CHAPTER 11

An Arc Beyond *Stasis*: Activism in the Hinterland-facing Fictions of Alex La Guma and Zoë Wicomb

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In *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* (1972), the fourth novel by exiled South African writer, journalist, and liberation activist Alex La Guma (1925–1985), a character called Beatie Adams, an implicitly "Coloured" nanny to a white child,[1] finds herself in the Company Gardens in central

[1] "Coloured," in the South African (British) spelling, denoted a particular racial classification for a diverse group of people that included, inter alia, autochthonous Khoisan peoples (not Bantu / Black African), slaves from the Indian Ocean rim, deracinated white settlers, and mixed-race or biracial people. Much politics has attended its lowercase or uppercase usage; see for example Zoë Wicomb's sustained use of the word uncapitalized to reflect its continued use for communal self-identification, as distinct from the capitalized classificatory term whose convoluted legal definitions one of the protagonists in her novel *Playing in the Light* reads about in the National Library in Cape Town (2006, 120–122).

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Cape Town, near the 1908 bronze statue of Cecil John Rhodes that stands there (8). Sindi-Leigh McBride's discussion of the inscription on this statue's granite base—"Your hinterland is there"—in her presentation at the colloquium from which this volume arises, reminded me of La Guma's novel's engagement with this landmark, and with these words ascribed to the former Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, mastermind of the colonization of Mashonaland and Matabeleland, and architect of the expansion of British rule over all of Southern Africa.[2] For Beatie Adams, Rhodes's statue's raised left hand is not "pointing north" to Cairo, tracing the route of the Cape-to-Mediterranean railway of imperial fantasy (as the inscription implies), but instead "toward the segregated lavatories: Yonder lies your hinterland," Beatie thinks, with amusement (12).

La Guma, who had recently begun two decades of exile when *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* was published and would never again see his home city, slightly misremembers the inscription, substituting *yonder* for *there*, *lies* for *is*. The errors suggest a greater sense of spatial remove, as well as a dislocation that registers temporally. The former effect emphasizes apartheid's segregationist policies, indexing the stasis in which South Africans consigned to the actual hinterlands, both near and far (in Phil Neel's definitions [2018b, 17–18]), of apartheid's spatial engineering—as well as to the metaphorical hinterlands of apartheid's developmental logic—long felt themselves trapped.[3] The latter effect implies belatedness through its old-fashioned formulation, while the phrase "yonder lies" also suggests a promise that might or might not be honored—just as in "lies" we might intuit multiple political falsehoods. Reading stasis affirmatively, as this chapter will attempt to do, might allow one to read this multivalent *lying yonder* as reassessing any assumption that a hinterland's stasis is either wholly negative or a permanent state; the slantwise misquotation elevates the critique implicit in Beatie's bemusement, whether intentionally or not. In La Guma's hands, Rhodes's imperial overreach is reduced to bathos, its

[2] The hinterland as "beyond" or "back" country bears an imperial or extractive-capitalist descriptive intention, suggesting not only spatial remove but temporal difference: belatedness, backwardness, stasis, an association that is implied by the geological sense in which the word has been used as synonym for one body in relation to another (*hinterland* to *foreland*): that which has shifted (away), or not yet shifted (toward). See the *Oxford English Dictionary* etymologies and list of historical usages ("hinterland, n." 2021).

[3] Those finding themselves in the hinterland, Neel suggests, are subject to an "inclusive-exclusion": "the commonality that comes from being increasingly surplus to the economy, though also paradoxically integral to it" (2018b, 13).

end the petty apartheid regulation of separate amenities, rather than anything edifying or lasting.

Immediately after musing on Rhodes's statue, Beatie picks up a newspaper and encounters a report about a murder in a rural town: a white woman has been charged with poisoning her husband:

> Suddenly Beatie Adams remembered a country station, milk cans, a sheep pen, a coloured man in a railway cap sweeping the platform as her train pulled slowly past, carrying her towards the city, years ago. Surely, she thought, it couldn't be *that* place. [….] Beatie Adams wondered how people could be so nasty as to go about murdering each other. (13)

She cannot fathom such nastiness: this, she thinks, "was not a world included in a succession of servants' rooms" (13), spaces that are themselves metaphorically hinterlands within a zone of suburban propriety penetrated neither by such happenings nor news of such events (see Jansen 2019). Suburbs are (near) hinterlands, too, Neel reminds us (2018a, 33), and both these and those further removed, recalled in Beatie's memory of her origins, are cast as unsettling, known *and* defamiliarized spaces, in which nothing happens but from which violence is never far removed.[4] The term "hinterland" has a figurative usage, after all, connoting the unconscious or repressed,[5] and repression—whether socio-political (which is to say material) or psychological (on the part of those repressed or complicit in repression, however conscious)—inevitably marks engagements with the hinterland in South African letters as an overdetermined spatio-temporal continuum, whether understood as a *chronotope* with Bakhtin (1990), or a *heterotopia* with Foucault (1984). What, after all, are J. M. Coetzee's *Dusklands* (1974) but historical and psychological hinterlands connecting the Cape settler-colonial adventure in the eighteenth-century with US neo-imperialism in Vietnam in the early 1970s? The hinterland is a space, too, in which the claims of Black South Africans to the land must be confronted, as in Nadine Gordimer's *The*

[4] Suburbs, Neel writes, "most often act as a near hinterland, where visible industry … accretes just outside the sightline of the wealthy urbanite"; conversely (and concomitantly), "exurban and rural areas compose a far hinterland," one saturated with extraction, production, and much violence (2018a, 33).

[5] See, as examples of historical usage: "Unexplored territories full of mystery and danger in the hinterland of their own minds" (1919); "We are mostly unexplored hinterland" (D. H. Lawrence, about 1930) ("hinterland, n.").

Conservationist (1974), published in the same year as *Dusklands*. One might go back further, to Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), or earlier still to the 1820s poetry of Scottish immigrant Thomas Pringle, for similarly rich and fraught representations of the non-metropolitan, rural, and peripheral, and their alternative affective-temporal structures.

La Guma's interest in the social and political marginalization of characters classified by apartheid legislation as "Coloured" is in some ways a precursor to similar concerns in the early work of another writer for whom hinterlands serve as multiply suggestive spaces. Beatie Adams, indeed, shares a story of arrival in the city not unlike that of Frieda Shenton, the protagonist of Zoë Wicomb's debut 1987 linked-story volume (or composite novel) *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* (1987). Wicomb's book's title alludes to the conceit that one always knows where one is in Cape Town because of Table Mountain's presence at the city's heart, but it is peripheral spaces that interest this author more: the segregated university college for Coloured students that Frieda attends, a mere "clearing in the bush" according to the title of the chapter in which it features; the segregated Cape Flats suburb where Frieda visits friends on a return trip from her new life in Britain; and, further afield, the dusty northern Cape settlement from which, like Beatie, she first arrived on a train to the city, and which she revisits with her mother in the book's final story or chapter, "A Trip to the Gifberge." In this final story (or chapter), Wicomb's protagonist learns that one might know where one is in Cape Town, but it is only in the hinterland that one has access to a connection with place that is neither circumscribed nor has its significance prescribed by apartheid or whiteness.

Wicomb has long been—and remains—interested in the hinterlands of the Western, Northern, and Eastern Cape provinces of South Africa. From the earliest to her most recent book, these spaces serve repeatedly to index alternative temporalities, affective investments, and even language(s) left behind by protagonists who only ever partially succeed in leaving the provinces—and the past—behind. La Guma's early fiction, by contrast, has an almost obsessive interest in urban (or urban-peripheral) experience: *A Walk in the Night* (1962) follows a cast of characters in inner-city Cape Town's ill-fated District Six over the course of a single day; *And a Threefold Cord* (1964) is set in a Cape Flats shantytown at the mercy of rain and fire; and *The Stone Country* (1967) substitutes a prison yard—Roeland Street gaol, at the very heart of Cape Town—not just for the city but the whole

country, implicitly rendered a prison by apartheid. It is only in the last two novels, *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* and *Time of the Butcherbird* (1979), that La Guma ventures into what one might convincingly describe as the hinterlands—from whence Beatie Adams has come, and which are rendered deeply unfamiliar in the pages of the newspaper she reads in the shadow of Cecil Rhodes's "hinterland" statue in the Company Gardens. Wicomb's Frieda Shenton is, like Beatie, a reader, though one also on her way to becoming a writer; "A Trip to the Gifberge" concludes with a reference to her recently published stories.[6]

In the remarks that follow, I begin to ask what might be gleaned from putting work by these two writers, a generation apart, both classed by the apartheid regime as Coloured, both exiles, into productive conversation around the concept of the hinterland. What is revealed by considering (in brief) those fictions by each that chart most convincingly—I contend—the journey of a protagonist from political naïveté to engaged activism (though necessarily of very different kinds)? What kind of work is done in and through the affective-temporal conditions explored in these works in relation to the hinterland (in particular), and how might they help us revalue the stasis typically associated with such spaces?

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Stasis involves waiting, a word with a noteworthy critical history in South Africa. We encounter it in the title of Coetzee's 1980 novel *Waiting for the Barbarians*, and in his speech on the acceptance of the CNA Prize for which he declared South Africa to be "in the provinces of history" (1981)—perhaps also in its *hinterlands*. We might also think about Vincent Crapanzano's *Waiting: The Whites of South Africa*, a work of social anthropology (first published in 1985) that considered the discontents of the condition in which apartheid-era whites (in his study site, in the Cape Winelands) hoped for something, anything, to happen, but were simultaneously paralyzed by such hope (1986, 43–47).[7] In my 2017 monograph *Present Imperfect: Contemporary South African Writing*, I consider a selection of contemporary writers in whose work we see a range of engagements with the condition of waiting experienced as stasis, structured less by hope than by disappointment. In this affective-temporal state, I argue,

[6] See Van der Vlies (2013) further.

[7] On religion in particular, see Crapanzano (1986, 70, 99, 219–233).

we might apprehend both a temporal description (a missed appointment with history, with the promise of the transition), and an affective one (dysphoric states marked by varieties of bad feeling). Among the thinkers who provided the tools for my analysis in that book,[8] Giorgio Agamben and Walter Benjamin are perhaps most useful for a consideration of La Guma and Wicomb's hinterland-focused fictions.[9]

Agamben reminds us that, in its original usage in Classical Greece, *stasis* named a condition of civil war. The uprising understood by the Greeks in this way is also a standing still, he points out, a standing firm, linked (*stasis*, from *histemi*) to an act of standing upright as if to speak a certain truth, to take a stand, to look to the future: "*stasimos* is the point in the tragedy when the chorus stands still and speaks" (Agamben 2015, 10). If politics is "a field of forces whose extremes are the *oikos* and the *polis*," the household and the city, Agamben continues, then "between them, civil war marks the threshold through which the unpolitical is politicised and the political is 'economised' […]" (2015, 16–17).[10] Politics moves into the household under these conditions; "the *oikos* is politicised"—questions of life (as opposed to the "good life") move into the public realm—and the

[8] Besides Lauren Berlant, Sara Ahmed, and Sianne Ngai, the work of anthropologist of the Caribbean David Scott was especially helpful, both *Omens of Adversity* (2014), a fascinating engagement with the aftermath of the failure of the revolution in Scott's native Grenada, and *Conscripts of Modernity* (2004), a reassessment of C. L. R. James's work on Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Haitian Revolution. Susan Buck-Morss has had fascinating things to say about Hegel on Haiti, first in an intervention in *Critical Inquiry* in 2000, and then in a response to reactions to that essay; both essays appear in the edition cited here (2009). Hegel surely hovers in the background of any discussion of hinterlands like some disappointed angel of history.

[9] In *Present Imperfect*, I read two debut novels by Masande Ntshanga and Songesiwe Mahlangu in order better to understand what I take to be their attempts to name and recuperate the quotidian as political, to identify and begin to imagine a response to the eclipsing of *homo politicus* by *homo oeconomicus* in (post-) postapartheid South Africa. Both novels involve far and near hinterlands, in Neel's use of those terms (2018a, 33).

[10] Agamben's larger project in the text is to suggest that we need a *theory* of civil war. He restricts himself to two moments in Western political thought—the idea of civil strife in Greek city-states; Hobbes's *Leviathan*—that "represent the two faces, so to speak, of a single political paradigm, which manifests itself, on the one hand, through the assertion of the necessity of civil war, and on the other, through the assertion of the necessity of its exclusion." Agamben's contribution is to suggest that these twin impulses (necessity of, necessity to exclude) "maintain a secret solidarity between them" (2015, 3).

polis is "economised" (Agamben 2015, 12).[11] This sounds very much, I observe, like Wendy Brown's description, after Foucault, of the chief characteristics of neoliberalism, which economizes the private sphere and privatizes politics: *homo oeconomicus* moves into the realm of politics and *homo politicus* into the home (2015, 49–62).[12] Neoliberalism thrives, in other words, on a version of civil strife that is experienced affectively by individual subjects as impasse, *stasis* experienced as stasis. But if these conditions pertain in post-apartheid South Africa, in particular in the wake of the Mbeki presidency, they help us to understand the peculiar nature of impasse felt under the conditions of late-apartheid, too—a state of impasse characterized by brutal police-state repression, paranoia about government informants, a lack of any sense of forward movement, and a form of horizontal or lateral violence (in a Fanonian sense) that might be understood as undeclared civil war.[13]

La Guma is South African literature's key example of a writer whose works' closely observed naturalism serves a progressive political purpose, charting the growth of political consciousness among ordinary people from communities that apartheid labeled "Coloured" or "black."[14] *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* traces a short period in the life of an activist called Beukes as he distributes posters for an illegal protest gathering. Over the course of a very long day, he encounters a range of ordinary Capetonians with varying degrees of obliviousness to the politics of the moment, or whose involvement in the struggle is constrained by their willed ignorance or a desire to avoid (as is the case for Nelly, the wife of Beukes's friend Arthur Bennett) "any bladdy trouble" (20). Another acquaintance, Tommy, is even further from taking up arms:

> For Tommy reality, life, could be shut out by the blare of dance-bands and the voices of crooners. From this cocoon he emerged only to find the means of subsistence, food and drink. Politics meant nothing to him. He found it easier to live under the regime than to oppose it. (53)

[11] Agamben concludes thus: "*in the system of Greek politics civil war functions as a threshold of politicisation and depoliticisation, through which the house is exceeded in the city and the city is depoliticised in the family*" (2015, 12; emphasis in original).

[12] See Van der Vlies (2017, 162–171).

[13] See Fanon (2021), especially the chapter "Concerning Violence."

[14] For a survey, including of the reception of La Guma's work, see Van der Vlies (2003).

La Guma's careful depiction of the material conditions of dire poverty and brutal restriction to which white South Africa constrains its racial Other is in service of a readerly implication in making meaning, in recognizing the structural nature of oppression, and in apprehending what characters in various states of ignorance or denial are not able fully to appreciate themselves. In an early assessment of La Guma's oeuvre to date, Coetzee described this as a form of Lukácsian critical realism (1971, 6–10). Three years later he argued that they were in fact *not* examples of this form because they too often displayed stasis: the characters only imperfectly perceive the ideological nature of their reality and take only tentative steps (if any) to challenge their oppressors; this stasis therefore belonged to the naturalistic novel, Coetzee argued (1992, 352).

In *In the Fog of the Seasons' End*, however, despite passages of extended description (in the mode of naturalism; La Guma as the Zola of District Six),[15] we see a character actively engaged in resistance organizing and standing ready (standing up in the mode of Agamben's gloss on *stasis, stasimos*) to take up arms. "There's no point in talking violence if you can't put it into effect," Beukes realizes (89–90). This process of converting stasis into something active is linked to a valorization of the hinterland that is dismissed as a false promise—or the reality only of separate toilet facilities—in the scene in the Company Gardens discussed above. Beatie is one of the many characters trapped in a condition of stasis whom Beukes must attempt to nudge toward political maturity (repoliticizing the *polis*—and drawing attention to the always-already structurally subordinated and hence politicized *oikos*, too). Remarking on her nanny duties, Beukes tells Beatie: "We all good enough to be servants. Because we're black they think we good enough just to change their nappies" (11). Beatie responds: "That's life, isn't it?" but Beukes replies: "There are things people can do" (11). He leaves her soon after, and Beatie opens the newspaper to read about the hinterland murderess, a story revisited throughout the day in several other papers. It even begins to take on allegorical significance as we learn that the accused has poisoned her husband by adding "a little bit of the white powder which contained arsenic to his coffee" ("she would put the deadly white powder in the cup first and then pour in the steaming

[15] "A slum hung on the edge of the city suburbs like dirty plaster, cracking and crumbling away, yet unwilling to fall apart. There were ruined and broken lines of gimcrack cottages where the main suburb ended and then winding and broken lines of dwellings with rusting walls and sagging roofs held down with stones or baling wire" (La Guma 1972, 142).

coffee") (62). Whiteness here poisons the black base. "In a side column" on the newspaper page on which Beukes sees this account, he reads about "the Minister of Police [announcing]: 'The Republic is facing a new wave of guerrilla incursions on its northern borders … African nationalist infiltrators are stirring up the local population'" (62). Here, then, is another "poison" that might counteract the already-poisoned white republic.[16]

Beukes, meanwhile, walks through the Company Gardens toward the natural history museum that sits at its center. Here, too, is an unenlightened potential comrade, also likely Coloured, who sits reading a newspaper "behind the glass of a cubicle" and is implicitly trapped in a form of stasis like that of the museum's exhibits: "stuffed animals, the monkey foetus in a glass jar, and the crushed flea behind a magnifying glass" (14). Beukes thinks immediately about the plaster-cast San figures in the museum's "anthropological section": "Bushmen" who "had hunted with bows and tiny arrows behind glass; red-yellow dwarfs with peppercorn hair and beady eyes." Significantly, we read, "Beukes had thought sentimentally that they were the first to fight" (14). Here the city-dwelling, not-yet-radicalized subject of apartheid repression is contrasted with what these historical hinterland-dwelling progenitors represent: resistance. Beukes's understanding of his task, one might say, is to reactivate the energies of revolt latent in the far hinterlands and insert them—in the persons of newly recruited cadres—into the near hinterlands of Cape Town's suburbs.

We continue to follow Beukes as he attempts to distribute leaflets advertising a peaceful resistance campaign (87, 97), but the day ends with his being shot by police as a crackdown begins. The novel concludes with a shift from Cape Town's dilapidated "Coloured and Black settlements" (63)—and indeed its manicured white suburbs—toward an embrace of the hinterlands and an implied commitment to armed resistance that will be taken further in *Time of the Butcherbird*, which features a central act of rural land dispossession and an act of violence against whites by a Black guerrilla fighter.[17] Beukes is last seen waving recruits to the armed wing of the liberation movement off into the bush *en route* to the border. Notably, *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* bears a dedication to real-life freedom fighters "Basil February and others killed in action, Zimbabwe, 1967" (v).

[16] See also La Guma (1972, 112, 163).

[17] There is no space here to elaborate on the potential use of Neel's construction of the "Ultra" as a figure of revolt, which might be productive in readings of apartheid-era resistance writing; see Neel (2018b, 151–156) and Welsh (2019, 392) further.

While a separate strand of the novel features flashbacks to the childhood and young manhood of a fictional equivalent, Elias Tekwane, and his torture and death at the hands of security policemen, the novel holds open in this final scene and its dedication a revalorization of the hinterland not as sleepy rural station-sidings (per Beatie Adams), but site of future resistance (per the San, "the first to fight" [14], and February) and political (and personal) actualization.

We see a similar trajectory, with differences, in the movement *back* to the hinterlands as site for the reclamation of energies previously regarded as static or backward, in Wicomb's *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*, published only a couple of years after La Guma's death (in Havana, Cuba). A longer version of this chapter might trace in greater detail the process by which Wicomb's protagonist Frieda must learn to read the potential that persists in those (far) hinterland spaces to fulfill her destiny as writer (see Van der Vlies 2013, 12–17; Neel 2018a, 33). Each chapter (or story) indeed shows us Frieda figuring out her relationship to signs and stories in response to which she must negotiate an ethical position. In "A Clearing in the Bush," we see her feeling that she has "betrayed" a character about whom she is writing an English essay (56). In "Behind the Bougainvillea," her reading is not literal, unlike the girls she sees reading a "photo-story" in the static space of a hinterland doctor's waiting room (110), but metaphorical: she must read between the lines to understand that her love interest, Henry, is an ANC activist (119). In "A Fair Exchange," Frieda learns to listen intently to the story of another—here a farm laborer coded as closely descended from autochthonous Khoisan people—in order to learn how to apprehend her own (the exchange, significantly, involves her handing over her spectacles in return for Skitterboud's story). Finally, in "A Trip to the Gifberge," Frieda's mother implores her not to conform to the expectations of white readers (even if she is also appalled at the impropriety of her writing about herself). Only then, having embraced her status as activist hinterland amanuensis (a role, one might argue, reprised with a difference in each Wicomb book to follow), can Frieda overcome her stasis and become a writer.

Crucially, it is in what Neel would cast as the "far hinterland" (2018a, 33), then, that Wicomb's writer-protagonist appears to find the potential to assert herself as writer, though it might be more accurate to say on the far fringes of the far hinterland if we understand the latter as "devoted to particularly messy or violent industries—agriculture, mining," and others (Neel 2018a, 33). Indeed, *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* begins with a

white official coming to inspect a gypsum mine that is the mainstay of Frieda's family's town, and in "A Fair Exchange" and "A Trip to the Gifberge" we see the intrusive and appropriative operations of white stock farming. It is only up in the mountain, in indigenous flora (the famed *fynbos*), that Frieda is admonished to break free from apartheid-administered metaphorical hinterland subjectivity. When she objects to her mother's desire to take home a protea bush, Mrs. Shenton insists her daughter is mistaken in subscribing to an alien (and alienating) semiotic system (proteas being both exemplary *fynbos* specimens *and* crucially also the floral symbol of apartheid South Africa). "And then you can hoist the South African flag and sing" the national anthem, Frieda responds, sarcastically, to which Hannah Shenton replies:

> Don't be silly; it's not the same thing at all. You who're so clever ought to know that proteas belong to the veld. Only fools and cowards would hand them over to the Boers. Those who put their stamp on things may see it in their own histories and hopes. But a bush is a bush; it doesn't become what people think they inject into it. (Wicomb 1987, 181)

Here the very materiality of the far hinterland offers itself as antidote to stasis.[18]

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Agamben's helpful reminder about the energies encoded in the etymology of *stasis* is at this point usefully set alongside another theoretical flashlight, if you will, provided by a thinker who offers another way of reanimating energies not always glimpsed in stasis. Walter Benjamin's idiosyncratic historical-materialist project was predicated on reanimating past moments of liberatory or revolutionary potential and utopian hope. *The Arcades Project* and other writing on history (not least his famous theses "On the Concept of History") use a range of metaphors to explain this task: a "leap in the open air of history" to blast "out of [its] continuum" (2006, 395) a "constellation saturated with tensions" (396); to reimagine the "homogenous, empty time" (395) of officially sanctioned histories (those authored

[18] Something similar can be seen in "A Fair Exchange," in which Skitterboud's wife names her child "Blom," flower, after "the Namaqua daisy that breaks out of the stones washed white by winter rain"; "[j]ust Blom, plain flower a name that no one could take away from her" (Wicomb 1987, 133).

by apartheid ideologues, for instance) as a quasi-mystical "now-time" (*Jetztzeit*), full of potential. It is tempting to read the glass cases and dioramas in the South African Museum in Cape Town's Company Gardens that feature in *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* as allegories of the "empty time," and the hinterlands from which those first resistance fighters, the "Bushmen," came, as allegory for the *Jetztzeit* that freedom-fighters, like some embodiment of Benjamin's (fighting) historical-materialist, will reanimate. "[T]he relation of the present to the past is purely temporal," Benjamin wrote in *The Arcades Project*, but "the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but figural […]" (1999, 462–463). Is it too much to read in the final moments of La Guma's novel something like this process of recovery, turning empty time into *Jetztzeit*, the stasis of restricted life under a repressive regime into revolutionary now-time? Beukes stands in the yard and watches the van leave, "then turned back to where the children had gathered in the sunlit yard" (La Guma 1972, 181).

As in the earlier novels *A Walk in the Night* and *And a Threefold Cord*, children here suggest the future, though one for which a fight will have to be mounted. La Guma would not live to see the realization of a New South Africa suggested in that closing scene, though his novels offer perhaps the most consistently engaged (and engaging) example of writing that emerged in South Africa out of a dialectics that matched extreme literariness, as Coetzee recognized (1992, 358; see also Van der Vlies 2007, 124–125), with a commitment to produce what Fanon would doubtless have endorsed as the embodiment of a fighting literature. La Guma, and Wicomb after him, revalues stasis as potential, and in the work of both writers the geography of such revaluation is sketched in a trajectory that appears to follow an arc, ironically traced by Rhodes's outstretched arm, from city center to a hinterland that might indeed become, for the marginalized viewer prepared to take it, "yours." That the arc is redrawn differently, however, in each writer's work (and differently in different works by each), might suggest less an unequivocal directional imperative—from near to far hinterland, from rural area to city—in whichever direction, than an oscillation that is recalibrated according to the exigencies of the moment, that of writing *and* of the activism that seemed necessary *in* that moment, one that arcs toward a reactivation of the potential that lies waiting in the hinterland, whether near or far.

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