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THE POLITICS OF REPENTANCE IN ALAN PATON'S *CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY*

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A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in the Department of African literature, University of the Witwatersrand.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own unaided work. It is being submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

(E RISI)

30 April 1999

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife Luisa, and to my father, who encouraged me to embark on a Master's degree, but who passed away before it was completed.

ABSTRACT

This research project examines the way in which Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* addresses the crisis within South African society in relation to its so called Native Policy, in the years 1940 – 1948. The problems of housing, crime, land depletion, the break-down of tribal institutions etc. were all being debated within the context of various ideological positions. In his novel, Paton makes his own voice felt within the context of a Christian Liberal paradigm. In this regard I have explored the characteristics of Christian Liberalism, its strengths and weaknesses, and its relation to the competing discourses of the period, in particular those of the government's policy of segregation on the right, and the growing strength of the ANC and the Labour Movement on the left. The novel positions itself both in terms of protest and containment, and in terms of what I have called the *politics of repentance* calls on whites to embrace a more equitable model of society based on Christian and Liberal principles in a spirit of conversion and brotherly love, while eschewing a more radical approach to the dismantling of an order rooted in British colonialism, largely because of the imputed violent implications of such change. Paton's visionary appeal is thus limited by both his own political leanings as well as by the pastoral ideal within which he expresses his inspiration.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	(i)
DEDICATION	(ii)
ABSTRACT	(iii)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	(iv)
TABLE OF CONTENTS	(v)
CHAPTER 1	1
CHAPTER 2	13
CHAPTER 3	40
CONCLUSION	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY	62

CHAPTER I

Responses to *Cry, the Beloved Country* abound, although there is no detailed full-length critical work dedicated to the novel or to Paton's oeuvre in general. The responses vary according to the political climate in which they were written and in particular, to the relation of that climate to liberalism. Black African responses (Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ezekiel Mphahlele, in particular) tend to be negative, and highlight the colonial nature of the novel, in particular the colonial nature of Christianity. Other critical responses tend to fall into two categories: liberal newspaper reviews (for example, the Daily Herald, 1948) which guardedly sing the novel's praises for its humanity and beautiful diction; and academic reviews, mostly published in *English in Africa*. Many of the latter, written in the 1980's, tend to strike a critical stance. Given the political impetus to "rolling mass action" following the formation of the UDF, many of them adopt marxist literary tropes to point to the mystification of the "real" conditions of oppression in the novel. I will draw attention to three of these articles in the discussion below: Stephen Watson's "*Cry, the Beloved Country* and the failure of Liberal Vision", Andrew Nash's "The way to the Beloved Country: History and the Individual in Alan Paton's *Towards the Mountain*", and David's Wards chapter on *Cry, the Beloved Country* in his discussion of African fiction: *Chronicles of Darkness.* Articles written in the 1990's, after the unbanning of the ANC and the initiation of negotiations leading to the democratic elections in 1994, are more cautious in their criticism, and revise in general the evaluation passed on liberalism in the 1980's. Paul Rich, for example, whose seminal work *White power and the Liberal Conscience: Racial Segregation and South African Liberalism* (1984), traces the continuity between liberalism and first segregation and then Apartheid, offers a re-assessment of liberalism in his article "A new South African Liberal Conscience?" (1997)

> "The general academic debate in South Africa on liberalism tended to overlook the role and significance of liberal ideas in South African politics and was mostly concerned with the social and class location of liberal political organisations. This disregard for liberal political

> thought reflected a widely-held view among radical academic and political circles in the 1970s and early 1980s that liberal ideas had little or no relevance to contemporary issues of national liberation."
>
> (Rich 1997: 3)

The re-emergence of liberalism in relation to "democratic and non-racial discourses in the anti-apartheid opposition in the 1980s and early 1990s", (Rich 1997:16) has re-established its importance in debates concerning constitutionality, the limits of state power and the rights of the individual in a democratic state. In relation to these debates, David Hemson's article: "*Cry, the Beloved Country*: Land, Segregation and the City", (1994) evaluates the novel in relation to the strengths and weaknesses of liberalism. Beyond the articles enumerated above, I am also indebted to Tony Morphet's "The Honour of Meditation", (1983) which "honours" Paton's personal contribution to South African literature and society on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. Although his discussion of the construction of the self, as vulnerable-to-fear and redeemed-from-fear, in Paton's autobiographies largely falls out of the scope of this study, I am indebted to him for his eloquent rendition of the structural opposition between fear and hope, and history and redemption in *Towards the Mountain* and by extention *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

Written as it was in 1947, and published in 1948, *Cry, the Beloved Country's* appearance coincides with a watershed year in South African history: the accession of the National Party to power, and the entrenchment and systematization of racial politics that it in fact marked. Both Ngugi and Mphahlele draw attention to the continuities of Apartheid with British colonialism; other critics point to the discontinuities between the politics of the United Party and its successor. It is my contention that the accession of the National Party to power is marked by both continuities and discontinuities, and that a study of the novel needs to respect its historical specificity, that is, that it is marked by and representative of discourses extant during the period 1940-1948, the period from the beginning of the Second World War to the beginning of the cold war.

The Christian Liberal Discourse that Paton propounds in his novel itself occupied a specific position in relation to competing liberal discourses and, it may be argued, was itself by no means hegemonic in relation to the State policy of Segregation. Thengani H. Ngwenya's recent study "The Liberal-Christian Vision in Alan Paton's Autobiography" highlights the moral and religious aspects of Paton's liberalism. He quotes Watson (1988:105) in support of his analysis:

> "Whether he is dealing with his two marriages, the ill-fated story of the Liberal Party, or the most blinkered of reactions to incidents in recent South African history, there is always a larger design that remains in focus. This is both his own inner history as a believing Christian, journeying towards God, and his own, often sorely-tried, faith and hope that justice will prevail in South Africa ... In other words, his journey is as much an ethical, religious one, a pilgrim's progress and constant battle between personal good and personal evil, as it is a political saga. And this does more than just colour his writing; it informs it at the deepest level."
>
> (Ngwenya 1997: 38-39)

Paton's moral standpoint, Ngwenya concludes, informs his writings with idealism and his political activity with "respect for the "Rule of Law" and his belief in the "virtues of volutionary as opposed to revolutionary strategies". (Ngwenya 1997: 39) Ngwenya proceeds to point to the fundamental principles of liberalism, both secular and Christian, which he highlights in Paton's autobiographies, *Towards the Mountain* (1980) and *Journey Continued* (1988). The first is the construction of a coherent stable self, in particular through the moral influence of exemplary characters with a high level of moral consciousness. Such encounters are "redemptive". (Ngwenya 1997: 44)

The second is the purported "docility and obduracy" (Paton 1980: 19) to constituted secular authorities in relation to a higher law: divine justice in the case of Christian liberalism; humanist ethics in relation to secular liberalism. Ngwenya quotes Michael Black as commenting that

> "The law remained, in theory at least, a representation of something "righteous". And so, whilst Paton campaigned against apartheid, he never felt morally justified to break its laws, unless those contravened a higher law of God."
>
> (Ngwenya 1997: 43)

In this light, Ngwenya points out that Paton in particular always insisted that noble goals could only be attained through noble means. Thus the struggle for political power was never entirely compatible with the notion of "Christian duty". (Ngwenya 1997: 52)

The third was liberalism"s stress on "humanitarian social upliftment of Africans" (Ngwenya 1997: 44) that found its inspiration and fulfillment in church missionary activities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This practical expression of brotherhood had its origins in "Christian doctrines of neighbourly love and tolerance". (Ngwenya 1997: 45) This, in *Towards the Mountain,* is pitted against exclusivist nationalism, in particular in relation to the incompatibility between English liberal philosophy and Afrikaner Nationalism, as manifested in the Trek Centenary Celebrations of 1938. Political loyalties not underpinned by a sense of universal brotherhood are considered unacceptable.

This sense of universal brotherhood is what gives liberalism its prophetic value: liberals viewed South African society as having veered from the ideals of civilised society and regarded themselves as the moral mouthpiece to recall society to its ideals founded in British civilisation: "freedom of expression, the parliamentary franchise and individual rights transcending social or religious affiliation." (Rich 1984: 123) Richard Elphick summarises these values as:

> "freedom from tyranny, equality of all before the law, the dignity of the individual, limitation of the power of the state."
>
> (Elpick 1987: 79)[1]

[1] Paton particularly stresses these values in his study of Geoffrey Clayton.

Rich maintains that liberalism, and in particular its Christian variety, served as the moral conscience of the English speaking intelligensia (Rich 1993: 6) to which Paton, like his mentors, Geoffrey Clayton, Archbishop of Johannesburg, and Alfred Hoernlé, professor of philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, belonged. At the same time Hemson pinpoints the essential dilemma of liberals in South Africa:

> "This paralysis of will expresses essentially the dilemma of the liberal, a privileged individual sustained by the political economy of privilege; earning directly or indirectly the dividends of the sweated labour of the gold mines, served by the black domestic servant, and whose property is defended by a murderous police force. Caught between the volatile black opposition (half understood, half supported, and comprehensively feared) and the obdurate and increasingly oppressive state, the liberal's voice grows faint and weak. Taken as a whole its links to the black nationalist opposition are tenuous and tend to snap time and again under any serious pressure."
>
> (Hemson 1994: 31)

Both Rich and Hemson point to the continuity of liberalism with the politics of segregation: the liberals' sense of the "moral depravity of the city" and the "moral durability of the people of the land" (Hemson 1994: 33) plays into the segregationist paradigm of African impermanence in the urban areas. To this liberals attached the imperative of the re-construction of rural areas, and the need to protect Africans from "the corrosive effects of modernity". (Hemson 1994: 33) These political promptings are fundamental to Paton's tragic vision of South Africa in the novel, and manifest themselves both in its thematic concerns and its choice of literary model. (Hemson 1994: 33)

Having established the ideological parameters of Paton's thought, it is equally important to examine the relationship between this "ideological" thrust and literary creation in the South African context. In his paper, "Literary Liberalism: The *Voorslag Trio* in Political Retrospect", Peter Alexander points out that within South Africa, William Plomer was the first liberal author to open up the two major thematic veins which were to dominate subsequent South African Literature in English. *Turbott Wolfe*, expounds the theme of love across the colour bar, and his short story "Ula Masondo" relates the story of a young Zulu who goes to Johannesburg to work in the mines, and of his gradual corruption in the "white man's big city". (Alexander 1998: 33) He eventually returns home "having lost the innocence of the tribesman and having adopted the worst elements of urban white culture". (Alexander 1988: 26) Plomer's work, Alexander contends, is remarkable for sharing the ideological parameters of South African Liberalism in the 1920's, and for establishing the literary parameters for South African liberal fiction for his and subsequent generations. Clearly it helped to "form (and inform) Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, without question the most influential expression of liberalism in South Africa's history". (Alexander 1988: 33)

Paul Rich's seminal study on liberalism in South Africa traces the growth, in liberal circles, of the disillusionment with industrialisation and its effect on African societies. Plomer was obviously in contact with this stream of thought. What is more important, however, is the encapsulation of these insights in a literary form which accords with the four elements of liberalism defined earlier in this paper: the construction of a coherent self; the ontologisation of law as the governing principle of civilised ordered society; the stress on humanitarian social upliftment; and finally moral indignation at the ethical and moral short comings of a society structured in racial privilege. Plomer's works were both published in 1927, and co-incide with the creation of the racial state in South Africa, inaugurated by the constitution of the Union of South Africa in 1910, and progressively extended via the Land Act of 1913 and the Mixed Marriages Act of 1926. Like its literary precedent, *Cry, the Beloved Country* is also based on the theme of the indigenous African who hazards the dangers of the corrupting influences of white urban society. The theme of the

corruption of the Black poor in urban centres needs to be specified in economic terms: the migration of Blacks from impoverished rural areas to cities as cheap labour to sub-economic zones with no infra-structure etc., in short slums, with their predictable array of associated problems: crime, prostitution, delinquency etc. The 1913 Land Act was of course pivotal in the creation of rural and urban poverty as it tied economic dispossession to the political disinheritance of Blacks in South Africa. The irony of course is that given the racial nature of South African society, the fact that racialised structures had in fact created these social problems, the cause of the problems was not attributed to social structures, but to an essentialised racial stereotype. It is one of the aims of both "Ula Masondo" and *Cry, the Beloved Country* to challenge this essentialisation, and reascribe it to its social causes. The choice of a literary form laden with individualist and essentialist presuppositions to some extent militates against the success of the project.

In "*Cry, the Beloved Country* and the failure of Liberal Vision", Watson points to Paton's primary concern in the novel as being the exposure of the social and moral disintegration following the destruction of the tribal system by the colonial order. (Watson 1983: 31) Watson argues, however, as to the inadequacy of liberal ideology in providing solutions.

> "As has already been suggested, Paton's ideology is an amalgam of Christianity and liberalism. In a fundamental respect these two ideologies are by no means incompatible. As Leo Marquard has written, "liberals believe in the integrity and worth of every individual. Religious people would express this by saying that every individual is a child of God; and liberals who are not religious may derive their belief from humanism. But whatever its origin, the belief is fundamental to liberalism and from it flow many of the demands of liberals, such as the rights of the individual and the equality of all in the eyes of the law...With this belief [in the primacy of the individual] it is inevitable that those virtues which will enhance the life of the individual will be emphasised and valued above all others, and that there will be a heavy stress on private virtues such as inner strength and integrity, and

> that there will be a marked suspicion of any political ideas and programmes which make demands of absolute commitment upon men and women since these are perceived to be threatening to the essential autonomy of the individual."
>
> (Watson 1983: 36/37)

The definition Watson gives here of liberalism is unfortunately a poor one and does not admit of the political features of liberalism which do promise political change in the sense that he is proposing. His separation of liberalism from materialism is too neat, as is his equation of liberalism (and in particular of Christian liberalism) with tragedy, both of them characterised as apolitical. Watson draws on J.M. Coetzee's characterisation of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in "Man's Fate in the Novels of Alex La Guma" as the predominant example of religious tragedy in South Africa:

> "A young African comes to the city, falls among bad companions, kills a white, and is hanged. The fathers of the dead men console and learn to respect each other. The hero who bears the blows of fate is here doubled in the persons of the two fathers; we share their sufferings as they share each other's sufferings, in pity and terror. The gods are secularised as the pitiless justice of the law. Nevertheless, Paton's fable bears the invariant content of religious tragedy: that the dispensation under which man suffers is unshakeable, but that our pity for the hero-victim and our terror at his fate can be purged by the ritual of reenactment."
>
> (Coetzee 1972: 348)

Despite the problematic equation of Greek and Christian tragedy in Coetzee's discussion, this and Watson's reading of *Cry, the Beloved Country* elide in my opinion the important political dimensions of Paton's liberalism, which cannot merely be subsumed under the heading of "religious tragedy" which is the "apolitical doctrine that defeat can turn itself, by the burst of tragedy, into victory". (Coetzee 1972: 346; my emphasis) The politics of repentance, as I have preferred to call it, views "the dispensation under which man suffers [as] unshakeable" (Coetzee

1972: 348) and "inscrutable" (Coetzee 1972: 346) only in so far as the evil which governs human hearts is inscrutable. Kumalo's prayer at the end of the novel is not so much apolitical (à la Watson) as unable to pinpoint the time when the injustices and inequalities of South African life will come to an end.

> "But when that dawn will come, of our emancipation, from the fear of bondage and the bondage of fear, why, that is a secret."
>
> (*Cry, the Beloved Country*: 236).[2]

These "misfortunes" are not ascribed to the "mystery of injustice and fate" in the novel as Watson suggests, but are, to use Watson's own words, "quite explicable in terms of the man-made reality and historical conditions of South Africa in the first half of this century". (Watson 1983: 33) They are, however, subject to the overriding preoccupation in the novel with the divine framing of human history, and the reconciliation that will ensue if and when human beings are prepared to heed the divine impulse to forgiveness and brotherhood. This theme of "inter-racial reconciliation, made possible through the infusion of Christian forgiveness" (Hemson 1994: 27) cuts across Watson's characterisation of the main preoccupation of the novel as an exposure of social disintegration as a result of racial politics. (Watson 1983: 31)

The crux of Watson's misreading of *Cry, the Beloved Country* as an apolitical tragedy, is his framing of what he calls the "revolution of hearts" (Watson 1983: 37) as a purely religious (and therefore, for him, private) matter. Thus while he gives interesting insights into the relationship between Stephen Kumalo and his brother John, his inability to characterise the struggle between the two in anything but classical idealist and materialist terms with their concomitant dualism of spiritual and political, of private and public, reproduces the same schism he accuses Paton of: the "naïve" (Watson 1983: 39) division of the personal and the political. If anything the question that arises is not whether these dualities are related, but as to the terms of their inter-relationship. Watson is right in establishing that for Paton the

[2] Subsequent references to the novel will be abbreviated to CBC.

touchstone of this inter-relationship must be respect for the "essential autonomy of the individual", (Watson 1983: 37) but he misses the religious and political underpinnings of this concern.

In a similar way, David Ward's discussion of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in his book on African fiction, *Chronicles of Darkness*, characterises Paton's novel as vapid idealism which fails to take account of the growing strength of what he labels "Black Power" in the labour movement in the 1940's. He allies himself with both Ngugi and Mphahlele in their attack on Khumalo's white-washed Christianity. Ngugi speaks of "good Christian souls who suffer without bitterness, and move through an oppressive regime without even being stirred to anger... he can only look to the merciful white man's god for deliverance" and Mphahlele remarks that "we can almost hear [Paton's characters] groan under the load of the author's monumental sermon". (Ward 1989: 73) He also characterises the ideal readership of the novel as assenting vigorously, as long as their "sympathy [doesn't] interfere too much with their view of the world". (Ward 1989: 73) The novel thus comes to enact a "quasi-magical" (Ward 1989: 78) drama of liberal wish-fulfillment, which he suggests is "deeply offensive to the new black culture". (Ward 1989: 75) Much of his tone is dismissive, even vitriolic. Even so, several of his insights are provocative, like the following:

> "The title, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, demands a passionate concern, and, to be fair to Paton, the concern is there; it is powerful, it thrusts through the book from beginning to end. But it is an odd kind of passion, which holds within itself a fear of passion."
>
> (Ward 1989: 76)

In particular his observation concerning the binary between urban and rural in the novel needs to be taken seriously. Imbricated in other binaries – sophisticated/ simple, post-lapsarian/pre-lapsarian – it may, within the context of the address of the novel play into the "politics of innocence" (Morphet 1983: 8) which views the African rural context as pre-colonial and hence protected against the blight of

civilisation. I have already referred to this strand in liberal thinking in relation to both Paul Rich's and David Hemson's discussion of liberalism, as well as with reference to "Ula Masondo": lamenting the destruction of the rural tribe and the attempt to reconstitute it in a pre-historical way.

J.M. Coetzee has reiterated the same concern in his essay on *Cry, the Beloved Country* in *White Writing*: "Simple Language, Simple People: Smith, Paton, Mikro." (Coetzee 1988: 115-135) He expounds on issues already touched on above:

> "South African fiction is full of examples of people (and peoples) to whom a language limited and simplified in various ways is attributed, and whose range of intellection and feeling is by implication correspondingly limited and simplified."
>
> (Coetzee 1988: 116)

Kumalo is of course named as the exemplar of an "artificial literalism" which conveys the "naiveté" and "childishness" which reflect on the imputed quality of mind of rural Zulu speakers in general: all of which indicates

> "nostalgia for pastoral solutions to historical problems, nostalgia reinforced by the strong pastoral strain in English literary culture."
>
> (Coetzee 1988: 118)

Coetzee's concerns are coloured by his sense of the schemata through which ideas have to be expressed. His conclusion differs from that of Ward however:

> "What, if anything, then separates Paton from those writers of 1930s and 1940s who, under one disguise or another, call for the movement of history to come to a halt, for economic, social and personal relations in the South African countryside to freeze forever in feudal postures? The answer is that, with however much regret, Paton

> accepts that the economic, and hence the political basis of feudalism has been eroded by demographic forces. Kumalo's aspiration, in the wake of his son's death, is to hold together the remnants of his community in a muted version of black pastoral. But for how long? The fact is that the exhausted soil can no longer support them. As the young agricultural expert tells him, "We can restore this valley for those who are here, but when the children grow up, there will again be too many" (268). To this young man Paton allots the last and most telling word. To his logic Kumalo and his patron Jarvis, with their fragile hope of preserving an Eden in the valley immune from the attractions of the great city, have no response."
>
> (Coetzee 1988: 129)

I would agree with Coetzee rather than Ward: both Msimangu and the agricultural demonstrator confront the Reverend Kumalo on this issue. Nevertheless, just as the essentialisation of character compromises the project of de-racialising subjectivity, so too, the echo of pastoral and its idealism of pre-colonial rural life, and Paton's inability to coherently confront the issue of urbanisation, must play into the hands of naïve, or worse, not so naïve readers, historically in pursuit of segregationist politics.

The above discussion highlights a number of important issues which I shall explore in the rest of this study. Chapter II examines the novel in relation to what I have pinpointed as the overarching concern of the novel: the relation between the divine impetus and historical society. Chapter III examines Paton's concern with the corrupting influence of the city as a locus of unredeemed historical forces. The question will be posed as to the limitations this places on Paton's conception of the divine, as expounded in chapter II, as well as to what Hemson dubs the evidence of "the limitations of the time, ... and the constrictions of imagination" (Hemson 1994: 35) in Paton, as both Christian and visionary.

CHAPTER II

I

Cry, the Beloved Country is a Christian novel, both in terms of its "mythical dimension", and in terms of its "address to history", (Morphet 1983:10) and both of these aspects are united in the person of its central character, Stephen Kumalo, who is a Christian priest. This means that the mediation of the "world" we encounter in the novel is in and through the mythological patterning of a Christian consciousness, that is through the myth of the fall and redemption in Christ. Tony Morphet, in his reading of *Towards the Mountain* comments that the master concept of Paton's autobiography is that Paton sees his life as a

> "progress through the world to another timeless recreated world on Isaiah's mountain .... Having exposed himself to the devastating realisation of the insecurity and instability of his personal self ... he has in deep unconscious modes drawn upon the resources of the Christian cosmology in order to sustain his sense of identity and purpose."
>
> (Morphet 1983: 10)

This is another way of saying that Paton's own experience of himself as fallen in a fallen world is held in tension by his belief that he and the world are redeemed in Christ. The same tension is reproduced in most of the main characters in his novel: Stephen Kumalo and Msimangu (both priests), Arthur Jarvis and his father, James Jarvis. For a non-Christian, this may seem to spell a withdrawal into a "mythological realm", (Morphet 1983: 10) but for Paton the tension between history (the realm of personal and social endeavour; necessary and necessarily fallen) and mythos (the realm and pattern of redeemed history, never realised, but always potentially realisable) is important, and the refusal to engage with the tension marks failure from a Christian point of view.

Chapter 2 of Book 1 of the novel actually presents Kumalo's refusal to enter into the tension between faith and life as a failure to live up to his responsibility as a

Christian pastor. His attempt to live the primordial innocence of the private christian in denial of the forces of history affecting his rural idyll has led him into a state of fear and broken relationship. Morphet is correct to point to fear as the dominant emotion in the novel, but it is not the final determinant in the novel: the redemption envisaged in book 3 includes redemption from fear. But for the moment, Kumalo's refusal to enter this world, to enter the history of his brother, sister and son, is crippling to him and to the people he is responsible for.

> "We had a son, he said harshly. Zulus have many children, but we had only one son. He went to Johannesburg, and as you said – when people go to Johannesburg, they do not come back. They do not even write any more. They do not go to St Chad's, to learn that knowledge without which no black man can live. They go to Johannesburg, and they are lost, and no one hears of them at all. And this money...
> But she had no words for it, so he said, It is here in my hand.
> And again she did not speak, so he said again, It is here in my hand.
> You are hurting yourself, she said.
> Hurting myself? hurting myself? I do not hurt myself, it is they who are hurting me. My own son, my own sister, my own brother. They go away and they do not write any more. Perhaps it does not seem to them that we suffer. Perhaps they do not care for it.
> His voice rose into loud and angry words. Go up and ask the white man, he said. Perhaps there are letters. Perhaps they have fallen under the counter, or been hidden amongst the food.
> Look there in the trees, perhaps they have been blown there by the wind.
> She cried out at him. You are hurting me also."
>
> (CBC: 11/12)

The emotional pain in this passage speaks for itself, and its intensity is in proportion to the enormity of the historical event which has overtaken this family, and by implication, this people, and to which they react with silence and fear.

"They were silent, and she said, how we desire such a letter,
and when it comes, we fear to open it."

(CBC: 9)

The letter is the signifier of all that has broken upon their lives from outside, from Johannesburg, the signifier of white urban civilisation, which is both desired and feared. The tribe has been broken. The "tribe" is a signifier in the novel for "an earlier and more innocent era in human culture ... [based on] direct (i.e. unmediated) personal relations based on respect, obedience and fidelity". (Coetzee 1988: 129) Morphet, in his paper, however, remarks that the past can no longer be an end in itself. The way can only be forward, not backwards, but such a step – evoking more fear in the fear of change, of corruption, of too being swallowed by what heretofore has been the unnameable – requires a push from outside, and a relinquishment of the dream of simple restoration. (Morphet 1983: 10)

"All roads lead to Johannesburg." (CBC: 12)

Fanon, whose *Black Skins, White Masks* describes particularly incisively the momentous impact of Western culture on the colonial world, also tells us that within the colonial framework

"For the black man there is only one destiny.
And it is white..."

(Fanon 1967: 10)

As a Christian, how does one respond?

The novel frames the response to this question not in the figure of Kumalo, who after all is just beginning his journey out of fear, but in the figures of Msimangu, his mentor, and Arthur Jarvis. Each represents the Christian voice, but from different sides of the racial divide.

Paton's own answer to this question precedes, according to both Tony Morphet and Andrew Nash, his writing of the novel, and the answer he gives, they maintain, is largely determined by his own crossing from the realm of primordial innocence, that of Nature (Morphet 1983:10/ Nash 1983:17) into history, largely under the influence of Geoffrey Clayton, ordained as Bishop of Johannesburg in 1934, and as Archbishop of Cape Town in 1949. Clayton, like Paton, was no radical, but he did take a lead in asserting the role of the church in the secular sphere and was adamant that the Christian response to the economic dispossession and the increasing racialisation of South African society under the auspices of segregationist policies did not merely entail a passive acceptance of them. In 1934, the Synod of the diocese of Johannesburg asserted that:

> "the only true solution of the Native question is the Christian basis of the ultimate right of individuals and nations to full citizenship."
>
> (Paton 1973[3]: 53)

Much of Paton's discussion of Clayton focuses on Clayton's own theological perspective on the position of the church in society, and in relation to injustice in particular. Clayton's attack is two-pronged:

> "If she (the Church) thinks, as I do, the colour-bar unchristian, she ought to try and get it altered. But in the meantime she has to try to help those living under the restrictions of the colour-bar to live Christian lives."
>
> (Paton 1973: 73)

In October 1940 Clayton declared that

> "our policy is based on fear, fear of economic competition, fear of racial admixture."
>
> (Paton 1973: 100)

[3] This refers to Paton's biography of Geoffrey Clayton: Apartheid and the Archbishop

Paton continues to summarise Clayton's "charge" as follows:

> "The freedom of the individual was rendered nugatory by an economic system that seemed to take more account of profit than of human values, and in the interest of profits it actually hindered the distribution of the fruits of the earth and the products of industry among those who needed them. South Africa was not a democracy ...There would be many problems in giving the vote to all, but the present order was not Christian.
> Clayton said that trusteeship was an attractive principle, but it had no solution for poverty and low wages... He said that there was only one viable solution for the question of poverty: to increase wages, a solution which might temporarily reduce profits, but in the long run would create a valuable local market for South African industry."
>
> (Paton 1973: 102)

Given this forthright engagement with the South African question in the face of the Second World War, it is not surprising that Clayton set up a commission to urgently define "what it believes to be the mind of Christ for this land". (Paton 1973: 103) Of the commission Paton writes:

> "As for myself, having lived for 38 years in the dark, the Commission opened for me a door, and I went through into the light... and entered a new country....To yield the idea of a continuing white supremacy was in those days an intensely difficult thing for a white South African to do."
>
> (Paton 1973: 117/116)

The findings of the commission (1943) were as follows: that the world is God's world, not ours; that "a Christian must render Caesar's things to Caesar, but he must remember that it is God who declares what belongs to Caesar", (Paton 1973: 117)

and that in relation to the Government's involvement in the war for the "rights of men", the charge of hypocrisy [cannot] be avoided if through the laws and customs of this land, these rights are refused to any of its people on account of colour". (Paton 1973: 118) Clauses D and E attacked the profit motive unless subordinated to human values, and condemned the inequalities in income between white and black and called for the removal of the colour bar. Similarly it condemned "territorial and social segregation" and called for the extension of the Cape franchise[4] to all "men and women throughout the Union". (Paton 1973: 118) The commission concluded:

> "In making public this report we are aware that to implement its findings demands first of all a change of heart within the nation."
>
> (Paton 1973: 119; my emphasis)

Paton finally comments:

> "The proposals of the Bishop's commission were for that time revolutionary, but they were very far from breaking the white monopoly of power... the implication of the whole Report was that all discrimination based solely on race or colour should go, but this particular implication was not explicitly stated."
>
> (Paton 1973: 119)

He also points out, however, that the description of migrant labour as the cause of "grave moral evils attendant upon the separation of men from their women folk" was unacceptable to three members of the commission connected with mining industry. What partly emerges from this summary of Paton's account – written 25 years after the publication of his first novel – of Clayton's and the Anglican Church's attempt to grapple with the evil of what Clayton called the caste society is to note that the Commission hardly envisaged "breaking the white monopoly of power", (Paton 1973: 118) and that it was compromised by powerful vested interests in the mining establishment. This has echoes of Rich's accusations of the liberal entrenchment of

[4] It entailed qualifications of literacy and income not required by whites.

the caste society at the same time as attempting to make that society more tolerable for the underdog. (Rich 1984: 76) Nonetheless to reduce the discussion to this conclusion also hides the enormous contribution to the alteration of the balance of economic and political power if the recommendations of the Commission had been put into effect. As always vested interests had their effect and some of the recommendations were muted. On the whole, however, while hardly envisaging revolutionary change, the moral exhortation against the economic and social evils attendant upon the "colour bar" and the call to conversion to eradicate them, shines through. While one might agree with Rich as to the alliance between liberal politics and continued white power, one certainly cannot attribute to the Anglican Commission the underlying motive to indefinitely maintain such power while at the same time presenting its kind face. If Clayton himself believed in "trusteeship", he was also fond of noting that "trusteeship comes to an end when the ward comes of age". (Paton 1973: 108) What remains pivotal is the call for a change of heart in the context of political and economic accomodation to a juster vision of society. Amelioration, and not rupture, in the context of a British colonial order is envisaged. Other christians (for example Michael Scott) did call for more radical solutions, but Clayton's initiative carried the authority of the Church establishment in the 1940's, and the Church still believed that it could influence government policy. (Hemson 1994: 35)

While the Commission is not directly named in the novel, the spirit of the Commission and its recommendations pervade Paton's Christianity and his vision of society. This is no pietism; and if the individual remains sovereign in his/her responsibility before God, he/she does so responsible also for the society in which he/she finds him/herself. Paton, it must be remembered, was, while on the Commission, also fully involved in his "experiment" to turn Diepkloof Reformatory into a school. Nash characterises his engagement with Diepkloof as a refusal to engage with "objective social forces":

> "The success and failure of his actions in attempting to reform Diepkloof appeared to him to be decided by his

own efforts and by God's will."

(Nash 1983: 23)

I think this is a misreading of Paton's autobiography; it is also a misreading of Paton's engagement, as a Christian, with history, that is, of his attempt to keep in focus the tension between God, himself and society. It is not that he denies objective social forces; it is that he wants to assert much more. Something similar is present in Clayton's response to Alfred Hoernle's pessimism about white South Africa's will to dismantle "our caste society" in the 1940's. (Paton 1981: 243) It is the exhortation not to give up hope in God's saving power in the face of enormous odds.

The same complex of ideas informs the first conversation between Kumalo and Msimangu in the novel.

> "Msimangu paused. I hope I shall not hurt you further. Your brother has no use for the Church any more. He says that what God has not done for South Africa, man must do. That is what he says.
> - This is a bitter journey.
> - I can believe it.
> - Sometimes I fear – what will the Bishop say when he hears? One of his priests.
> - What can a Bishop say? Something is happening that no Bishop can stop. Who can stop these things from happening? They must go on.
> - How can you say so? How can you say they must go on?
> - They must go on, said Msimangu gravely. You cannot stop the world from going on. My friend, I am a Christian. It is not in my heart to hate a white man. It was a white man who brought my father out of darkness. But you will pardon me if I talk frankly to you. The tragedy is not that things are broken. The tragedy is that they are not mended again. The white man has broken the tribe.

> And it is my belief – and again I ask your pardon – that it cannot be mended again. But the house that is broken, and the man that falls apart when the house is broken, these are the tragic things. That is why children break the law, and old white people are robbed and beaten.
>
> He passed his hand across his brow.
>
> - It suited the white man to break the tribe, he continued gravely. But it has not suited him to build something in the place of what is broken. I have pondered this for many hours and must speak it, for it is the truth for me. They are not all so. There are some white men who give their lives to build up what is broken.
> - But they are not enough, he said. They are afraid, that is the truth. It is fear that rules this land."
>
> (CBC: 25)

As Msimangu engages with Kumalo's fear, this is a moment of unmitigated realism, of staring history – marked by fear and brokenness – in the face. Even Msimangu is weighed down by the fact ("objective social force") that "They give us too little … They give us almost nothing". And the question arises as to how – as a Christian – one must cope with the full force of this tragedy, of this "almost nothing", whose economic and social consequences echo throughout every page of this novel. At this point Msimangu does not give a direct solution, but he does establish TWO provisos: as a Christian, he may not (1) deny God's role as part of the solution as Stephen's brother has done, and (2) he may not turn to hating whites. After all, even if he owes whites no other debt, he owes the debt of having brought Christianity to his father and to himself. Christianity is in the position to establish a new tradition; the tragedy is that most whites themselves are not "Christian, otherwise healing might ensue." The "fear that rules this land" prevents the realisation of a truly Christian order.

Paton does not cast an askance eye at Christianity, accusing it of collusion with the colonial order in Africa. What we infer from this passage is the certainty – and

behind it, that of the Christian Church in the first part of this century – that the Christian faith possessed the power to save both the individual and society, if only it would be lived in its fullness. (Paton 1973: 73) The last condition, established on the premise of free will, offers for the moment little hope, since there are too few "who give their lives to build up what is broken". The full force of history therefore weighs. Given no other option Msimangu remains, as Morphet says of Paton, with the question.

The answer (or at least part of it) emerges after Kumalo's and Msimangu's next visit to John Kumalo. It leads to a reflection on the nature of power and love:

> "Yes, that is right about power, he said. But there is only one thing that has power completely, and that is love. Because when a man loves, he seeks no power, and therefore he has power. I see only one hope for our country, and that is when white men and black men, desiring neither power nor money, but desiring only the good of their country, come together to work for it."
>
> (CBC: 37)

Framed in terms of the relation between mythos (love) and history (power), the entry of mythos into history is the only real means of its transformation, and the true Christian spirit of service and selflessness is the vehicle by which mythos may "materialise" in society. It is not the role of mythos to avoid history, to retreat from it – as Kumalo himself has attempted to do – but to engage with it with hope, even if all the evidence points to the contrary. To whites this entails a call to relinquish fear and embrace the demands of love; to blacks it counsels patience and courage never to give up hope. It also counsels, despite the difficulties, the counsel to live "Christian lives". (Paton 1973: 73)

Book 3 of the novel is the practical working out of this call to brotherhood. It is the projection onto history of the realised mythos, of God's acting in and through

brokenness (personal and social) to reconstruction and reconciliation. It is also at the same time the realisation of the pastoral dream, but this time of an "enlightened innocence".

Kumalo has his first glimpse of this resolution in the symbolically weighted episode of his visit to Ezenzeleni. His sense of despair has grown in relation to the immorality and corruption of the "hell" of Johannesburg, and with the weight of the possibility that it might be his own son who killed Arthur Jarvis. He is at this point forced to admit the irrevocability of the act of colonial violence and the birth of a "new" society:

> "Yes – it was true, then. He had admitted it to himself.
> The tribe was broken, and would lie mended no more …
> He looked down upon the heart sick with fear and
> apprehension. … The tribe that had nurtured him and
> his father and his father's father, was broken …
> And what have you found?
> Nothing … There is nothing in the world but fear
> and pain."
>
> (CBC: 79/80)

History – apart from mythos – confronts and overwhelms with its sense of hopeless despair. Msimangu must intervene – as a priest:

> "This is madness … But it is also sin, which is worse.
> I speak to you as a priest."
>
> (CBC: 80)

Even in "hell", a Christian may not give in to the sin of despair: the sin against the Holy Ghost. In the midst of such despair, Kumalo's encounter with the blind, the broken whose lives were transformed by "white men (sic) who did this work of mercy" is a sign of mythos, the "open[ing] of the eyes of black men that were blind"

(CBC: 80) via faith. The reference is of course to the few whites who "gives their lives to build up what is broken" (CBC: 25) and also to himself. What he sees is a sign in embryo of the creation of a new society based in mutual charity. The paternalism of the scene is intended: it is whites who broke the tribe, it is they who have to take the first step to mend it!

What follows – spoken by Msimangu in Zulu – is intended for Kumalo: it gives Kumalo his commission, the same commission Jesus had to open the eyes of the blind, to bring prisoners out of prison ...

> "I will make darkness light before them
> and crooked things straight
> These things I will do unto them
> and not forsake them."
>
> (CBC: 81; quoting Isaiah)

This is not a concrete programme (social, political or economic) but a prophetic message of God's action in and through history at its darkest; an exhortation not to give up hope. It is the hope Clayton spoke of in 1940. It is the hope the Christian is exhorted never to abandon.

Paton is aware of the gap between what is promised and the reality of what is. Msimangu is pointedly compared to John Kumalo in the reference to "this golden voice that could raise a nation". John Kumalo chooses political/economic action (a strike to be exact) as his means to redress the economic oppression inherent in colonial society. Why does Msimangu choose another way, culminating in fact in his renunciation of the world and his embracing of religious life?

> "They ask what folly it is that can so seize upon a man, what folly is it that seizes upon so many of their people, making the hungry patient, the suffering content, the dying at peace?
> And how fools listen to him, silent, enrapt, sighing when he is bare, feeding their empty bellies on his empty words."
>
> (CBC: 83)

There are a number of possible answers to the above question: John Kumalo (and those sympathetic to him) might respond with an accusation of the limitation of religion, of how it is the opiate of the masses, how it makes oppression palatable to the oppressed who content themselves with spiritual crumbs in order to win heaven, what Rich calls "ambulance work to make the caste society more tolerable for the underlying castes within it". (Rich 1984: 76) Paton is aware of this criticism, and for the moment makes no attempt to counter it, partly because the purpose of this passage is not to establish a social/political programme – there are other moments for that in the novel, ranging from the description of the bus boycott, to the descriptions of shanty town and lack of housing, to the reference to the reformatory – and partly because he examines the implications of Kumalo's political vision later on in the novel. The rhetorical purpose of the above passage is instead to be found in the fact that Msimangu is a priest, not a politician, and it is his role to offer spiritual insight, not give political advice, in this case to a fellow priest in despair.

Earlier in the novel, Msimangu and Kumalo had exchanged angry words.

> "I tell you, you can do nothing.
> Have you not troubles of your own?
> I tell you there are thousands such in Johannesburg. And
> were your back as broad as heaven, and your purse full
> of gold, and did your compassion reach from here to hell
> itself, there is nothing you can do."
>
> (CBC: 62)

The enormity of the task of history weighs upon Msimangu at this point, and his helplessness in the face of it. He knows however that bitterness and despair are not God's way. If sometimes he is tempted to follow other routes to bring about social change (CBC: 37), he recognises his lack of faith:

> "Sometimes I think I am not fit to be a priest. I could tell you..."

to which Kumalo responds:

> "It is no matter. You have said you are a weak and selfish man, but God put his hands upon you. It is true, it seems."
>
> (CBC: 63/64)

The point here is precisely that: to become an instrument for God; to be purified so as to become a channel for grace and forgiveness: to allow God to put his hands on one. The Christian vision of a redeemed world is not one in which one devises one's own social action – such social action would itself be fraught with the corruption and sinfulness besetting the present one, albeit in another form. The vision is one of converted men and women who allow God to put his hands on them for the transformation of GOD'S world. This is of course an ideal which it is unlikely will ever be perfectly achieved: it is only at the end of time that history and mythos will collapse into each other, and there will be a "new heaven and a new earth". (Revelations 21) For the moment christians are called to engage with history and transform it, but on God's terms, not their own!

It is structurally important in the novel that the white man who is killed is a figure involved in the upliftment of the Black community, one of the few who gives up their lives to build up what has been broken (CBC: 25) and that further, he and Kumalo's son have actually grown up in the same valley, that their fathers are neighbours. As such Arthur's death is the life "offered in expiation for many", that is, he is the Christ-figure whose life and death, like Christ's, permit mythos to re-enter into history and begin to transform it. As Father Vincent tells Kumalo:

> "My friend, your anxiety turned to fear, and your fear turned to sorrow. But sorrow is better than fear. For fear impoverishes always, while sorrow may enrich.
> But when the house is destroyed, there is something to do. About a storm he can do nothing, but he can rebuild a house …

> No one can comprehend the ways of God, said Father Vincent desperately ...
> It seems that God has turned from me, [Kumalo] said.
> That may seem to happen, said Father Vincent. But it does not happen, never, never, does it happen."
>
> (CBC: 96)

Kumalo in his despair – the dark night of his soul – is exhorted not to give up hope; to trust in the mystery of God's action in the world; not to try and fathom the mystery but to believe in it, and to present his petitions (CBC: 98) in prayer. He must live this moment of history fully in faith to allow God's transforming power to enter into it, but in God's way, not his!

II

Just as Arthur Jarvis' loss of life stands as the structural centre-point of the novel, his writings also stand in the centre of the novel, and James Jarvis' reading of them represents those white readers who "would do justice if they were not afraid", (CBC: 98) and who therefore would be is converted by them.

Arthur's writings are varied and extend from social comment to personal testimony. His manuscripts are not read contiguously, but are interspersed with other events so that Book 2 may be described according to the following schema:

- INTRODUCTION: repeat of the first two paragraphs of the introduction to Book I.
- JARVIS informed of his son's death.
- Jarvis discusses his son with Harrison.
  Arthur's commitment and honesty are established.
- Jarvis, on his own in Arthur's study.
  He examines his books, and in particular a picture

of "Christ crucified and Abraham Lincoln".

- MANUSCRIPT NUMBER I.
- The service in the church in Parkwold.
  Jarvis shakes hands with Blacks for the first time.
- MANUSCRIPT 2. He gives the manuscript to his wife.
- The Court Case.
- The discovery of Gold at Odendaalsrust.
- MANUSCRIPT 3.
- The meeting between Jarvis and Kumalo.
- John Kumalo encouraging the strike.
- The judgement and Kumalo's meeting with his son.
- Kumalo's farewell party, at which Msimangu announces his decision to enter a religious community.

Manuscript ONE is a form of moral exhortation that forgives the past (history in the form of colonial expropriation of Africa) but which does not condone the present. It is based on Lincoln's speech at Gettysburg, "apparently a speech that was a failure, but that had since become one of the great speeches of the world". (CBC: 128) It is a speech in which the position of Christian liberals is stated in embryo. European/British colonialism is accepted as a fact, and indeed is framed in terms of the potential advancement in civilisation; the entrenchment of economic and cultural "exploitation" are deplored however, for moral reasons, and in terms of enlightened self-interest. It is an appeal to whites' Christian conscience. The contrast between what was permissible and what no longer is permissible, identifies the contradictions between the "high ideal" and "fearful practice" that characterise "our civilisation" in South Africa, (CBC: 134) and which is continued in the second manuscript Jarvis reads. Its rhetorical thrust is firmly rational in its attempt to appeal to "high ideal". Ward suggests that the contradictions which Jarvis identifies mar not only white thinking but Jarvis' (and Paton's) own thinking so that the novel recognises the limitations of "its own problematic". (Ward 1989: 77) The crux of the matter is that if white South Africa had followed the logic of this exhortation it would – while accepting there was no way back, and while even possibly accepting the relative

"superiority" of Western civilisation – nevertheless have established South African society on a basis which eschewed class, racial and economic privilege. Although couched in the language of the "limits of proper action", (Ward 1989: 76) this passage lists the following: the impermissibility to (1) keep men unskilled, (2) keep women and children away from the towns, (3) to go on destroying family life, (3) to exploit labour, (4) to deny comparable Education to Blacks and (5) to attempt to preserve defunct tribal structures with a policy of segregation unthoroughly or dishonestly applied. The last is important: it is the only place in the novel where the 1913 Land Act is, if obliquely, referred to. It also relativises the segregation policy, and thus positions Paton in opposition to liberals of the 1920's and 1930's, who pursued segregation (what Rich calls "cultural idealism") in an attempt to bolster the tribal system. (Rich 1984: 66-76) Ward contends that "it is deeply wrong for Paton [to seek] for a universal authority in terms only of limits to proper action, and not in terms of rightness of purpose or response". (Ward 1989: 76) However, given its rhetorical model (the Gettysburg Address), the rhetorical nature of the exhortation needs to be acknowledged. The full force of the rhetorical argument then leads to the conclusion: "because we are a Christian people": this goes beyond the rhetoric of "the limits of proper action". Instead, the last statement introduces the full force of moral argument that Ward suggests is missing. Everything of course hinges on the effect of the conjunction "because". It is an assumption on which the rhetorical force of the rest of the exhortation (and indeed of the novel) succeeds or fails.

The effect of that "because" is also to draw attention to the condition for the entry of mythos into the scheme of things. Christianity, really lived, embraces the entire historical order: private (including individual morality), social (organisation of society on just lines) and economic! At that point of time (1947), Paton is suggesting that the entry of mythos into history would transform it: the suffering of the moment - private and social – would become the transformed/redeemed of the future. The ideal is presented with urgent force; the reality (present in the compromising rhetoric of permissibility) is, however, pessimistic: "we are caught in the toils of our own selfishness... The truth is our civilisation is not Christian." (CBC: 134)

The intervening pages, between the first and second manuscript present us with a poignant reminder of possibility (again the "high ideal") and the petty reality of white South Africa, which trucks in the details of racial division and political decoys in order to avoid facing the structural basis of social problems: it is politics devoid of ethical considerations and proof of the veracity of the first line of the second manuscript:

> "The truth is that our Christian civilisation is riddled through and through with dilemma."
>
> (CBC: 134)

This is also couched in the rhetoric of contradiction, but is framed in terms of the absolute epistemological category: truth. It outlines the Christian beliefs of "Christian civilisation", what it calls its high ideals. It is as such a restatement of a Christian creed (We believe ...), but is not so much doctrinal, but applied Christian ethics: it restates in summary the statement of the Diocesan Commission to determine the mind of Christ in South Africa (1943) which was referred to earlier. It draws attention to a re-statement of mythos – God's will for society in this case – and that society's contortion of Christianity to justify racist and exploitative practices.

> "Thus our God becomes a confused and inconsistent creature."
>
> (CBC: 134)

The rhetorical force of "our" is comforting and inclusive, and at the same time jars in its identification, so as to force one to ask: is this my God? The conclusion is incontrovertible: simply by force of rational argument "our civilisation is not Christian"; again everything hinges on the force of the "because" of the previous manuscript for the reader to be convinced on the need for change: the politics of repentance. Ironically it is perhaps not so much the argument, but the emotional force of the last words "Allow me a minute" which penetrate Jarvis' spirit.

"The truth ... that our Christian civilisation is riddled through and through with dilemma" echoes through the subsequent court scenes, and the section on the discovery of gold at Odendaalsrust. Structurally "high ideal" and "fearful practice" are juxtaposed, the second fraught with the "fearful clutching of possessions" that Paton identifies as the key to the white South African "dilemma". (CBC: 134)

The style of chapter 5 of Book II is dignified and sonorous, in keeping with the dignity of the system of Justice and the Law. However, those who suggest that Paton unquestionably upholds the Law, (for example, Watson 1982: 32) fail to identify the irony in his description of South Africa's justice system, an irony which undermines its absolute authority, and shows that it is also "riddled" through and through with dilemma". Paton thus reproduces in his prose the echo of the contradictions Jarvis had earlier defined:

> "The judge does not make the Law. It is the People that make the Law. Therefore if a Law is unjust, and if the Judge judges according to the Law, that is justice, even if it is not just".
>
> (CBC: 136)

A sophistical distinction, but one Paton hammers home:

> "It is the duty of a Judge to do justice, but it is only the People that can be just ... which means at the door of the white People, for it is the White People that make the Law."
>
> (CBC: 137, my emphasis)

And given what we have been told about "fearful practice", it becomes obvious on which grounds these laws are made, and which it is "justice" to administer. And that is not all: the fearful practice is further seen to contaminate the judicial process when one realises that Absolom is found guilty, and his cousin is not, because John Kumalo is able to "oil the palm" of the justice system, so to speak, and get them off.

> "For to the Judge is entrusted a great duty ... a Judge must be incorruptible."
>
> (CBC: 136)

Absolom's sentence reveals the opposite. The judge has obviously been influenced by the fact that another "European household [was] shot dead by Native Housebreaker". (CBC: 165, my emphasis)[5] The sentence is also framed by the restrictions he places on his office:

> "It is not for a judge otherwise to decide in how far human beings are in truth responsible; under the Law, they are fully responsible. Nor is it for a judge to show mercy. A higher authority, in this case the Governor-General-in-Council, may be merciful, but that is a matter for that authority."
>
> (CBC: 171/172)

We have here in embryo the catch-22 of a racist society. Whites make the laws which render Blacks at the mercy of Whites who must administer that Law without mercy. And the higher authority the judge speaks of, is equally implicated in the racist structures which the judge says he must administer, unless society (read white society) changes it, which is, by logical extension unlikely, since racist societies do not change racially motivated laws.

The position of the judge is untenable, and so is his sentence of Absolom to death. It is no wonder then that Paton, via Kumalo, refers to Divine Judgement as the ultimate arbiter of human history. (CBC: 180)

Arthur Jarvis' third manuscript is entitled: "Private Essay on the Evolution of a South African" and is in the form of a personal testament. It moves to redefine the identity of a South African beyond the narrow limits of white South Africa's definitions of itself. It also attempts to define a new subjectivity which moves

[5] Paton is obviously aware of the racist weight of this description . (CBC: 165)

beyond the racialised subjectivity of white South Africans. In his autobiography *Towards the Mountain,* Paton attempts to indicate his movement from an English-Speaking person in South Africa to a new identity as a South African and as a human being motivated by ideals of service and inclusive compassion. This is a description of a similar process, and it recalls the moment in his autobiography, and in his biography on Geoffrey Clayton, when he describes the accession to a liberated sense of self referred to earlier.

> "As for myself, having lived for 38 years in the dark, the Commission opened for me a door, and I went into the light ....and entered a new country."
>
> (Paton 1973: 117)

The effect on Jarvis senior is not described in such illuminary terms, but there is an echo of this nonetheless: without fear, he walks out of the front door, into the open. Jarvis is now ready to meet Kumalo, his old neighbour, whom he has never seen before. It is painful for both men, but the pain is necessary for their self-confrontation, just as Jarvis's pain in reading his son's last manuscript was important for his awareness of how little he knew about his son and indeed about South Africa.

> "I know you, umfundisi, he said.
> The suffering in the old man's face smote him, so that he said.
> Sit down, umfundisi. Then the old man would be able to look at the ground, and he would not need to look at Jarvis, and Jarvis would not need to look at him, for it was uncomfortable to look at him. So the old man sat down and Jarvis said to him, not looking at him, There is something between you and me, but I do not know what it is.
> - Umnumzana.
> - You are in fear of me, but I do not know what it is. You need not be in fear of me.
> - It is true, umnumzana. You do not know what it is.

- I do not know but I desire to know.
- I doubt if I could tell it, umnumzana.
- You must tell it, umfundisi. Is it heavy?
- It is very heavy umnumzana. It is the heaviest thing of all my years.

He lifted his face, and there was in it suffering that Jarvis had not seen before. Tell me, he said, it will lighten you.

- I am afraid, umnumzana.
- I see you are afraid, umfundisi. It is that which I do not understand. But I tell you, you need not be afraid. I shall not be angry. There will be no anger in me against you.
- Then, said the old man, this thing that is the heaviest thing of all my years, is the heaviest thing of all your years also.

Jarvis looked at him, at first bewildered, but then something came to him. You can mean only one thing, he said, you can mean only one thing. But I still do not understand.

- It was my son that killed your son, said the old man.

So they were silent. Jarvis left him and walked out into the trees of the garden. He stood at the wall and looked out over the veld, out of the great white dumps of the mines, like hills under the sun. When he turned to come back, he saw that the old man has risen, his hat in one hand, his stick in the other, his head bowed, his eyes on the ground. He went back to him.

- I have heard you, he said. I understand what I did not understand. There is no anger in me."

(CBC: 155/156)

The movement from fear through suffering to acceptance and forgiveness is for both men an important moment in their healing, and in their ability to embrace a new path, which in Ndotsheni, they are to pursue together. Their mutual respect contrasts markedly with Smith's daughter's rudeness and lack of sensitivity. In the midst of the realisation of mythos in the history of their personal tragedies, the novel doesn't let us forget the enormity of the transformation that is actually needed for national

healing. What follows this scene are: the description of John Kumalo calling for a strike, the sentencing of Absolom, (on which I have already commented), Absolom and the girl's marriage and Kumalo's meeting with her, Kumalo's confrontation with his brother and the farewell party at which Msimangu announces his decision to "retire into a [religious] community". The list illustrates both acceptance and refusal of healing, the latter concentrated in the figure of John Kumalo, whose desire for power is contrasted with the enfolding experience of forgiveness and love in those who embrace God's plan for them via the Christian faith. In turn, transformed, they become God's instruments for further transformation. Book III is an illustration of this, but is not the totality. Msimangu's decision to "retire" into community life is not explicated on, but in the context of the Anglican Church in South Africa, the only Anglican community he could have joined was that of the community of the Resurrection, which spawned priests like Father Huddleston. In other words, it is unlikely Paton is advocating pietism, as Ward and Watson suggest. (Ward 1989: 76/ Watson 1982: 35) The picture of Fr. Beresford in the novel (CBC:148) is more likely to mirror Msimangu's further calling; I would suggest Fr. Beresford's activities are by way of extension to those of Msimangu, not by way of contrast. For the moment the weight of entry of mythos into the urban context falls on the likes of Msimangu, who functions in contrast to John Kumalo. John's characterisation, and indeed that of the labour movement need further comment. I shall return to this discussion in chapter III of this paper.

III

Book 3 of the novel celebrates, with reservation, the working out of the mythos in the Valley of Ndotsheni. It celebrates renewal and new life and opportunity through the co-operation of Jarvis and Kumalo. It is pastoral, but as Coetzee points out, not naively so. It is "wishful thinking", but to borrow Frederick Jameson's phrase from the *Political Unconscious*, it involves the symbolic resolution of real contradictions. (Jameson 1981: 77) Healing and reconciliation includes the personal (Kumalo and his wife), and communal (the entire community benefits from Kumalo's new confidence and sense of hope, as well as from the financial resources made available

to them through him). It involves the healing within the "breach in nature", thus uniting people and Nature in a cosmological whole, just as they were in the beginning when it was "even as it came from the Creator". (CBC: 7) The fact that the drought is broken conveys the experience of life-giving nourishment in every aspect of creation: physical, emotional and spiritual. In a similar way, the birth of Absolom's child promises a new future in the valley, not only for Kumalo's family, but for all the community. Symbolically the tide has been stemmed. The tribe – in part – has been restored to itself.

Kumalo being a man of God knows the source of this renewal and transformation:

> "No power but the power of God could bring about such a miracle and he prayed again briefly, Into Thy hands, O God, I commend Ndotsheni."
>
> (CBC: 199)

The episode with the skeptical Bishop is strategically placed to act as a confirmation of God's role as to what was taking place in the Valley. He is concerned with the reputation of the church, and Kumalo's own distress, for after all "is it not true that the father of the murdered man is your neighbour here in Ndotsheni", (CBC: 222) but once Jarvis' letter arrives in which he promises milk for the children, an agricultural demonstrator, and money for a new church, "in memory of our beloved son", (CBC: 223) the Bishop is convinced.

> "It was the way it was done in olden days, said the Bishop. In the olden days when men had faith. But I should not say that, after what I have heard today."
>
> (CBC: 224)

And Kumalo, standing outside the church under a sky black with promise, hears (as an illusion, or an "intimation of the divine" – it is for us to choose which – "Comfort

ye, comfort ye, my people; these things will I do unto you, and not forsake you." (CBC: 226) The commission he received at Ezenzeleni has been confirmed.

At the same time, even at this moment when mythos enters history to transform it and brings out its promise, it remains in tension with history, and does not override it. This is another way of saying that the Divine works through humanity and the field of human endeavour – history – for human good, if humanity allows it. This is the mystery of the incarnation. This tension is noted in small details: the sullenness and silence at the agricultural meetings when farmers must know they must give up their land, or that they must plough differently. (CBC: 226) It is present in the last meeting between Jarvis and Kumalo in the distance that yet remains between them because of the difference in colour and economic means. Jarvis is embarrassed by it, but it is difficult to overcome in a society structured on race!

It is particularly present in Kumalo's last prayer on the mountain as he wakes to greet the dawn: not only the dawn of a new beginning but also the dawn of his son's execution. The two things are held together in his mind, and in his prayer for the beloved country: "Nkosi Sikelel' i Afrika". It is present in his awareness that what he has seen in Ndotsheni is just a beginning, not just for the valley, but for the whole country, and that he will not see that salvation. He is aware that no matter the strength of the power of love, not all people are ready for it, and that the power of fear remains as strong, and that each generation has to renew its choice to allow mythos to transform human society; otherwise history will again be weighed down by fear. The dawn may have come, but it is full of the forlorn cry of the titihoya, weighed down still by the "bondage of fear". (CBC: 236)

The subtitle of the novel: "A story of comfort in desolation" is not then simply the personal comfort of religion, offered to those who suffer oppression, as Watson suggests. (Watson 1983: 37-38) The comfort that is being proposed is the comfort of mythos in the face of history, and that implies not just "profound spiritual strength", (Watson 1983: 37) but that through faith one becomes an instrument of the divine for the transformation of history. Such is the true calling of Christians; it

is patent the extent to which the Church has indeed failed in its God-appointed task. *Cry, the Beloved Country* is an attempt to direct the reader's view – and in particular the Christian reader – to the extent to which his/her Christianity conforms with a faith that identifies with the divine will to transform history or whether it merely reproduces society's malaise for personal gain. The mystery of evil in the world is the primary cause of suffering and oppression, and it displays itself in the private and the social realms. It is through personal and social conversion that individuals and society open themselves to the divine comfort in their desolation and allow the grace of transformation to redeem them and their society - such is the politics of conversion. Jarvis and Kumalo have experienced God's hand on them. Most South African's do not.

To conclude I return to the passage on Fear in the novel. (CBC: 67-72) What these passages indicate is the reduction of the great issues of South African society to futile debate. There is no conviction grounded in a sense of urgent divine commission. For Paton, instead, it is not a question of choice whether or not to continue to structure society in racial injustice. The call to repentance is incontrovertible.

> "Who knows how we shall fashion such a land? For we fear not only the loss of our possessions, but the loss of our superiority and the loss of our whiteness. Some say it is true that crime is bad, but would this not be worse? Is it not better to hold what we have, and to pay the price of it with fear? And others say, can such fear be endured? For is it not this fear that drives men to ponder these things at all?"
>
> (CBC: 71)

The failure to root out fear and to refashion the land in the image of mythos – dying to self and living to others – is more fear, and a shrinking into the white collective self! (CBC: 71) The ideal Paton offers as an alternative is clear. The call to conversion as a political act remains for him the only lasting means for achieving a just and peaceful society; the alternative offers a scenario of class- and race-conflict

and entrenched violence. That the white electorate in 1948 did not embrace his call for repentance in his novel does not cancel the validity of that call; indeed the same call has been made constantly since then by various political players, and has not lost its urgency even now in 1999. Perhaps it remains to ask, however, whether any society, has really – en masse - ever embraced it.

CHAPTER III

In this chapter I will consider the issue of Paton's presentation of John Kumalo and the incipient labour movement which he is usually understood as figuring. The issue is particularly controversial in the novel and critics who highlight it, in general accuse Paton of falling foul of modern South African political realities, (although this usually indicates the politics of the 1980's) and condemn the novel as reactionary in relation to the "real" forces for change in South Africa. (Watson 1982: 38-40/ Ward 1989: 75-78) What this conclusion sidelines is exactly what is meant by "real" forces for change. A careful reading of both Watson and Ward indicates that they are in fact propounding a strategy of protest and even of violent conflict in the interests of political accomodation. Since Paton (correctly) is understood as resisting such methods he is accused of idolising the law. I would suggest that the issue is not primarily that of the law, but of violence.

What a Christian is to do in the face of a concerted policy of injustice on the part of the government of a so-called "legitimate" authority has always been a moot point. The so-called "just war" theory was reserved for illegitimate government or for foreign aggression. The policy of segregation in no way qualified in liberal eyes as either. Clayton might sanction violence against Hitler, but to sanction violence against the South African government in the years 1945-1948 was for him inconceivable. This does not automatically rule out political activism, but even here Clayton drew the line, as his disagreement with the activist politics of both Michael Scott and Huddleston prior to 1948, and indeed, even after the accession of the Nationalists to power, indicates. Paton shared these assumptions, as his autobiography *Towards the Mountain* indicates. In a statement, which raises more questions than it answers, Clayton argued in support of his attitude that

> "The Church is not here primarily to serve society. Its prime duty is to worship God and obey Him."
>
> (Paton 1981: 248)

The debate within the Anglican Church, and indeed within Christianity as a whole, was more complex than what Paton leads us to believe, however. *Between Two Fires: The Anglican Church and Apartheid* (Worsnip:1991) traces the ongoing debate within Anglicanism with respect to calls for "unlawful" protest against the Union Government. Clayton despite his sympathy for black demands, and even his conviction of the need to "re-christianise South Africa" (Paton 1973: 146) in relation to the justice of those demands, always remained aloof from the calls for increasingly radical Black resistance to segregation in the 1940's and to Apartheid in the 1950's. The Diocesan Report of 1943 suffered according to Worsnip, from the assumption that the government would eventually be willing to listen to the Church on questions of policy, (Worsnip 1991: 26) and therefore that protest politics were unnecessary. The prophetic role of the Church – its calling for repentance and a change of heart – was limited to encouraging the government to change; any attempts to force the issue – as in the case of Scott, for example – were discouraged. (Worsnip 1991: 151) The difference between Clayton and Scott, Worsnip maintains, resided in their exposure to Black opinion. Clayton simply was out of touch with Black leaders, Scott was not. (Worsnip 1991: 117)

The radicalisation of Black leadership outside the sphere of the Joint Councils and the growth of the ANC and its Youth Wing, therefore found Clayton and the Church sidelined from new developments in Black Politics. Their obvious concentration on the war effort in Europe had added to their diffidence. Paton's biographies of Clayton and Hofmeyr, and his own autobiography (*Towards the Mountain*) indicate that the Strike of 1946 came as a surprise, as was their confusion on how to react to it, the Mine Workers Union being as yet an illegal body and the threat of violence (real or imagined) uppermost in their minds. The description of the strike takes up only a few lines in each of the above works, although in none of them is Paton unsympathetic or even dismissive. In his own autobiography, Paton scrutinises the issue of violence in relation to World War II, and extrapolates his conclusion in relation to Black Christians in the 1980's.

> "These various admonitions create tremendous difficulties today for black Christians. If they are committed to violence, they either abjure their Christianity or they find that the gospels support their struggle for liberation. A third course is to take refuge in pietism. There is yet a fourth course and that is to preach peace and non-violence, but that is becoming a lonely road for a black Christian, for he is then accused of choosing peace above justice, and slavery above freedom."
>
> (Paton 1981: 231)

Paton does not say it directly, but it is obvious that his sympathies are with the fourth option. Throughout his political career he in fact consistently opposed what he calls "violence" as a political option, even in the face of the "institutional violence" of the State. (Paton 1981: 231) In the history of the Liberal Party (*Liberals Against Apartheid* (1997)), R. Vigne quotes Paton as confirming the party's policy of non-violence since "violence" would "only deepen fear and intensify hate and make more difficult the solution of our problems". (Vigne 1997: 189) This may seem self-evident, but the problem is that Paton does not always draw a distinction between non-violent (but active) protest, which might have violent results, and violent struggle. His opposition to sanctions in the 1980's espoused in *Journey Continued* does not seem to indicate a real awareness that sanctions were in fact a form of non-violent protest. (Paton 1989: 219) His seeming belief, inherited from Clayton that "the Christian must never use the same weapon as his opponent" (Worsnip 1991: 151) left him with little option outside the passive resistance of satyagraha which he proposes in the face of the "race-caste society that would not change". (Paton 1973: 146)

To add to the complexity of the debate, Bishop Reeves, Clayton's successor to the diocese of Johannesburg in 1949, with Scott and Huddleston, represented a different tradition within Anglicanism which did recognise the need for "illegal" protest, if not violent struggle, if legislation rendered legal opposition impossible. Whereas Clayton used the image of the crucifixion to counsel patience, (Paton 1973: 146) Reeves instead talks of the "terrible crucifixion of man by man which is now taking place in South Africa". (Worsnip 1991: 121) His response assumed a "co-ordinating

role between the many and various bodies engaged in explicit political opposition, such a trade unions, the South African Institute or Race Relations, the African and Indian Congresses, the Congress of Democrats and others", (Worsnip 1991: 12) all of which were involved in "illegal" protest. That this took place in the 1950's does not exempt it from relevance to the above discussion. Despite the renewed urgency of the situation in the 1950's, Clayton remained equally aloof from Reeves more "direct" approach, as he had from Scott and Huddleston in the 1940's. Both Clayton's and Paton's opposition to activist politics in the 1940's and 1950's was in fact part of a complex of liberal disengagement which neither was able to broach, as the Liberal Party's distancing itself from involvement in Congress Politics in the 1950's, indicates. In any case, before 1948, despite increasing tensions on both left and right, Paton (and Clayton) remained of the opinion that conditions did not warrant the kind of confrontation with the State that protest action outside the legal channels would provide. They felt, moreover, that it might jeopardise the possible success of the eventual change of heart they were working for. To these considerations must be added their heightened sensitivity to the issue of potentially violent confrontation between the State and its opponents. One wonders to what extent they were not casting an eye over their shoulders at the increasing threat of Afrikaner Nationalism on the horizon of the political landscape. It is indeed one of the anomalies of *Cry, the Beloved Country* that the novel devotes only one page in the novel to the Nationalists (CBC: 70) and references to Afrikaner nationalism are relatively few and somewhat dismissive of their political leanings. (CBC: 115/131) Was it because Paton was himself unaware of or dismissive of the threat from the Afrikaner right and its impact on the white community as a whole in terms of their scare tactics concerning Black crime and communist agitation? A cursory glance at the history of the period would tend to suggest otherwise. The appeal to Christian hope and love must be read like Clayton's counter to Hoernle's pessimism, in relation to the deepening anxiety in White South Africa. The novel appeals to whites to take another look, to look to their long term interest, and to take a leap of faith. At the same time, he tries to downplay those strategies which he considered would increase those anxieties. Paradoxically, the portrait of John Kumalo may be seen as confirming them. This complex combination of theological and political argument,

personal fear and political opportunism, which informed Paton's and Clayton's ideological positioning in relation to the phenomenon of political activism is none other than the strange melange of "great ideal and fearful practice" (CBC: 134) that Jarvis describes as marking "our civilisation". That it should mark the complexities of Christian liberalism should not surprise us.

Given the complexity of the above issues, it is obvious that John Kumalo must occupy a complex structural position in the novel. Generally his personal juxtaposition to his brother Stephen goes unnoticed. What is controversial is his political function where he functions as a representative, next to Tomlinson and Dubula, of the urban politicised proletariat, although neither of these figures carry the weight of full counterpoints to John Kumalo. (Hemson 1994: 37)

The major episodes in which John Kumalo features include his first and final meeting with his brother Stephen, and the strike episode between them. In the first encounter with Stephen, John Kumalo establishes a number of aspects which are symptomatic of his opposition to his brother (traditional, rural and Christian) and Msimangu (urban and Christian). The first is that the woman he is with is not his wife, according to the church. Like Gertrude, he has exceeded the limits of Christian morality and indeed has become for himself his own arbiter of right and wrong. Second, he has had an "experience" in Johannesburg. The word is purposefully chosen to convey something akin to a religious experience, although it is not so directly, and it is related to the charisma of his "strange voice". This experience is difficult to speak of in Zulu, redolent with pastoral and traditional rhythms, (Coetzee 1988:128) and John prefers to explain himself in the lingua franca of urban Johannesburg. (CBC: 34) Given this specification, one understands that the experience is new to his life in Johannesburg, and is difficult to communicate outside his own political circle. Thirdly, and this follows on from the second: in Johannesburg, John has political standing (he is a "somebody"). Moreover, this being a "somebody" permits him to transcend the authority of both the chief and the Bishop, both of these being for him examples of retrogressive and anachronistic tribal and religious authorities, who stand in the way of his political career. Under

the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act, the chiefs had in fact become an instrument in the policy of segregation pursued by the Native Affairs Department of the Union Government. (Rich 1984: 64) Equally the Anglican Church, for all the verbal criticism of segregation and racial discrimination, was itself subject to the same caste divisions as South African society in general. Paton traces the discrimination that existed in the Anglican Church in *Apartheid and the Archbishop*, and highlights Clayton's attempts, without success, to ameliorate the situation. (Paton 1973: 64-73) The novel tacitly accepts both of these criticisms. The criticism of the chieftainship and its tendency to venality is repeated by the agricultural demonstrator in Book III (CBC: 227-228) and Kumalo's own meeting with the chief in Book III is a mere formality and shows him up as ignorant and ineffective, "for the counsellors of a broken tribe have counsel for many things, but none for the matter of a broken tribe". (CBC: 198) This is another way of saying that the chieftainship was part of the problem, not the solution. Certainly, Paton does not subscribe to the view that the authority in rural areas must stay in the hands of the chiefs. In a tacit dismissal of trusteeship as administered by the Native Affairs Department, leadership in the valley passes to Kumalo and Jarvis and works practically through the agricultural demonstrator, who echoes John's criticism of subservience to colonial structures. Even John's criticisms of gold mines and their exploitation of Black labour (CBC: 34) are mirrored in Arthur Jarvis' own critique. (CBC: 126-127)

So if John Kumalo's criticisms are themselves supported elsewhere in the novel, one may draw the distinction between his opinions and his actions, between the said and the unsaid. All of this is borne out in his underhand dealings of Absolom and his own son in relation to Jarvis' murder. Msimangu, who it seems is already known to John, and is his adversary in religious, not political terms, understands that behind the political façade and the charismatic voice lies a corrupted demagogue, hungry for power and wealth, for which he is prepared to risk the loss of the life of others to achieve them. Despite the validity of some of his criticisms of the Church, his total rejection of Christianity is an index of hubris, and dovetails with his corrupt moral desire.

The occasion of Stephen's first meeting with his brother provides Msimangu with the opportunity to establish the following judgement:

> "He stopped in the street and spoke quietly and earnestly to his companion. Because the white man has power, we too want power, he said. But when a black man gets power, when he gets money, he is a great man if he is not corrupted. I have seen it often. He seeks power and money to put right what is wrong, and when he gets them, why, he enjoys the power and the money. Now he can gratify his lusts, now he can arrange ways to get white man's liquor, he can speak to thousands and hear them clap their hands. Some of us think when we have power, we shall revenge ourselves on the white man who has had power, and because our desire is corrupt, we are corrupted, and the power has no heart in it. But most white men do not know this truth about power, and they are afraid lest we get it.
>
> He stood as though he was testing his exposition. Yes, that is right about power, he said. But there is only one thing that has power completely, and that is love. Because when a man loves, he seeks no power, and therefore he has power. I see only one hope for our country, and that is when white men and black men, desiring neither power nor money, but desiring only the good of their country, come together to work for it."
>
> (CBC: 37)

Once inspected under Msimangu's spotlight, the "experience" John Kumalo has spoken about, must be understood as a kind of drunkenness on the power he has tasted. It is a statement about the dangers of the corrupting influence of power if it is cut off from the wellspring of Christian love. Potentially, Msimangu suggests, the danger of this corruption is all the more real if a people is oppressed. A black man in

South Africa must be a "great man if he is not corrupted", that is, if he puts aside his desire for wealth or revenge.

> "But there is only one thing that has power completely, and that is love."
>
> (CBC: 37)

Stephen and Jarvis together are able to fulfill this requirement: submitting their lives to the scrutiny of mythos, they are able, despite their sinfulness, to put aside their desire for power and money, and "desiring only the good of their country, come together to work for it". Msimangu too conforms to these requirements through his sacrifice. John Kumalo does not – not because he is unable. The call to conversion is open to all, even to him. But he refuses conversion, that is, to submit himself to the purification of personal motive and the transforming power of self-sacrifice. Even Stephen, who must emerge as the hero of the novel, has battled with his own corruption – his temptation to despair, his lies to his brother to hurt him – but submits himself at the same time to the standards of divine order: the command to love, to seek nothing for oneself. Thus seeking no power, he has it. This of course is not the same power in both instances: the first is the power which accrues to those immersed in history, and partakes of history's corruption; the second is the power of God working through men/women, who via mythos, transform history. It is only the second kind of power which can bring about the reconciliation needed for South Africa's rebirth. Mythos determines the deeper motivation and meaning of the political sphere; only if the motivation of political protest conforms to the motivation of mythos, can such protest ensure that the violence Paton associates with "historical" power is not unleashed.

These conclusions are borne out in the final meeting between John and Stephen. (CBC: 178-182) We find again the distance between façade and reality which John projects. Every word between the two is pregnant with innuendo in relation to the chasm which has been created between them over their two sons. They are also unable to communicate across the chasm between their different "ideological" positionings: John versed in "history", Stephen in mythos:

"You have read history, my brother. You know that history teaches that the men who do the work cannot be kept down forever. If they will stand together, who will stand against them? More and more our people understand that. If they so decide, there will be no more work done in South Africa.

- You mean if they strike?

- Yes, I mean that.

- But the last strike was not successful.

John Kumalo stood on his feet, and his voice growled in his throat.

- Look what they did to us, he said. They forced us into the mines as though we were slaves. Have we no right to keep back our labour?

- Do you hate the white man, my brother?

John Kumalo looked at him with suspicion. I hate no man, he said. I hate only injustice.

- But I have heard some of the things you have said.

- What things?

- I have heard that some of them are dangerous things. I have heard that they are watching you, that they will arrest you when they think it is time. It is this matter that I must bring to you, because you are my brother."

(CBC: 180/181)

John's reference to the State's handling of the strike by forcing the workers back into the mines "as though we were slaves" draws our attention to the unjustifiable violence of the State. However to the question "Have we no right to keep back our labour?", Stephen asks another question which cuts through John's façade of political agitator to his motivation, and John's attempt to play the righteous politician ("I hate only injustice") is juxtaposed with "some of the things" he has said (what exactly is he planning?) which lay bare his moral corruption and his demagoguery behind his innocent rhetorical stance. Besides which, his imputed love of justice can hardly sit comfortably with his misuse of justice to free his son and put the blame on Absolom. At the same time Stephen yields to his desire to hurt his

brother, and his lie rings as the touchpiece of the pain and betrayal their relationship has become, as well as a testimony of Stephen's own "corruption" as a human being. He is overcome with shame:

> "He had come to tell his brother that power corrupts, that a man who fights for justice must himself be cleansed and purified, that love is greater than force....God have mercy on me."
>
> (CBC: 182)

He has forgone his chance to bear witness to John on the power of love, and John's recalcitrance becomes a reprimand of his own sinfulness.

At face value the above antithesis of "love" and "force" is self-evident. The equation of "force" and political action does however betray a slip of terminology. Paton is confusing political activism with political violence, both of which he rather glibly fashions as "force". His engaging with "materialist" politics from a liberal Christian point of view points to its pitfalls: its final lack of power to transform interior motivation and the possibility of the escalation of violence as a result of "class struggle". Paton has re-produced the traditional antipathy between Christians and Marxists. Marxist dialectic, which proposes class struggle and the victory of the worker, is in the larger picture of things discounted since it is not seen to engage with the spiritual touchstones of love and moral transformation. Equally, however, the novel cannot meet/address the criticism from "below" of the failure of Christian liberalism to procure the change of heart it propagates, and the need for action. Nor can it answer the charge of pietism and passivity: this has perhaps always been the burden of religious pietism. The last is particularly relevant in relation to Ghandian doctrine of satyagraha which Paton in fact endorses in *Ah, but thy Land is Beautiful*.[6] The concern that political and social transformation conform to criteria established in relation to mythos: love, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, remain forever moral

[6] The Dalai Lama is facing the same pressures to abandon his refusal to commission the Tibetans to take up arms against China.

imperatives which at the same time activists may contend to be impediments to the achievement of one's goal of political liberation. For Paton, however, the means can never justify the end result. (Ngwenya 1997: 52) His presentation of John Kumalo presents the dangers of moral degeneration (hatred, venality, power hunger) from within, and the risk of bloodshed from without, as a result of the movement for political liberation. Further, the warning must ring that Black leadership which is self-seeking will reproduce injustice in its own guise if it is corrupted by money and greed, just as white government is corrupted by money and greed at this point of time (1947).

With this in mind, I wish to address Paton's presentation of the strike. (CBC: 157-163) The style is partly narrative, partly didactic. The voice is however not univocal, but shifting, although it is sometimes difficult to pinpoint the extent of irony intended, and therefore the authorial intention in relation to the events being described. Nevertheless, in this way Paton captures the shifting kaleidoscope of South African political opinion, the said and the non-said, the explicit and the implicit. The governing hermeneutic of the passage is thus negotiated between declared and unstated meanings and the gap between them:

> "John Kumalo speaks the one meaning, and means the other meaning."
>
> (CBC: 160)

John's stated meaning is reasoned, if radical and uncompromising, as it calls for strike action in the interest of greater economic justice. His calls however refrain from making the sort of political demands which any white government of the time would have found inflammatory.

> "All we ask is justice, says Kumalo. We are not asking here for equality and the franchise and the removal of the colour-bar. We are asking only for more money from the richest industry in the world. This industry is powerless without our labour. Let us cease

> to work and this industry will die. And I say, it is better to cease to work than to work for such wages."
>
> (CBC: 159; my emphasis)

At the same time the tone is new, and so is the strike action that Kumalo is calling for. Rich documents the greater mood of militancy in the ANC during this period, largely due to the sense of frustration with the lack of progress in the economic demands of Black labour between 1942 and 1946, (Rich 1984: 77-87) in particular the slowness in applying the findings of the Lansdown and Smit Commissions, and the perceived ineffectiveness of the Joint Councils referred to earlier. He cites the document African Claims, adopted in December 1943, (incidentally at the time as the Diocesan Commission over which Clayton presided) as completely rejecting the policy of segregation (and trusteeship) on the grounds that it was "designed to keep the African in a state of perpetual tutelage and militates against his normal development". (Rich 1984: 85)

> "While restating traditional political objectives such as the extension of the franchise, equal justice before the law, freedom of the press and the right to own and sell property, African Claims also sought a welfare state programme that would lead to the state provision of education for African children, free public health and medical services, industrial welfare legislation, and unemployment, sickness and old age benefits.
>
> These social democratic objectives continued to characterise the ANC's political strategy as well, at least until the 1946 African mine strike and the collapse of the Native Representative Council ... Xuma hoped to model the ANC on lines close to that of the British Labour Party, with a new power base lying in areas like African trade unions."
>
> (Rich 1984: 88/86)

John Kumalo's rhetoric accurately reflects this militancy; what is not reflected in the above quotation is the charge of corruption. The equivalence between Black radicals and corruption, which Paton establishes in the novel, is in terms of Rich's account not historically sustainable.

What then is the unsaid against which the said is set, the appeal to uprising and revolution which John Kumalo dare not utter but which his audience understands, and which it might enact, if only he is prepared to give the word, to lead them? Such an appeal is hardly "rational": it is framed in terms of "bodily sensation" and "electricity" which the "sound of the voice" excites. This is political rhetoric at its most contagious. It is for the narrator (Paton?) the voice of "Africa itself", "Africa awakening from sleep, of Africa resurgent, of Africa dark and savage".

> "What if this voice should say words that it speaks already in private, should rise and not fall again, should rise and rise and rise, and the people rise with it, should madden them with thoughts of rebellion and dominion, with thoughts of power and possession? ....
>
> "The people shiver and come to themselves."
>
> (CBC: 158)

What John Kumalo is expressing unconsciously with his audience is nothing more than the dream of an oppressed people for freedom. But it is a dream that has the potential to unleash enormous violence as the pent up anger and humiliation of an oppressed people is released, as well as the reciprocal violence of the state's response. The sense of the white fear of revolution and the African desire for revolution is palpable, but cannot be expressed. It thus becomes unconscious. It results from the limits imposed by the violence of colonialism as well as by the rationality of language and the law. Both – violence and rationality – are, of course, present in the restraint which dominates the scene, in particular in the presence of the police. What Paton envisages here is the unthinkable rendered thinkable and then submitted again to control (police and reason): "the people shiver and come to

themselves". It presents the double-bind of colonial violence and rationality: the desire for freedom from colonialism rendered inaccessible except via the rational and violent constraints imposed by the colonial state. The image of Africa resurgent must in this logic of colonial violence be coupled with Africa "dark and savage". This is the rationale of initial conquest and subsequent oppression. It is also the projection of the guilt of colonial violence onto the colonised, who act as the mirror of the darkness and savagery of the colonial process, which in this case, "enlightened" Europe cannot admit itself to having committed. It is the projection of the "horror" of Kurt's view of himself in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. It is the barbarism Fanon pinpoints as precisely the creation of the colonial unconscious with respect to the imputed violence of the colonised.

In these terms the unconscious appeal to open uprising communicated by John Kumalo's "subtext" must threaten the resurgence of Africa "dark and savage" and threaten to throw South Africa into a state of bloodshed. It is not only, or even primarily a question of the violence of the strikers which is Paton's concern, as critics like Watson (1983: 36) suggest. The references to rampage (CBC: 162) I would suggest need to be read ironically as an index of white hysteria. (Paton 1964: 363) It is especially the question of the backlash from the forces of "Law and Order" which such an incident might provoke. The presence of the police and Harry Openheimer, at the call for the strike, betrays an acute sense on Paton's part of the delicate balance of social cohesion within the colonial state. If the strike – as toned down as it is – arouses the levels of hysteria in the white community described on pages 162-163 of the novel, and results in the police driving back the black miners into the mines, (CBC: 163) then one may ask, how much more violent the response would have been if the unrest had been more widespread. This is 1946, not 1990. One need but draw attention to the South African State's response to Black mobilisation in the 1980's to stress the point.

> "Power, said Msimangu, power. Why God should give such power is not for us to understand. If this man were a preacher, why, the whole world would follow him....

> Perhaps we should thank God he is corrupt, said Msimangu solemnly. For if he were not corrupt, he could plunge this country into bloodshed. We shall never understand it."
>
> (CBC: 160/161)

Earlier in the novel, Msimangu drew the distinction between two kinds of power: the power of mythos, and "historical" power. (CBC: 37) One wonders which one is being referred to here. For if the first power he mentions must be "historical", the fact that we are told that it is from God might indicate that it is the second type. And his conclusion that perhaps they should thank God that he is "corrupt" only increases our confusion by attempting to shift the whole force of his perplexity onto John Kumalo's personal/moral corruption. The contradiction inherent in Paton's (and liberal Christianity's) attitude to the strike is laid bare. If we return to the full force of the fact that this power John has, has been granted to him by God, then it becomes possible that his use of his voice might just be about doing God's work after all, which for Clayton and Paton is untenable. Many of the first Black proponents of active protest politics were in fact Christians, and would have understood their activism in this light, as did Scott and Huddleston. Surely if John Kumalo were corrupt (in the sense of being a true demagogue) he would unleash bloodshed. The fact that he withdraws from inciting his listeners may be evidence, not of personal corruption and fear of loss, as Msimangu suggests, but of good political judgement and even compassion. One thus has reached the limit-text – and the double-bind – of the Christian liberal position in relation to the threat of organised labour. Sympathetic with its demands, yet afraid of its potential to unleash untold violence (here ostensibly by the strikers!) it is unable to engage with either the threat or the shadows of unconscious fear which it arouses. It can only declare "non-understanding". (CBC: 161)

Rich in fact points out that many liberals were left high and dry by the strike and the subsequent boycott. Brookes, warned of the dangers of permitting the boycott movement to extend itself, since it would result in a "civil war" between

"Government and the accredited leaders of the Native people chosen by a system of election which the Government itself has devised. It means that men who have hitherto stood out as moderates will, by the logic of events, be forced to take their place with extremists". (Rich 1884: 107) This Rich implies would have led to a further erosion of white liberal patronage of the direction of Black change. Similarly Ballinger's hope, Rich informs us, depended on the "boycott campaign being stifled and African consciousness at the grass roots being brought behind a more moderate leadership that was still prepared to work through the system of Native Representation", (Rich 1984: 113) that is, through the constitutional channels established by the State. The problem that these were insufficient is not confronted.

Indeed the problem is left unconfronted in the novel as well. Paton's inability to represent Black activism in anything but terms encapsulated in John Kumalo's "corrupt demagoguery" must act as an imaginative lacuna in the narrative structure of *Cry, the Beloved Country* and lessens the impact of the novel in relation to two key areas: the first is the question of the Christian response to intransigent oppressive government; the second is the evaluation of urban politics. Where Ndotsheni becomes the parable of the transformation of rural South Africa in the light of mythos, there is no such corresponding vision with respect to urban South Africa, and Msimangu as a priest can hardly bear the weight of such a transformation on his own; even Stephen's spiritual wisdom is balanced by Jarvis' money and practical insight. The problem has its origin in Paton's inability to (1) envision protest politics and (2) the city as anything but as the locus of corruption, and consequently urban politics as necessarily tainted with that corruption. The moral problematic of love and power may legitimately be inveighed against the personal immorality of John Kumalo, or even of the degrading impetus of the city, but it cannot cancel the legitimacy of the problems his political activism addresses. Without a viable Black political counter-balance to John Kumalo,[7] (and there were several actual activists from whom Paton might have drawn such a character) it comes to appear as if the politics of the Black proletarian movement which he comes

[7] Arthur Jarvis is to some extent his counter-balance, but he is white and liberal, and in any case is killed.

to represent is merely atavistic. In which case mythos is either reduced to a transcendental level of critique which is incapable of realisation in an urban environment, or it is played out on the side of colonial antipathy to the labour movement. Paton thus engages the reader in an attitude of all or nothing in relationship to Christianity or labour: the "golden voice" of Msimangu, or the bullish demagoguery of John Kumalo. However, as my initial discussion in this chapter indicates, Christianity cannot be understood as disqualifying political activism, for example, a strike, in the interests of political transformation. What is called for is co-operation, not conflict. The question of direct politically motivated violence would, from a Christian point of view, be more complex, but it is not directly relevant to the novel, and therefore to this study.

Msimangu's comments are followed by a shift to the poly-phonic narrative voice which Paton uses elsewhere to relate political attitudes with ironic distance. The fear of widespread uprising is pinpointed in terms of white South African neurosis, (CBC: 162) hardly commensurate with the reality on the ground:

> "The strike has come and gone. It never went beyond the mines. The worst trouble was at the Driefontein, where the police were called in to drive the black miners into the mine. There was fighting, and three of the black miners were killed. But all is quiet, they report, all is quiet."
>
> (CBC: 163)

Even the Church shares the confusion of the rest of white South Africa and adds its divisive voice to the confused and unprincipled debate characterising white politics elsewhere. (CBC: 145-149) It is notable that the calls whether to support the recognition of the African Mine Workers' Union or not, are motivated by fear on both counts. The response is hardly worthy of the spirit of the Diocesan Commission of 1943. Juxtaposed to this confusion, "all is quiet" is reiterated: the silence of the oppressed, rebeaten into submission. The word "remarkably" underscores the asymmetrical nature of colonial violence.

Then an extraordinary series of images follows:

> "In the deserted harbour there is yet water that laps against the quays. In the dark and silent forest there is a leaf that falls. Behind the polished panelling the white ant eats away the wood. Nothing is ever quiet, except for fools."
>
> (CBC: 164)

This passage, so easy to miss, is remarkable for two reasons. First it is composed entirely of metaphors and thus its reference is obscure. Any (white) South African could fail to immediately understand it. The idea was first encoded in Roy Campbell's poem "*The Zulu Girl*" whose sullen silence is "water lapping against the quays" in watchful waiting for the time to rise up and retake power. The second is the juxtaposition of civilised and primitive in the metaphorical structure: the contrast between polished panelling and the wood of the forest. The white ant attacks from within, slowly eating away until everything collapses. These are images of constant, unwitting danger, of a threat from the inside, which will not be perceived before it is too late. They evoke the anxiety of watchfulness against apocalyptic collapse. It is the voice of the colonist whose inability to embrace the love of mythos condemns him/her to eternal vigilance. It is the judgement on all attempts to retain an order constructed in colonial violence. It is among other things Paton's awareness, metaphorically expressed, of judgement against himself.

It is finally instructive, and a bit startling, to compare Paton's characterisation of the incipient trade union movement in the figure of John Kumalo with Herbert Dhlomo's characterisation of it in his short story "Farmer and Servant". The story relates the lives of two men, Jack Zomba and John Mtetwa, who escape from the semi-slavery of farm labour in the Northern Transvaal to Johannesburg. They participate in the war in North Africa, and emerge after the war as part of the growing urban proletariat, which Dhlomo describes as characterised by a new confidence. The Worker's Club they join is non-racial, and here they meet Christine,

a white girl who has learned the "futility of race and colour prejudice". (Dhlomo 1985: 464) While speaking at an open-air worker's meeting, a young Afrikaner Carl Rooi, outraged at seeing his ex-girlfriend fraternising with Blacks, shoots first John, then himself. The shot intended for Zomba goes wide. As an historical parable, Dhlomo captures the sense of greater freedom and possibility for blacks that the war brought, and the importance of the worker movement in the promised realisation of that freedom. He also shows that the danger, when it would come, would come from the white right-wing. Dhlomo, and not Paton, got it right.

CONCLUSION

This study of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in terms of the politics of repentance evokes both terms equally. This reading of the novel is suspended between both mythos and history. This implies two orders of being: the first is one of ideality: the realm and pattern of redeemed history; the second is an order of present personal and social endeavour marred by contradiction and marked by the sin. The need to repent, to bring history – individual, social, economic – back into line with the Divine Order is both a metaphysical and socio-political statement. Human Sinfulness is all-inclusive but it is also historically specific, structured in particular economic and social systems, in this case one structured in economic and racial privilege.

In chapter II of this paper I established a reading of the novel in relation to these two poles. The challenge of mythos forbids despair; at the same time as it requires repentance, it also promises redemption. The characterisation of Msimangu as the mouthpiece of mythos constantly reminds the reader of the divine challenge. Both Stephen Kumalo and Jarvis respond to it despite personal tragedy and the temptation to despair and dissolution in Kumalo's case, and to isolation and racial hatred in Jarvis'. Their response to the demands of Christian conversion demands personal purification and social commitment. At no point is religious faith a purely private matter in Paton's vision of Christian life. Their joining of hands so to speak enacts a symbolic possibility of racial reconciliation and the commitment of Black and White to work together in the interests of the "beloved" country in fulfillment of Msimangu's prophesy.

> "I see only one hope for our country, and that is when white men and black men, desiring neither power nor money, but desiring only the good of their country, come together to work for it."
>
> (CBC: 37)

This statement also promises the fulfillment of the Christian liberal vision of South Africa as a constitutional State founded in the principles laid down in the Diocesan Commission of 1943: a society founded in the universality of civil codes and equality before the Law. There is, however, also a confusion here on the basis of ideality: that between mythos and Christian liberal principles. The call of the gospel as an abstract embodiment of Divine Order may historically be encoded in a particular political/social/moral programme, but only tentatively so, and certainly never absolutely. In the characterisation of John Kumalo – and the urban proletariat he comes virtually to represent – this confusion becomes apparent. Paton's – and indeed, just as importantly, his mentor, Clayton's – inability to engage forthrightly with mythos in relation to the demands of the emerging proletariat and "struggle politics" implies certain "ideological" limits beyond which neither he nor Clayton were prepared to engage. John Kumalo's characterisation as a corrupt, venal demagogue may bear the structural weight of his contrast with first his brother, Stephen, and second Msimangu, but it cannot as Watson points out bear the full weight of a characterisation of the truth of his politics. (Watson 1982: 39) Obviously Paton never felt that the situation in 1947/1948 warranted radical protest which defied the constitutionality of what he saw as a legally constituted state. The law might be unjust, but it was better than no law. The alternative he saw to be chaos and violence, much of it on the side of the state. As a liberal he was aware of the ambivalences of the colonial project, but he was not about to discount it altogether, especially since he was hopeful of gradual political change. As a Christian he was caught in the historical convergence between British civilisation and Christianity. He could not endorse any project which he considered would jeopardise the foundation of society in relation to these fundamental identities, even if this entailed a qualified support for segregation at that moment in time. Ngwenya sums up this conclusion as follows: for Paton

> "the struggle for political power is not entirely compatible with the notion of Christian duty!"
>
> (Ngwenya 1997: 39)

And as Hemson reminds us, these ideas of segregation (no matter how qualified) reaped their own bitter harvest in the policies of Apartheid. (Hemson 1994: 35)

Likewise Paton – as a liberal Christian – could not finally endorse the phenomenon of urbanisation. Both Rich and Hemson have pointed to the collusion of liberals and the ideals of segregation; for liberals the "redemption" of the land, no matter how important in real terms, nonetheless occludes a positive valuation of the city as anything beyond an invitation to moral dissolution and political demagoguery. This must, in relation to the poles of mythos and history, mark a point of lack of faith and surrender to the despair Msimangu warns of. The transformation of history in the novel demands the symbolic encapsulation of both rural and urban redemption, not of rural only.

> "Here lies the dark side of liberal imagination: what is **missing** is the penny whistle, Spokes Mashiyane, the comfort of friends, the dancing, maraba style, the excitement and vitality of the African township, the shebeens, the Trevor Huddleston jazz band, Hugh Masekela, the confidence and self-consciousness of the township working class which vainly penetrates the narrative, and the hard-headed vitality and resistance of *Mine Boy*. None of this is there, and Paton remains trapped within the moralism of the segregationists who saw nothing but death and destruction in African city life."
>
> (Hemson 1994: 41)

Paton, as author of visionary appeal, thus remains subject to the limitations of Christian liberalism and the pastoral literary form he chose to express that vision. This is not the limitation of mythos itself. It is instead the shadow of the fear of the colonist (Morphet 1983: 8) who is however aware (if only partly in certain moments) of the judgment of both Mythos and History on himself.

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