dead man, Robert Zwelinzima, and quickly replaces it with his own passport photograph, thus, Sizwe Bansi becomes dead and Robert Zwelinzima lives. This indicates the harshness of the apartheid system that an Africans prefers his name dead and acquires the name of the dead in order to survive.

Peter Abrahams in his novel *Mine Boy* (1946) describes how blacks are always being chased down like hunted animals. He says:

“Suddenly a pick-up van swerved round a corner. Policemen jumped out and ran down the street. The crowd scattered ... people ran in all directions. The gamblers made a grasp for the stakes and ran. The two ‘swankies’ disappear down the street. Only the coloured people did not run. ‘come! Joseph urged again, ‘But we have done nothing’. They will not ask you’. Joseph said in disgust and dashed down the street” (16).

In an apparent protest against the apartheid regime, Melikhaya Mbuluma satires the whites, because of how they subject blacks to all forms of inhuman treatment. He says: “Why kill an innocent poor white? The curses of the almighty be upon you murderers of children. Where were those who stand in your way to liberty? Die like dogs, you doers of evil and cruelty” (Mbuluma, 2024, p. 15).

Melikhaya Mbuluma the poet, satirises white invaders, thus ridiculing their domination of the blacks. However, in the subsequent Stanzas of the poem, he becomes pessimism, as he says, he will soon be arrested by the apartheid authority. The poet is not unaware of the risk of being incarcerated, and at the same time, he cannot standby to see his people suffering and keep quiet.

A Walk in The Night

Jonathan Essuman's "The Lost Dignity: The Reading of Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night*" unravels the dark side of apartheid system through the analysis of Alex La Guma's novella; *A Walk in the Night*. The analysis brings out how La Guma uses his literature to reveal to his readership the lost dignity of the oppressed. The work seeks to reveal to readers the atrocities that were perpetrated against the non-whites in South Africa. The study also highlights the restrictions placed on African workers under the oppressive Apartheid system and its effects on the psyche of the non-whites in South Africa have been given credible space in the novella. The paper shows how the novella achieves a fictionalisation of the different forms of maltreatments that non-whites suffered during the Apartheid regime. The work traces the authors relentless effort to protest against the Apartheid era. The paper concludes by revealing how the lifestyles of the non-whites are affected, and clearly indicate that the Apartheid system really took away the dignity of the non-whites in South Africa.

Sam Dennis (2012) Analysis of *A Walk in the Night* is concerned with examining some vices attached to colonialism like racial oppression, racial segregation, racial violence, poverty, and so on in South Africa. The work defined oppression as the act of oppressing, the imposition of unreasonable burden either in taxes or services excessively rigorous government severity. However, racial oppression, according to him would mean, "The severity or misery imposed on a particular group of people with the same biological features by another group or specie of mankind". The work seeks to interface the relationship between the two.

Ogbeide O. Victor (2014) in his "Beyond Complexion, Class and Race: An Ecocritical Study of Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night* and *A Threefold Cord*" presents an ecocritical study of Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night* and *A Threefold Cold*. He argues that while many critics over the years have focused on the human dimension of apartheid in South Africa, virtually none has bordered about the republic's environment. His paper contends that the South African environment suffers degradation, neglect and destruction as much as the hapless non-white in the republic courtesy of its policy of "herding" people into little spaces leading to slums where the pervading perfume of bitter dereliction holds sway. His research is located on the need for the Republic of South Africa, and indeed, many African countries to evolve environment-friendly policies which will ensure a relatively even distribution of their population. Even so, the overall significance of the work is the need for the world to be more conscious of the need to care for its environment. This is because in the final analysis, there can never be social justice without environmental justice. He concludes that even the environment is not spared the damaging effects of South Africa's apartheid policy. As the poverty-stricken non-white population finds itself herded into the little space of District Six that is denied of social amenities, overuse and abuse of the environment become the norm leading to environmental disintegration.

DATA ANALYSIS

Themes of Apartheid in *A Walk in The Night*

Denial of Rights and Deprivation

This short novel is about the cruel treatment of the detestable Apartheid system which the non-white community has to suffer, and alternatively, it is about the hardly any benefits granted the non-whites to live supposedly standard lives (p. 41). Michael Adonis and Willieboy are, in this vein, presented as typical examples of the ill-fated coloured people. The author uses these two to buttress the evil that apartheid represents, a system that perpetuates deprivation and the denial of rights (p. 43). Hence, numerous other young fellows, including Michael Adonis and Willieboy, who live in District Six in Cape Town, cannot practically find a solution to their plight except through criminal behavior (p. 45).

Willieboy, in order to survive, involves himself in petty crimes and violent acts and Michael Adonis, also after dismissal, finds solace in Foxy's gang, which specializes in burglary and minor crimes; hence, he becomes a member (p. 48 - 50). To worsen the situation, Adonis, who is still angered by the sack, transfers his anger onto an old Irish man, Mr. Doughty, during an argument over a bottle of wine and strikes him dead. In response, the police begin a furious hunt for the supposed killer. With no evidence against Willieboy, Constable Raalt, a vindictive white police officer, pulls the trigger and shoots him. This extrajudicial killing goes unpunished (p. 52 - 56).

The stories consistently depict the dehumanization of black and poor individuals, reflecting the systematic stripping away of their dignity. In "The Lemon Orchard," the educated black teacher's humiliation and fear are evident as he is led by white men into the orchard for punishment. The narrative describes his experience: "He shivered in the cold, but it was not just from the cold. The fear gnawed at him, eroding his confidence and sense of dignity". This story starkly illustrates the social injustices and normalized violence used to maintain racial hierarchies. In each story, the characters' experiences reflect a broader societal tendency to dehumanize those considered "other," whether due to race or socioeconomic status (p. 119).

Governmental Policies and Injustice

The sequence of the events in the novel indicates a total failure of governance and complete loss of justice. The story revolves around Adonis and Willieboy such that the story literally moves with them. It is through the lives of these characters that readers are made cognizant of the characteristics of apartheid and its consequences on the people. The story begins by introducing Michael Adonis, a coloured worker in a sheet metal factory. He is dismissed from his job upon talking back to a white foreman, who refuses to allow him to take a few minutes off his work for urinating. It is obvious that the story deals with a subtle but steady moral deterioration of Michael Adonis. Adonis who meets a friend, Willieboy at the café and tells how and why he got sacked:

'Nice, boy, nice. You know me, mos. Always take it easy. How goes it with you?'

'Strolling again. Got pushed out of my job at the factory.'

'How come then?'

'Answered back to an effing white rooker. Foreman.'

'Those whites. What happened?'

'That white bastard was lucky I didn't pull him up good. He had been asking for it a long time.'

Every time a man goes to the piss-house he starts moaning. Jesus Christ, the way he went on you'd think a man had to wet his pants rather than take a minute off. Well, he picked on me for going for a leak and I told him to go to hell.' (p.4)

From the dialogue above, the main reason for sacking Adonis from the job is quite unfortunate that working for the white man is a tedious task for the non-white fellow. One has to get worn out for working under the white's authority. As in the case of Adonis, he goes out to urinate and he is questioned on that. The verb 'moaning' as used in the passage tells us the displeasure shown by the foreman when he realises that Adonis takes a break to visit the urinal. Adonis who considers himself as a human being but not a working machine also talks back to the foreman which results in his dismissal from the factory.

Willieboy informs us:

'Ja,' Willieboy said. 'Working for whites. Happens all the time, man. Me, I never work for no white john. Not even brown one. To hell with work. Work, work, work, where does it get you? Not me, pally.' (p. 4).

From this quotation, one can glean that the non-white is not respected by the white man. He is made to overwork himself like a 'donkey'. Adonis' colleagues in the factory are not even

given the chance to urinate when they wish to. One has to work all the time when one gets to the work place. The only time he gets to rest is when he has closed from work. This therefore indicates how cruel these white employers are. Willieboy, on the other hand, who does not want to over-work himself decides that he will never work for a white man. However, Adonis is not only sacked from his job but also is insulted by his foreman. He does not remain silent after he had been insulted but also insults the foreman by saying 'he was no-good pore-white' (p.4).

Having nowhere to go and nobody to appeal to against the dismissal, he finds himself in a café which is described as an outpost of 'the whirlpool world of poverty, petty crime and violence' (p.4) of District Six. Thrown into this coloured urban slum, without a job, or the surety of getting one in the near future, his thoughts were 'concentrated upon the pustule of rage and humiliation that was continuing to ripen deep down within him' (p.1). Adonis is boiled up with anger deeply in his thoughts to the extent that even when eating at the restaurant, the thoughts of the foreman insulting him never escaped the mind and he says: 'That sonavabitch, that bloody white sonavabitch, I'll get him' (p.5).

Further, when Adonis comes out from the restaurant, he is stopped on the road by two Afrikaner (white) policemen who intend searching him for dagga (marijuana) in a very derogatory manner. Smoking of marijuana is associated with the non-whites because they are seen as having nothing to do with their lives than to smoke and create troubles in the society. "This policeman asked in a heavy, brutal voice, 'Where's your dagga?' 'I don't smoke it'" (p.12). The adjective 'brutal' as used to describe the voice of the policeman indicates how pitiless and heartless the policeman is when asking Adonis whether he has marijuana in his pocket or not. This indication brings to the fore how the white men in the society live with the non-whites. There is no point of respect for the non-white races as regards their human identity and that authorises the white men to derogatorily approach the non-white. The whites perceive the colour black to be connected with evil and wickedness; "virtue is white as sin is black."

Interestingly, during the search for dagga, the policemen see money in Adonis' pocket and as a matter of fact takes Adonis for a thief: 'Jong, turn out your pockets,' the first one ordered. 'Hurry up.' Michael Adonis began to empty his pockets slowly, without looking up at them and thinking, with each movement, you mucking boers, you mucking boers. Michael Adonis showed them his crumbled and partly used packet of cigarettes, the money he had left over from his pay.

'Where did you steal the money?' The question was without humour.

'Didn't steal it, baas (you mucking boer).'

'Well, muck off from the street. Don't let us find you standing around, you hear?'

'Yes, (you mucking boer).'

'Yes, What? Who are you talking to, man?'

'Yes, baas (you mucking bastard boer with your mucking gun and you're mucking bloody red head) (p. 12)

Consequently, with no proof, Adonis has been classified as a thief. Adonis possessing any amount of money means it was a stolen item and that he has no other ability or capability of getting money in the view of the white police officer. However, the truth is, the non-white only earns a living from succumbing to performing the laborious jobs for the whites for low earnings devoid of stealing. Yet, he (Adonis) is regarded as a thief since he is caught possessing money. In the apartheid system, non-whites, only do the menial but tedious work in the society. They work in areas like the mines and steel industries like that of Adonis. The whites held that they are superior justified discrimination, segregation, colonialism, slavery and even genocide.

One of the ailments of this period is poverty. Poverty during the apartheid regime in South Africa ruined some young people's lives. Willieboy's poverty causes him trouble, he went to Adonis's house to see if he would get some money from his pay-off, when he was taken for the murderer of the old man (Doughty), Joe's upbringing (his parents poverty lives) affected him so much and turned him to a beggar. There is the example of racial violence, constable Raalt's unlawful killing of Willieboy is a typical example of racial violence.

Racial oppression in the text can be examined through Michael Adonis's sacked from work by his white foreman. Racial segregation also can be seen, the white oppressor segregate (set apart) the coloured people to live separately in the hot tenements, while the whites live apart in a very conducive environment.

Social, Economic, And Psychological Impacts of Apartheid

The stories in *A Walk in the Night* and other Stories vividly depict the multifaceted impacts of apartheid on individuals and society.

Apartheid's enforced segregation led to social alienation and prejudice exemplified in "The Lemon Orchard." The dehumanization of black and poor individuals, reflecting the systematic stripping away of their dignity. In "The Lemon Orchard," the educated black teacher's humiliation and fear are evident as he is led by white men into the orchard for punishment. The narrative describes his experience: "He shivered in the cold, but it was not just from the cold. The fear gnawed at him, eroding his confidence and sense of dignity". This story starkly illustrates the social injustices and normalized violence used to maintain racial hierarchies. The narrative describes the mob's attitude toward the black teacher: "The men made coarse jokes, which seemed to them funny, about the 'kaffir' who would catch a cold" (p. 119). Choker was not given food in the Portuguese Cafe despite offering sixpence just because he was a black. This quote illustrates the casual cruelty and dehumanization faced by black individuals, reflecting the normalized racism in society.

Economic deprivation is a constant struggle for many characters. In "A Walk in the Night," Mikey's observations of the neighborhood highlight the economic hardships: "Here, the ragged children scurried like rats in the shadows of the streets, begging for bread or money" (p. 23). This vivid imagery emphasizes the poverty and desperation in the community, exacerbated by systemic inequalities.

The psychological toll of apartheid manifests in various forms, including fear, anger, and hopelessness. In "Blankets," Choker's reflections on his life underscore the pervasive impact of poverty and marginalization: "He felt that everything had conspired against him from the start" (p. 95). This statement captures the sense of futility and resignation experienced by many under apartheid.

Literary Creativity and Techniques

La Guma's storytelling is marked by his skilled use of literary techniques, which enhance the thematic exploration of apartheid and its effects as seen below:

i. Narrative structure and perspective:

The use of a third-person omniscient narrator allows for a comprehensive portrayal of the characters' inner lives and the broader societal context. In "Tattoo Marks and Nails," the narrator's insight into the characters' thoughts and feelings provides a nuanced view of the prison's social dynamics, as seen in the line:

"Each man's fate hung in the balance, yet they were all connected by the invisible chains of their shared plight" (p. 44).

ii. Imagery and symbolism:

La Guma uses rich imagery to depict the harsh realities of apartheid. In *A Walk in the Night*, the description of the night as:

“an old, discarded shroud that lay across the city” (p. 21)

The above quote symbolizes the pervasive sense of death and decay in the oppressed communities. The metaphor of the shroud suggests an overwhelming, suffocating presence that envelops the characters' lives.

iii. Tone And Atmosphere:

The tone often shifts from reflective to somber, mirroring the characters' emotional states. The atmosphere of tension and fear is palpable in "The Lemon Orchard," where the narrative describes the teacher's fear:

“He was gripped by a cold terror that tightened his throat and constricted his chest” (p. 121).

This detailed description heightens the reader's sense of empathy and understanding of the character's plight.

iv. Oxymoron (Juxtaposition) And Irony:

La Guma frequently uses juxtaposition to highlight contrasts in social realities. In "At the Portagee's," the disparity between the wealthy diners and the beggar is starkly presented:

“Inside, the people laughed and clinked glasses, while outside the beggar's stomach growled in hunger” (p. 59).

This contrast underscores the economic inequalities perpetuated by apartheid. The irony in stories like "The Gladiators," where the black boxer is cheered for his skill yet derided for his race, further emphasizes the absurdity and cruelty of racial prejudices.

Findings of the Study

The findings of this research are:

- i. Representation of Apartheid's Brutality:** The study found that Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night* (1962) provides a stark and unflinching portrayal of the brutality of apartheid. The novella vividly depicts the systemic violence and racial discrimination that black South Africans endured, using the experiences of the characters to illustrate the pervasive and dehumanizing effects of the apartheid regime.
- ii. Interconnectedness of Personal and Political Struggles:** The analysis revealed that the characters in *A Walk in the Night* are not just individuals caught in a web of personal struggles, but also representations of the broader political and social struggles of black South Africans. La Guma skillfully intertwines the personal lives of his characters with the political context of apartheid, showing how the regime's oppressive policies infiltrate and shape every aspect of their existence.
- iii. Narrative as a Tool for Social Critique:** The study concluded that La Guma's use of narrative, symbolism, and imagery in *A Walk in the Night* serves as a potent tool for social critique. The novella not only tells the story of individual characters but also critiques the broader societal structures that sustain and perpetuate apartheid.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, *A Walk in the Night* (1962) by Alex La Guma emerges as a significant literary work that captures the harsh realities of apartheid in South Africa. The novella's thematic exploration of racial oppression, social injustice, and resistance provides a deep and insightful critique of the apartheid system. Through his compelling narrative and richly drawn characters, La Guma not only documents the suffering of black South Africans but also presents a broader commentary on the human condition under oppressive regimes.

The study confirms that *A Walk in the Night* is a powerful testament to the resilience of the human spirit and a call for justice and equality in the face of systemic oppression. It underscores the importance of literature as a means of documenting and challenging social injustices, and it highlights La Guma's role as a crucial voice in the anti-apartheid movement.

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