

*LOST IN THE STARS*: KURT WEILL AND MAXWELL ANDERSON'S  
MUSICAL ADAPTATION OF ALAN PATON'S NOVEL  
*CRY THE BELOVED COUNTRY*

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*CRY THE BELOVED COUNTRY*

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background to the study

‘There is a lovely road that runs from Ixopo into the hills.’

Alan Paton (1949: 11)

The book that propelled Alan Paton and his ‘beloved country’ to fame begins with an immense journey. Like Whitman’s voyager, both of the protagonists in *Cry, the Beloved Country* sail forth to seek and find, and like Ulysses of old their course leads them back home carrying the burdens of material loss and moral gain. The details of that journey are reflected in Paton’s own life, but also in the teleology of the country that he wrote about. Paton’s life was inextricably linked with that of South Africa. Both of his autobiographies suggest this theme of voyage in their titles: *Toward the Mountain* and *Journey Continued*. Other political figures have also identified it in the stories of their lives; Albert Luthuli’s in *Let my People Go*, F.W de Klerk in *Die Laaste Trek – ’n Nuwe Begin*, and Nelson Mandela in *Long Walk to Freedom*. In Paton’s life the course had a moral imperative, one which he associated directly with his religious creed: he was travelling on the road toward the holy mountain of Isaiah (Alexander 1995: 430). He believed that he could not reach it in his lifetime but that he would find it after death. So, near the end of his life Paton gave orders for a road to be cut across his garden, stopping just short of arriving in a bed of azaleas and clivias (Alexander 1995: 432). It was the perfect metaphor for his contribution to South Africa, for his was also a *long walk* and he died just two years before the promise of a new South Africa dawned.

When Paton wrote the first lines of *Cry, the Beloved Country* he was in Trondheim, sitting alone in a hotel room<sup>1</sup>. Little did he know just how famous these lines would become: by the time of his death, nearly four decades later, *Cry, the Beloved Country* would have sold over 15 million copies in twenty languages (Alexander 1995: 222). But long before that, within a year after the

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<sup>1</sup> Paton had written nothing of the novel before this night. *Cry, the Beloved Country* was started in Norway on 25 September 1946 (Paton 1980: 267, 268) and finished in America on 29 December 1946 (Alexander 1995: 209).

novel's initial publication, the lyrical prose in the first chapter of the novel would even be set to music.

By that time Kurt Weill, the renowned German composer of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, was living in America and making plans to create an indigenous American opera, not knowing that this would be his last attempt before dying from heart failure. The lyricist working with him was Maxwell Anderson, who was then a well-known American playwright. Together they chose Paton's novel as their theme, and renamed their own musical adaptation of it to *Lost in the Stars*. Anderson attached great importance to the journey in Paton's novel and incorporated the Ulysses myth into it.

The fact that Paton was living on another continent did not seem to bother Anderson and Weill at all. If anything, it would only make it easier for them to adapt *Cry, the Beloved Country* freely and without his interference. But before they could do anything creative with Paton's intellectual property they needed his permission. It was Anderson who wrote to him on 15 March 1948, only six weeks after Scribner's first started distributing *Cry, the Beloved Country*. In the letter Anderson explains that 'the Khumalo story took such hold on me that I decided I'd like to try to arrange it for the stage' (Avery 1977: 221). Apart from further explanation of just how he and Kurt Weill planned to adapt the novel, Anderson also tells Paton that:

For years I've wanted to write something which would state the position and perhaps illuminate the tragedy of our own Negroes [sic]. Now that I've read your story I think you have said as much as can be said both for your country and ours.

Paton agreed to their proposal, and he seems to have been so interested in the prospect of a musical *Cry, the Beloved Country* that he wanted to send Weill some examples of African music – 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika' foremost on his mind, seeing as it featured in the book and was also by then the 'unofficial' South African anthem for members of the African National Congress (Alexander 1996: 231). But Weill rejected this offer because he wanted to write 'an American opera based on American popular song' (Hirsch 2002: 317). Judging

from their correspondence, the exchange between Paton (on one side of the Atlantic) and Weill and Anderson (on the other) was minimal.

Eventually though, Paton flew to America to meet with the cast and creators of *Lost in the Stars*. He arrived in New York on 11 October 1949 at Idlewild airport, with Anderson waiting there to greet him (Avery 1977: lxiii). Already in the final stages of rehearsals for *Lost in the Stars*, Anderson and Weill were eager to hear what Paton thought of their adaptation. He attended one of these rehearsals on his first night there and his memories of that night were recorded nearly forty years later in *Journey Continued*, the second instalment of his autobiography:

It was an unnerving and at times painful experience. It was my story indeed, but the idiom was strange, except for those parts which reproduced the actual language of the book. I kept on telling myself that the making of a book and the making of a play were two separate creative acts (Paton 1988: 20).

When the rehearsal ended, the creators of *Lost in the Stars* crowded around Paton and pressed him for his opinion.

Alas, my eyes were not shining. If they had been, there would not have been much need for words. But because they were not I had to say some words. I said that the choruses moved me deeply, and that that was a triple compliment to the writer and the composer and the singers. I admitted that the whole experience was confusing and strange, but I implied that it would become less confusing and less strange (Paton 1988: 21).

In the same paragraph, Paton admits that any friendship that had been developing between himself and Anderson was now 'nipped in the bud. Of the strength and beauty of his script, I had not said one word. I was a failure.'

Any frostiness between the two men could not have upset Paton too much. For even though he took a room at the Hotel Dorset where the whole Anderson family was also staying for that month, socialites were lining up to fete him on account of his still new status as a celebrity novelist. Both the *New York Herald Tribune* and *Time-Life* held luncheons in Paton's honour, and Pandit Nehru met with him privately to discuss the status of South Africa's many Indian

citizens (Paton 1988: 21, 22). Beyond these engagements, Paton also seems to have continued a love affair that he had begun only a month before in London. His lover was another South African, an expatriate by the name of Mary Benson (Alexander 1995: 250)<sup>1</sup>.

*Lost in the Stars* opened on Broadway, at the Music Box Theater, on 30 October 1949 (Sanders 1980: 380). Even though Paton was apprehensive, he wired an encouraging message to Anderson and Weill that morning (Alexander 1995: 251):

I SEND YOU MY BEST WISHES FOR TONIGHT AND HOPE THAT YOUR GREAT MUSIC WILL SATISFY EVERYONE AS DEEPLY AS IT SATISFIES YOUR FRIEND ALAN PATON.

Mary Benson was there at the premier with Paton<sup>2</sup>. She mentions her response at the opening night of *Lost in the Stars* in her own memoirs, *A Far Cry*: 'I wept as I'd wept while reading the novel' (Benson 1989: 54). Her response was not unique and even if Paton did not enjoy the production, he at least recognized the effect that it had on others in the audience:

It was an outstanding success. People wept and shouted and clapped. At the end there were ovations, for the cast, for the singers, the dramatist, the composer, the director, and for the author of *Cry, the Beloved Country* (Paton 1988: 23).

The next morning, when Paton entered the Dorset Hotel's dining room to eat breakfast, he found Maxwell Anderson and his family there. They were already reading the morning papers and had found generally optimistic reviews for the previous night's show. Among them, Brooks Atkinson, writing for the *New York Times*, had given the production his iconic seal of approval:

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<sup>1</sup> She had written Paton a fan letter in May of 1948 after reading *Cry, the beloved Country*, and he, taking pride in it, had been only too glad to respond (Alexander 1995: 244). What started as one fan letter became a regular correspondence, and when Paton travelled to London sixteen months later in September of 1949, they met and became lovers.

<sup>2</sup> In his biography of Alan Paton, Peter Alexander (1995: 251) asserts that both Dorrie Paton and Mary Benson were present at the show's opening on 30 October. But the biographer seems to have got the dates wrong, since he acknowledges on the same page that Dorrie only arrived in London the following week on 5 November. Alan flew there to meet Dorrie who was travelling from South Africa. After they had spent a few days together in London, the couple then flew back to New York and saw a later performance of *Lost in the Stars* together (Paton 1988: 24).

‘Out of a memorable novel has come a memorable musical drama. It is difficult to remember anything from Kurt Weill’s portfolio that is as eloquent as this richly orchestrated musical’ (Hirsch 2002: 315).

But Paton was still disappointed with *Lost in the Stars* and he found fault with one particular review that he read that morning. He disagreed wholeheartedly with Howard Barnes who, in the *New York Herald Tribune*, had written that Maxwell Anderson ‘captured the full essence of the original’ novel.

I did my best to join in the rejoicing, but my heart wasn’t in it. Maxwell Anderson knew it, and so did his wife. I am sure that *Cry, the Beloved Country* had moved him deeply, and that his musical play was ‘based on’ the book. But his view of life and the world was very different from mine. Barnes was wrong; Anderson did not capture ‘the full essence of the original’ (Paton 1988: 23).

Paton was right; Anderson did change aspects of the original when he adapted *Cry, the Beloved Country* for the stage. Most noticeably he gave it a new title, *Lost in the Stars*. Nearly forty years later, in *Journey Continued*, Paton joked about this lack of eponymy – ‘After all I was luckier than the novelist who sold his book to a dramatists’ company and complained that all they used of it was the title’ (Paton 1988: 24). The joke seems harmless enough, but it betrays a deeper sentiment. Paton felt that, in adapting *Cry, the Beloved Country* for Broadway, Maxwell Anderson had captured nothing of the original, not even its title.

We need to understand Paton’s negative sentiment towards *Lost in the Stars*. Many critics and authors (perhaps thinking of their own interests in a similar situation) would grant Paton every right to decry an adaptation that did not capture the full essence of his original. A few others, the French film theorist André Bazin among them, might be less sympathetic overall: an essay that Bazin wrote on ‘Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest’ in 1948 – the same year that Weill and Anderson began adapting *Cry, the Beloved Country* – spells it out in no uncertain terms (Bazin 2000: 25):



If the novelist is not happy with the adaptation of his work, I, of course, grant him the right to defend the original (although he sold it, and thus is guilty of an act of prostitution that deprives him of many of his privileges as the creator of the work).

Accusing Alan Paton of *prostitution* for selling the rights to *Cry, the Beloved Country* is extreme, but saying that the sale of rights deprived him of 'privileges as the creator of the work' makes sense: he was not the creator of *Lost in the Stars*, and therefore his opinion of it need not be final. Is it not possible that he was over-reacting? After all, he 'admitted that the whole experience was confusing and strange' when he attended that rehearsal on his first night in New York. He also 'implied that it would become less confusing and less strange.'

It stands to reason that Paton found the experience *confusing* and *strange*: *Cry, the Beloved Country* was his first novel and *Lost in the Stars* was his first confrontation with an adaptation of his own work. Also, novelists do not necessarily have detailed knowledge of dramatic form or practical experience in theatre. Certain devices are inevitable when translating a given work from one medium into another. In this particular case many musical and literary elements were at play in distilling a comprehensive and interior novel into a more compact Broadway musical that lasts around two hours: sustained dialogue, lighting, stage props and scenery, musical accompaniment, and rhyming lyrics are all alien to the novel and yet they are essential to the stage. It is exactly because the media are so different that adaptation is needed. And where there is adaptation, there will necessarily also be change.

In the preface to his screenplay adaptation of Michael Cunningham's novel *The Hours*, the British playwright David Hare (2002: ix) wrote the following: 'The great mystery of adaptation is that fidelity can only be achieved through lavish promiscuity.' So were Anderson and Weill *faithful* to Paton's original novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* through their own 'lavish promiscuity'? Or are they perhaps guilty of *violating* it? If Paton's words are anything to judge by, then violation did occur – for him *Lost in the Stars* was a 'painful experience' and an 'ordeal' (Paton 1988: 20). But then again, André Bazin would have accused Paton of prostitution!

It might even be true to say that the reason Paton found *Lost in the Stars* so *confusing* and *strange* when he first saw it in rehearsal was not only because he felt that Weill and Anderson had overstepped the line of fidelity in adapting *Cry, the Beloved Country*, but also because Paton was overstepping the line of fidelity in his own marriage at the same time. Paton does not mention the affair with Mary Benson in his autobiography, but then in *Kontakion for You Departed* (a book that was an extended love letter and a ‘hymn’ to Dorrie after her death), he recounts another time he had an extra-marital affair and, quite understandably, admits: ‘I do not find this easy to write about’ (Paton 1969: 96). He was ashamed by his own infidelities and considered them sinful. Such a man would have been plagued by guilt that his mistress was sitting next to him at the world premiere of *Lost in the Stars* while his wife was waiting for news back home in South Africa.

Discourse on adaptations is usually charged with sexual imagery (Naremore 2000: 8, 9). Words such as *fidelity*, *promiscuity*, *prostitution*, *violation*, *rape*, *perversion*, and *bastardisation* have become a standard part of the vocabulary, though they sometimes damage discussions when charged with a negative moralistic function. In Paton’s case they indicate his displeasure with the end product of *Lost in the Stars*, but also suggest that all was not well with his marriage. They might very well be two sides of the same coin.

To understand Paton’s unhappiness with the musical version of *Cry, the Beloved Country*, we need to explore if, how and why Anderson and Weill changed it in their translation. One particular point of Paton’s contention with *Lost in the Stars* is the seemingly agnostic message that its creators imparted on his story:

The song ‘Lost in the Stars’, sung by Todd Duncan playing the part of the humble and unsophisticated black priest Stephen Kumalo, was highly sophisticated, and it was extremely painful for me to hear my humble hero in a role that he could never have taken. It was made still more painful for me by the fact that the song belonged to the death-of-God genre, or to put it more accurately, to the desertion-of-God genre. God had created the universe, and more especially He had created the earth, but now He had gone away, ‘forgetting the promise that we heard Him say’. So ‘we are lost out here in the stars’ (Paton 1988: 20).

The distinctive cadences in Paton's prose, loved by so many readers of *Cry, the Beloved Country*, find their root in 'his early immersion in the language of the Authorized Version of the Bible' (Alexander 1995: 220). Much of the novel's story centres around religious themes, never heretical and always within issue of Paton's own devotion to Anglicanism<sup>1</sup>. At the end of Paton's novel God is still there: '*Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika, God save Africa*' (Paton 1949: 252). In contrast, at the end of *Lost in the Stars*, God has abandoned the protagonist Stephen Kumalo, abandoned Africa, and abandoned the whole planet (Anderson 1951: 94). The present study aims to explore and explain this dramatic shift in emphasis and also explore and explain Anderson's particularly colourful brand of agnosticism.

Apart from the new religious themes that Paton discovered in *Lost in the Stars*, he was also confronted with a deeply Americanized version of his original story. In *Journey Continued* we read that he recognized his story, but that 'the idiom was strange' Paton (1988: 20). For although it has South African roots, *Lost in the Stars* is ultimately a cultural hybrid, a work of art that was influenced (at varying stages) by the efforts of three different artists who originated from three different continents. The whole enterprise was a cross-cultural one and it involved an exchange that was still rare sixty years ago. In that light it would be a shame to dismiss *Lost in the Stars* outright, just because Alan Paton was unhappy with it.

## 1.2 Research questions

### 1.2.1 Main research question

Can *Lost in the Stars* be explored as an adaptation of *Cry, the Beloved Country*?

### 1.2.2 Sub-questions

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Paton grew up in a Christadelphian household but eventually rejected that creed for Anglicanism (Alexander 1995: 432).

- How did Kurt Weill and Maxwell Anderson adapt Alan Paton's novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* into a Broadway musical tragedy called *Lost in the Stars*?
- Is their adaptation 'faithful' to the original novel?
- If not, how and why did they 'violate' it?
- How does *Lost in the Stars* fare as an adaptation of *Cry, the Beloved Country*?
- How does *Lost in the Stars* fare on its own merit and as a work of musical theatre?
- Was Alan Paton's reaction to *Lost in the Stars* an over-reaction? If so, why?
- In ignoring African music to try and create an 'American opera based on American popular song', how did Kurt Weill set about his task and why did he choose a South African source novel?
- How did Maxwell Anderson's agnosticism influence the dramatic shift in the religious tone from *Cry, the Beloved Country* to *Lost in the Stars*?

### 1.3 Aim of the study

Since *Lost in the Stars* draws on the novel that is arguably South Africa's most famous (Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* may be a close contender), it is a topic relevant to South African literary and musicological research. This musical tragedy expounds on the same South African themes of culture and politics as Paton's novel, while it also mutates some of them. The present study aims to offer culturally informed insights into the South African roots of *Lost in the Stars* (and by extension also *Cry, the Beloved Country*), in contrast to the completely European and American perspectives of the research already published on *Lost in the Stars*. To do that it will explore the literary and musical elements of both the source novel and its adaptation in order to understand how Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill treated the themes at the core of Alan Paton's novel when they adapted it.

## 2 AMERICAN INTEREST

It may surprise many readers to find out that *Cry, the Beloved Country* was first published, not in South Africa, but in America. The publishing house Charles Scribner's Sons started distributing it on 1 February 1948 (Alexander 1994: 220). This was not the result of any censorship or ban of the novel in South Africa – such political machinations came later, only after the Afrikaner Nationalists came to power. Even so, throughout his entire career, both as writer and political campaigner, Alan Paton was never censored or banned in his home country. It seems that Paton was just too famous and so, for once, the engine of apartheid did not destroy the life of one of its staunchest detractors.

Luck and convenience had more to do with the American publication of *Cry, the Beloved Country*. As mentioned before, Alan Paton had started writing it in Trondheim, on his first visit to Norway. But Norway was only one leg of a larger tour that Paton undertook to study penal codes in England, Norway, Sweden and America. It formed part of his work as principal at Diepkloof Reformatory, a reform school for young black delinquents<sup>1</sup>. In total, Paton was away from South Africa for nine months, from 8 June 1946 to 21 March 1947 (Alexander 1995: 187, 214). *Cry, the Beloved Country* was written in the free time that Paton had on this tour, in the three months between 25 September and 29 December. The novel that is so famously concerned with South Africa was written entirely outside its borders, as if from the outside looking in. The author's prime motivator for writing the novel may well have been homesickness, instead of a burning desire to teach the world about South Africa. Paton's biographer points out another probable reason: Alan Paton's view that writing was an activity he could use to distract himself from sexual temptation in order to stay away from any foreign city's red-light district (Alexander (1995: 195).

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<sup>1</sup> Diepkloof's administration was originally handled by the South African Prisons Department, but was handed over to the Department of Education in 1934, at which time Paton was appointed there. He instituted liberal reforms at Diepkloof and, as it turned out, with hardly any resources he had already achieved results unequalled outside of Norway and Sweden. His work at Diepkloof ended in 1948, shortly after the publication of *Cry, the Beloved Country* and when the Afrikaner Nationalists came to power (Alexander 1995: 128, 217, 219).

Just as he was finishing *Cry, the Beloved Country*, Paton arrived in San Francisco and spent a busy two weeks visiting penal complexes, Preston School and Alcatraz the most renowned among them (Paton 1988: 287, 289). His hosts in San Francisco were Aubrey and Marigold Burns. They were the first ones to read the manuscript of Paton's newly completed novel (Alexander 1995: 208).

According to Paton's biographer (Alexander 1995: 206) he met them on Christmas Eve at the house of Sonia Davur, a contact that Paton had made when attending a Conference of Christians and Jews in London and Oxford during July that same year<sup>1</sup>. But the biographer's source is not clear. He may have misinterpreted Paton's own recollection, in *Journey Continued*, of a Christmas Eve Party in San Francisco, held by a Dr Ulysses Mitchell. Sonia Davur was in Dr Mitchell's employ at that time, and though Paton 'sat at a small table with Aubrey and Marigold Burns' he made no mention of actually meeting them that night (Paton 1980: 284). Another source appears far more reliable: in his biography of the publishing editor Maxwell Perkins (the man who eventually edited the manuscript of *Cry, the Beloved Country* for Scribner's), Scott Berg quotes an interview in which Aubrey Burns described his first meeting with Alan Paton: 'About the middle of December [1946] an unassuming man with a British accent appeared in the NCCJ office in San Francisco' (Berg 1978: 441). (The importance of Aubrey Burns's involvement in the National Conference of Christians and Jews in San Francisco has been overlooked in previous scholarship on *Lost in the Stars* and will be explained later in this chapter.)

In any event, Aubrey and Marigold Burns were both deeply moved when they read *Cry, the Beloved Country*. They decided to type out the manuscript for him and then to find a publisher for the book. They sent the new typeset manuscript to various publishers, and Maxwell Perkins – the editor who had discovered and nurtured authors like Thomas Wolfe, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald – chose to publish it (Berg 1978: 441).

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<sup>1</sup> Paton attended an international meeting of the Conference of Christians and Jews (also known as the Society for Christians and Jews) on the first leg of his tour of foreign prisons and reformatories. The group had been formed in the 1930s to try and placate the spread of anti-Semitism throughout Europe at that time (Alexander 1995: 189). Paton's attendance at the conference as South Africa's delegate was part of an exchange in which the Society sponsored his air fare to London (Paton 1980: 255). He met many Americans at the conference, some of whom invited him to contact them when he visited America later that year.

When it was finally published a year later, on 1 February 1948, the story of a black priest who travels from the hills of Ixopo to Johannesburg in search of his son captured the attention of American readers unexpectedly. Scribner's gave it no pre-publication marketing, meaning that it was not disseminated through established book clubs or radio programmes. Even *Publisher's Weekly* seemed ignorant of its existence at first (Alexander 1995: 221). But *Cry, the Beloved Country* achieved a rapid popular success very soon after its publication, and its reputation was bolstered by a stream of excellent reviews from American critics. Charles Scribner explained the book's success to Paton (who had by then been back in South Africa for almost a year) in an undated letter:

Friends of mine who rarely read a book are enthralled by it. The Church (including R.C.s) are preaching about it – & capitalists & leftists embrace it equally. Its fame is spreading by word of mouth which is the only advertising that really counts [...] In my 35 years of publishing I have never known the like and if the book does not eventually sell into the hundreds of thousands I shall be equally at a loss (Alexander 1995: 221).

Within three months of its publication *Cry, the Beloved Country* was already in its sixth printing. In time it would become a modern classic. Even Charles Scribner had underestimated the novel: it would sell 15 million copies by the time of Paton's death in 1988. By 2003, nine years after Paton's dream of a non-racial South African society had been realised, *Cry, the Beloved Country* was still selling at a rate of around 100 000 copies a year. Then, when the American talk show host Oprah Winfrey selected the book for *Oprah's Book Club* on 29 September 2003, sales shot through the roof (Maryles 2003: 16). Scribner's promptly published 935 000 copies. Within a day *Cry, the Beloved Country* reached the number one spot on bestseller charts, the first time since its initial publication in 1948.

The American success of *Cry, the Beloved Country* made an important political observer out of Alan Paton: Lesley Cowling (2005: 81) has traced the history of his profile in the American magazine media over a period of three decades after the publication of *Cry, the Beloved Country*. She has identified

him as the ‘foremost commentator on South Africa’ during that time<sup>1</sup>. Even Hillary Clinton – speaking at the world premiere performance of Anant Singh’s motion picture adaptation of *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1995) – called it ‘a book that many of us read and it was our first introduction to apartheid [and] to South Africa’ (Harwood 1995).

Ironically, the word apartheid does not even appear in the novel, reflecting that apartheid was not yet an official state doctrine at the time that Paton wrote *Cry, the Beloved Country*. The National Party came to power on 26 May 1948, almost four months after *Cry, the Beloved Country* was published, and almost seventeen months after Paton finished writing it. Nevertheless, the liberal message in Paton’s novel was farsighted. It was even more applicable to apartheid South Africa, demonstrating the social injustice, segregation and racism of that system. In turn, America adopted it as part of a canon of protest novels: Harriet Beecher Stowe’s book *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* had already become a part of the national mythology, as Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* would after its publication in 1960.

Maxwell Anderson first read *Cry, the Beloved Country* after Dorothy Hammerstein, the wife of the lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II, gave him a copy of the novel at her house on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1948 (Shivers 1983: 227). By then, Scribner’s had already been distributing it for one full month. Anderson read the novel without delay and wrote to Alan Paton on 15 March, asking his permission to rework it for the stage.

It is worthwhile examining details of Anderson’s biography during the months preceding his letter to Alan Paton, in order to understand the motivating force behind his sudden enthusiasm for *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

On a visit to Greece during the fall of 1947, Anderson saw a country devastated: first by its struggle against fascism during the Second World War, then by communist insurgencies from across the borders of Albania and Yugoslavia (Shivers 1983: 226). Anderson was an anarchist and protested against any state controls that could corrupt civil liberties. In *Knickerbocker Holiday* he had protested against Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal

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<sup>1</sup> In the 1980s writers like Nadine Gordimer, Dennis Brutus, Breyten Breytenbach and JM Coetzee gained more prominence (Cowling 2005: 82).



reforms, seeing as they were ultimately socialist programmes. Greece however was involved in a 'life and death struggle' (Shivers 1983: 227). After surviving the onslaught of fascism, it was now facing off with another kind of totalitarian politics, Soviet Communism<sup>1</sup>.

Early in December, on their return to America, Anderson and his wife boarded the *Mauretania* in Southampton (Shivers 1983: 227). It was on this transatlantic voyage bound for New York that they met Dorothy Hammerstein and her husband Oscar. But they also met another couple: Dr Everett Ross Clinchy and his wife (Shivers 1983: 229). Together, the three couples discussed the nuclear arms race between America and the Soviet Union, as well as the possibility of a nuclear world war.

Clinchy (a Presbyterian minister who was also president of the National Conference of Christians and Jews) suggested that, back in New York, they should coordinate some get-togethers where various playwrights, directors and producers could discuss ways in which theatre might – in Anderson's words – 'lead men toward some kind of amicable adjustment that would avoid these recurrent and expanding disasters we've so far lived through' (Avery 1977: 300)<sup>2</sup>.

The tone of Anderson's rhetoric, not only in the preceding quote, but also present in many of his plays, theoretical writings and letters, often exposes a self-conscious effort at being a poet and a visionary: what Mabel Driscoll Bailey, in the title of her book about his plays, enthusiastically termed *the playwright as prophet*. A notable catalyst for Anderson's 'prophetic' imagination at that time was Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History*, a tome that Anderson described as 'the most complete and erudite of all attempts to set down a record of men and civilization on this planet' (Shivers 1983: 226)<sup>3</sup>.

Thus Arnold Toynbee was invited to be the guest speaker at one of the meetings that Everett Clinchy had proposed when they were on the *Mauretania* (Shivers 1983: 229). In his speech, Toynbee stressed the importance of

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<sup>1</sup> When McCarthyism swept through America a few years later Anderson would actually support the frenzy to purge the entertainment industry of 'communists'.

<sup>2</sup> Among those who attended these eventual meetings were Oscar Hammerstein II, Kurt Weill, Robert Sherwood, Elmer Rice, Howard Dietz and Elia Kazan.

<sup>3</sup> In 1947 Anderson could only have read the first six volumes of *A Study of History*, the sixth of which was published forty days before the outbreak of the Second World War. Toynbee eventually completed the whole series in 1961 when he published its twelfth and last volume (Toynbee 1982: 11).

brotherhood: if the assembled playwrights and producers wanted to help stem the spread of bellicosity, then they should teach brotherhood from the stage (Avery 1977: 300). This didactic approach to theatre was nothing new to Anderson's friend and colleague, Kurt Weill – *Der Jasager*, one of Weill's German partnerships with Bertolt Brecht, is the perfect example of a play that aims explicitly to instruct its audience on morality, instead of merely entertaining it. For the others present that day it was a new approach to drama, ironically one more suited to communist theatre.

Nevertheless, Anderson and Weill held on to Toynbee's idea and it informed their later reading of *Cry, the Beloved Country* (Sanders 1980: 376; Shivers 1983: 229). Toynbee's call for brotherhood was the nexus between *Cry, the Beloved Country* and *Lost in the Stars*. In fact, in 1950 Maxwell Anderson received the annual Brotherhood Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews for his completed work on *Lost in the Stars*. Though he was still alive at that time, Kurt Weill did not receive the same honour, an unfortunate oversight of the Conference. Alan Paton received the award five years later for an article series he published in *Collier's Magazine*, titled 'The Negro in America Today' (Alexander 195: 295).

At the award ceremony Anderson gave credit to Arnold Toynbee for inspiring him to write about brotherhood. His acceptance speech – once again in 'prophetic' mode – gives further acknowledgment to Everett Clinchy (Avery 1977: 300, 301):

*Lost in the Stars* would probably not be on Broadway, or wouldn't be there as it is, if Everett Clinchy had not prodded and counselled and cried for help in the attempt which your Conference is making to urge brotherhood on men before it's too late. *Lost in the Stars* is definitely your play, the one Dr. Clinchy was asking for.

Judging by these words Anderson saw *Lost in the Stars* as a quite separate entity from *Cry, the Beloved Country*. He speaks of the play as a commissioned work that now belongs to the Conference of Christians and Jews. *Lost in the Stars* is somehow the work they had always needed to spread their agenda of brotherhood, as if *Cry, the Beloved Country* had never existed.

Admittedly he and Weill had been ‘telling someone else’s story, and the only honest way they could approach it was through emphasizing its universality’ (Hirsch 2002: 304). *Lost in the Stars* achieves that universality by playing up the theme of brotherhood that Arnold Toynbee had proposed. It was conceived in the universal breadth that Anderson saw in Toynbee’s *A Study of History*, and also (ironically) in the spirit of religious understanding so particular to the Society for Christians and Jews (an organisation that features constantly in the background during the incubations of *Cry, the Beloved Country* and *Lost in the Stars*).

Even though we know that Dorothy Hammerstein was the one who gave Anderson a copy of *Cry, the Beloved Country*, the evidence that he first learnt about the book from her is confusing. It is possible that Alfred Shivers (1983: 227) (Anderson’s biographer) may have been mistaken in determining the proper sequence of events: according to Shivers, Dorothy Hammerstein had already read *Cry, the Beloved Country* at the time of the *Mauretania* sea voyage – she had got hold of it through an ‘unknown third party in London or Sweden, places where Paton had preceded her by several weeks’ – and she was waxing lyrical about the book on the ship. This cannot be the case, since Paton toured those places in 1946 and this was December 1947 – a time when Paton was back at Diepkloof, anxiously awaiting the book’s first publication that following February. Also, when Paton completed *Cry, the Beloved Country* he was already well into the American leg of his tour, which came after his visits to London and Sweden.

Other accounts from Kurt Weill’s biographers vary with Anderson’s biographer: Ronald Sanders (1980: 376) states that Dorothy Hammerstein had read an *advance* copy of *Cry, the Beloved Country* (supposedly in galleys), while Ronald Taylor (1991: 321) states that she had only heard about (and not read) the novel somewhere during her travels and gladly recommended it to Anderson on the merit of what she had heard.

It seems most likely that Everett Clinchy (or his wife) may also already have known about *Cry, the Beloved Country*, if indeed the book was discussed at all on the *Mauretania* sea voyage. As president of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, it makes sense that Clinchy could have had some prior

access to the novel<sup>1</sup>: Aubrey Burns had read it a year before when Paton finished the novel at his house in San Francisco – and Aubrey Burns worked for the San Francisco branch of the NCCJ (Berg 1978: 441). The Burns family had even further access to the manuscript when they typed it out and helped Paton find a publisher for *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Even if they had not yet read it, the Clinchys may very well have heard about *Cry, the Beloved Country* through their connections in the NCCJ by December 1947 and they could just as well have told Maxwell Anderson about it.

Whatever the case may be, Avery (1977: lxi) finds evidence in Anderson's diary that he discussed the possibility of a musical on *Cry, the Beloved Country* with Kurt Weill very shortly after his arrival in New City on 15 December 1947. This is bizarre since Anderson had read nothing of it and would not do so for another two-and-a-half months (Shivers 1983: 227).

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<sup>1</sup> Everett Ross Clinchy was president of the NCCJ from 1928 until 1958 (Avery 1977: 301).

### 3 A PLAY WITH MANY PROBLEMS

By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century the costs of Broadway productions were vastly higher than they had been 20 years before. It was already impossible to sustain the run of a newly premiered work over a number of weeks if it were not an instant triumph at the box office. In such an environment, financial backers were hesitant to invest in any production that was not a sure-fire hit, making it difficult not only for new talent to be discovered, but also for established artists to create work that did not fit a proven commercial formula. Eventually, to counteract this scenario, an alternative theatre circuit called off-Broadway was formed; then later, when off-Broadway became commercially prohibitive as well, another circuit called off-off-Broadway was formed.

Unfortunately, Weill and Anderson did not yet have recourse to either of these last two options when they produced *Lost in the Stars*, and they had to pursue another avenue. They were both already members of the Playwrights Company, a production company that had been founded in 1937 by Anderson, Robert Sherwood, Elmer Rice, and S.N. Behrman for them to pool their economic resources and thereby cover the production costs of their new plays for Broadway (Anderson 2000: 148). Weill eventually joined their ranks as the only member of the group who was not a playwright.

But even the Playwrights Company had to give in to growing economic pressures. By the summer of 1949, when *Lost in the Stars* was premiered, they seem to have fallen on hard times: instead of budgeting *Lost in the Stars* properly as a Broadway musical, they financed a much tighter budget, as if for a play (Sanders 1980: 380). Weill had to keep the orchestra down to twelve musicians and also had to stay away from any expensive (flashy) production numbers. Anderson and Weill scuttled to find additional investors, and after being let down by several possible backers they decided to act on their own. In July 1949 they formed a limited-partnership agreement to invest \$ 10 500 of their own money in the project. (Hirsch 2002: 314). Anyone who has seen *The Producers* will remember how Mel Brooks explained to Gene Wilder the two cardinal rules of being a Broadway producer: 'Never put your own money in the show', and 'Never put your own money in the show!' Weill and Anderson learnt

that lesson the hard way for their own investment in *Lost in the Stars* never paid off.

Because of their limited funds, the producers had to face another obstacle: *Lost in the Stars* would have no dry runs in regional theatres outside New York, but would be launched immediately on Broadway (Hirsch 2002: 315). Giving the production a tryout away from Broadway audiences and critics would have afforded Weill and Anderson valuable time to iron out problems in their show. On Broadway this troubleshooting period would be limited to rehearsals because critics like Brooks Atkinson, who would be present at the first night's performance, had the power to make or break a production with a single review.

Even considering all these logistical problems, it is a simple fact that *Lost in the Stars* was a financial risk from its very conception. Anderson wanted to put a 'musical tragedy' on Broadway (Taylor 1991: 324). 'Musical tragedy' is a contradiction in terms. By 1949 musicals were known only as *comedy* whereas straight theatre could then be *tragedy*. And that would be what the audience expected. Even though it was old hat for European opera, a 'musical tragedy' would have been revolutionary for Broadway. Weill would have understood this, and we may see him cast in the role of Monteverdi, Gluck, or Wagner, finding renewal in ancient origins, looking back to the practices of ancient Greek theatre to validate the new American vernacular of opera that he was trying to create. The score he composed had definite operatic aspirations. Like Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, the music is written in large part for a chorus. Then, as if to strain their potential audience even further, they decided to load this operatic tragedy with a civil rights theme. This was a gamble, for even though New York audiences might be receptive to a play moralising civil rights, and East Coast audiences beyond Broadway might as well, it would be a very hard sell once the show was taken on the road through Texas, Arkansas or Mississippi. Conservative forces across America had gathered strength in the wake of the Second World War and, particularly in the South, white support for Jim Crow segregation laws was growing. It would reach fever pitch amidst the hysteria of the McCarthy era (Fairclough 2001: 210, 211). *Lost in the Stars* belonged in the cultural environment of a decade later, when the social revolution of the sixties placed the debate on civil rights at the forefront of the national agenda.

Their problems reached even further than selling their idea to white investors and a white audience. It was proving equally hard to find a black actor who was willing and able to take on the role of Stephen Kumalo (Hirsch 2002: 313). Anderson and Weill had wanted to work with Paul Robeson for a decade already, ever since they had started work on a musical called *Ulysses Africanus*. Robeson had not been available then and though he remained the obvious choice, by the late forties his progressively communist politics angered Maxwell Anderson (Sanders 1980: 378). It is ironic not to have cast Robeson in the role of Stephen Kumalo, for his brand of communism was a call for brotherhood not dissimilar to the message that the creators of *Lost in the Stars* hoped to spread<sup>1</sup>. Eventually Todd Duncan was the actor settled on to play Stephen Kumalo.

When Alan Paton gave his permission for the musical adaptation of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in March 1948, both Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill were already busy with other projects<sup>2</sup>. Work on *Lost in the Stars* only gathered momentum a year later with most of it executed in two distinct stages – February/March 1949 and August/September 1949 (Hirsch 2002: 302). Fortunately, Weill worked with considerable speed and facility, setting lyrics to music as fast as Anderson could supply them. It was made even easier when both authors salvaged copious musical and literary material from *Ulysses Africanus*, a musical that they had begun and then abandoned a decade earlier (see chapter 4).

When a newly created musical is staged for the first time on either Broadway or the West End, the show's director can have a lasting influence on its eventual content, effectively making him a co-author of the work (Hirsch 2002: 304). Weill wanted Rouben Mamoulian to direct *Lost in the Stars*: he had seen Mamoulian's expert direction for *Porgy and Bess* at one of that show's

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<sup>1</sup> Speaking at a presidential rally for the socialist politician Henry Wallace in May 1948, Katharine Hepburn excoriated the segregationists that were out to silence Paul Robeson (Mann 2006: 345). The actress, wearing a flaming red dress, called Robeson 'an American citizen, a great artist, the most articulate voice of the Negro people [and] an obvious threat for the men who would ignore the meaning of the Bill of Rights.'

<sup>2</sup> Weill was completing another musical with Alan Jay Lerner called *Love Life*, while Anderson was completing his play *Anne of the Thousand Days* (Sanders 1980: 377).

final rehearsals in October 1935<sup>3</sup>. Weill, who had arrived in America two months earlier, immediately fell in love with this black hybrid between musical and opera. It showed him the inherent flexibility of the Broadway musical and also became his inspiration to write his own black American opera (Hirsch 2002: 135; McClung & Laird 2002: 169; Taylor 1991: 218). Mamoulian would be the direct link to *Porgy and Bess*, effectively validating *Lost in the Stars* as an important link in the quest for an indigenous American opera.

In mid-April 1949 Anderson and Weill asked Mamoulian to direct their new show but learnt that he was already committed to another production, Morton Gould's musical *Arms and the Girl* (Sanders 1980: 377). Nevertheless, they met and discussed the idea for their play. Mamoulian was so intrigued by the project that he postponed work on *Arms and the Girl* in order to work with them. Eventually he brought two actors from the original *Porgy and Bess* production with him, strengthening the ties between that work and *Lost in the Stars*: Todd Duncan (now cast as Stephen Kumalo) had been the original Porgy, and Warren Coleman (now cast as John Kumalo) had been the original Crowne (Sanders 1980: 380). Mamoulian was a veteran of Broadway and Hollywood and had the necessary experience to guide this difficult play through to completion. He could also compensate for Anderson's limited experience in the medium – his only other complete libretto for a musical had been for *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1939), which was the only collaboration between himself and Weill up to that time (Sanders 1980: 377).

As it turned out, Mamoulian dominated the show during its rehearsal period; Anderson was forced to capitulate to his interpretation of the libretto, and Weill dutifully cut and pasted his music according to the director's demand. Both Hirsch (2002: 312) and Sanders (1980: 380) are critical of Mamoulian's dictatorial approach as director – Hirsch (2002: 312) recalls the words of Anderson's daughter, Hesper: 'Mamoulian didn't appreciate the show's blend of poetry and reality and made it all too stylized.'

Apart from contending with the director's creative demands, Weill also encountered logistical problems with the production's music (Hirsch 2002: 312, 313). First, his conductor of choice was engaged for another production:

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<sup>3</sup> Mamoulian also created the original Broadway productions of *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel!* (Taylor 1991: 324).



Maurice Abravanel would be conducting another opera premiering on Broadway during that season, Marc Blitzstein's *Regina*<sup>1</sup>. Instead he settled for Maurice Levine, then still a relatively unknown conductor on Broadway. Secondly, he encountered considerable resistance from the musicians' union but eventually got special dispensation to employ only twelve members in his orchestra – a chamber orchestra was apparently highly unusual for Broadway at that time. Thirdly, Weill always insisted on orchestrating his own compositions – again very unusual for Broadway. Like Mozart, he would always keep the abilities and limitations of a specific performer's voice in mind:

In the four weeks that are needed you get about two hours of sleep a night. But it's fun. You can't really start doing the orchestration until the rehearsals begin, because until you know who the singers are going to be, you don't know which key to choose for each number. The American musical is a custom-made job. (Kurt Weill, speaking in 1943 after the opening of *One Touch of Venus*; quoted in Everett & Laird 2002: xv)

Seen in this light, one can easily understand the tension that arose when Alan Paton attended a rehearsal for *Lost in the Stars* early in October 1949 and failed to give it a resounding 'two thumbs up'. Because of artistic differences Anderson was already not on speaking terms with the show's director. Understandably, Paton's discontent would only add to the strain. It also accounts for Paton's negative description of Maxwell Anderson: 'He was – to me – a withdrawn and taciturn man, and he was to stay that way' (Paton 1998: 21). Is it not possible that Paton was actually witnessing Anderson's hostility towards Mamoulian?

Further, why does Paton say almost nothing of Kurt Weill? It seems that Weill was laid low and avoiding any conflict with anyone, all for the sake of his own health. Earlier that summer, while playing tennis with Alan Jay Lerner, he had suffered a stroke (Taylor 1991: 325). Weill refused to seek medical attention and swore Lerner to secrecy, so that he could keep it a secret from his colleagues and even from his wife Lotte Lenya. Neither did his work allow him

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<sup>1</sup> For Weill this was an act close to treason, since he had long regarded Blitzstein a copycat who was forever biting at his heels (Hirsch 2002: 313, 318). To illustrate the point at hand, Blitzstein's *Regina* opened one night after *Lost in the Stars*.

time to slacken pace. Instead he had to step up to meet the deadline for the premiere of *Lost in the Stars* at the end of October.

*Lost in the Stars* opened at the Music Box Theatre on 30 October 1949. It was a bad choice of location; in the first weeks when the show still played to full houses, the intake from ticket sales was only marginally higher than production costs (Sanders 1980: 391). When attendance dropped towards the end of January 1950, the show was running at a loss. It had a run of some 280 performances before closing in May 1950 (Taylor 1991: 327).

Work on the show kept Weill busy through the festive season and into the New Year, when he arranged new orchestrations for the original cast recording (Hirsch 2002: 319). Additionally he supervised a TV production of *Down in the Valley*, another one of his Broadway shows, and also started working with Maxwell Anderson on a new project, a musical version of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*.

According to the memoirs of John F. Wharton, the lawyer for the Playwrights Company, Anderson and Weill remained convinced that *Lost in the Stars* was a fine work. They blamed Victor Samrock and William Fields, the company's business manager and press agent, for marketing it badly: 'Max became more and more irascible and Kurt more and more excitable' (Sanders 1980: 392-4). The strain took its toll on Weill. His health declined in February and took a turn for the worse when, on March 16, he experienced aggressive chest pains because of an erratic heartbeat (Hirsch 2002: 319). On March 19 he was taken to Flower Hospital in Manhattan, where he was put in an oxygen tent because of his deteriorating condition (Taylor 1991: 329). He regained some strength there and even began correcting proofs for the vocal score of *Lost in the Stars* after a week in hospital. But on April 3 Kurt Weill died in hospital from a cerebral embolism. Two days later he was buried in Haverstraw at Mount Repose cemetery. His gravestone is marked: Kurt Weill, 1900-1950. Four staves of music are printed beneath: Weill's own music for *Lost in the Stars*, together with the words that accompanied them in the show (Taylor 1991: 247, 331):

This is the life of men on earth;  
Out of darkness we come at birth

Into a lamplit world, and then –  
Go forward into dark again.

*Lost in the Stars* continued running on Broadway for another month, and was then taken out of town for a summer tour in San Francisco and Los Angeles. The brief summer tour failed to recoup any financial losses from the show's Broadway run, primarily because audiences did not flock to see the 'spirit of racial reconciliation depicted on stage' (Hirsch 2002: 316). Todd Duncan even resigned before the season's end, protesting the racism he and other black actors faced in their struggle to find accommodation on this tour (Oberstein 1985: 8). And so *Lost in the Stars* quickly ended its premier season in the same part of the country where Alan Paton had completed his novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* four years earlier.

One cannot help but wonder: if Weill had put off working on *Lost in the Stars* and concentrated on a full recovery, might he not have lived a much longer and more productive life? Just before his death he was planning operatic versions of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Mark Twain), *The Grapes of Wrath* (John Steinbeck), *The Good Person of Szechwan* (Bertholt Brecht), *Gone with the Wind* (Margaret Mitchell), *Winterset* (Maxwell Anderson), and *Moby Dick* (Herman Melville) (Drew 1987: 422). Any one of these projects would have brought him closer to achieving his hopes for an American operatic institution.

#### 4 *ULYSSES AFRICANUS AND THE SPACESHIP MUSICAL*

Before analysing *Lost in the Stars*, we need first to take a look at *Ulysses Africanus*. Anderson and Weill had already made plans for this musical in 1939, abandoning it with time, only to resuscitate it again when they started work on *Lost in the Stars* a decade after. Consequently there were substantial parts of the musical and literary subject matter of *Ulysses Africanus* that resurfaced in *Lost in the Stars*.

*Ulysses Africanus* was conceived in the wake of Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill's first collaboration, the Broadway musical *Knickerbocker Holiday*. With its premiere run coming to an end, the two authors decided to seek out another project that they could work on together, and they fell upon a black-themed musical. The immediate plan was to translate *Eneas Africanus*, a civil war novella by Harry Stillwell Edwards, for the stage (Sanders 1980: 285). It was Anderson who decided to rename the story's protagonist – Eneas became Ulysses – making it necessary to change Edwards' original title as well.

*Eneas Africanus* was written in an epistolary structure. The novella consists of letters written in response to an advertisement placed in the *Macon Telegraph and Messenger*. The original *Telegraph and Messenger* advertisement, placed by George E. Tommey, asks the editor and readers of this fictional newspaper for 'assistance in tracing an old family Negro' who had disappeared from his farm in Jefferson County (Edwards 1940: 1, 2). Eneas, the 'old family Negro,' had been sent away from his home on a horse-drawn wagon during a local invasion by federal troops. He was entrusted with the safeguarding of his white owner's silver heirlooms, including a silver cup 'known in the family as the 'Bride's Cup' for some six or eight generations' (Edwards 1940: 2). Tommey now wants to present the Bride's Cup to his daughter on her wedding day.

However, when the time came to return to his master's home, Eneas lost his way and spent the next eight years meandering through the South. The plot unfolds as various readers of the *Macon Telegraph and Messenger* write letters to George E. Tommey, informing him of their own encounters with his lost slave Eneas. As the letters progress, we learn that Eneas has married and had children. Unable to support his family on sharecropping he starts racing horses

(as it turns out, the mare that he left the farm with sired a prize colt that wins him a great deal of money). And in another letter we learn that Eneas has become a preacher (just like Stephen Kumalo in *Cry, the Beloved Country*).

In effect, Eneas leads the life of a free man. Nevertheless, at the end of the book Edwards has him find his way back to his old master, conveniently on the very day that Tommey's daughter gets married. The slave returns the silver heirlooms to his master, including the cherished Bride's Cup. He then takes his master aside and offers him 'an old scrap pocketbook, stuffed with bills' that Eneas won racing horses and took up in church collections (Edwards 1940: 38).

Anderson reworked this novella into a two-act play with definite plans for music that Weill would provide (Zychowicz 1994: 78, 79). Then Harry Stillwell Edwards suffered the same fate as Alan Paton – the name of his story was changed after Anderson worked through it. By changing the title of his play from *Eneas Africanus* to *Ulysses Africanus* Anderson evoked Homer's *Odyssey*, in which the hero's return home was foiled for twenty years by Poseidon.

But then Anderson also made considerable alterations to the plot of the novel (Zychowicz 1994: 80): At the start of Anderson's play *Ulysses* already has a wife, Pennie (taken from Penelope from Homer's *Odyssey*). As the hostilities of the Civil War threaten to overrun his Master's plantation, *Ulysses* is ordered to take the family silver into hiding and keep south of the fighting until the war is over. Soon after leaving his home and wife, *Ulysses* runs into a group of Ku Klux Klan members. He survives, but the experience leaves him without hope and he sings the song 'Lost [Out Here] in the Stars'. Then in the second act, instead of racing horses, *Ulysses* runs a minstrel show that – introducing a play within a play – performs the *Odyssey* to white audiences. *Ulysses* is tempted by the black women who perform in his show and have fallen in love with him (the sirens from Homer's *Odyssey*). But Pennie finds *Ulysses* after many years and convinces him to return home; *Ulysses* must return the silver to his Master in order to save the plantation and its mansion from carpet-baggers.

Even with these adjustments to the plot, the story remains condescending and reinforces negative racial stereotypes. There is nothing liberal in Anderson's treatment of the story, just as there was nothing liberal in the original *Eneas Africanus*. Edwards's writing contains frequent use of the word 'nigger', and his black characters also speak in a contrived southern

dialect. How much of this would Anderson have retained in his adaptation? One also wonders if Anderson was already trying, as he would write to Paton in 1948, 'to write something which would state the position and perhaps illuminate the tragedy' of black people in America (Avery 1977: 221). If so, then this particular tragedy was blatantly racist.

But Maxwell Anderson saw it differently. He outlined his ideas in a letter to Paul Robeson dated March 1939:

Essentially it is the story of a man in a chaotic world in search of his own manhood and his own rules of conduct, but I mean to tell it, of course, somewhat lightheartedly with whatever humor and grace I can muster and with Kurt's music (Avery 1977: 85).

This was the beginning of Anderson's decade-long flirtation with Robeson, whom he wanted to take the role of his protagonist in all the different incarnations of his black musical: 'I don't know of anybody who could both act and sing in it and the script might be wasted completely if you were not available' (Avery 1977: 85, 86). Furthermore, Anderson also wanted the protagonist to discover 'that his freedom brings with it responsibilities as a person which he never had to worry about before'. Robeson rejected Anderson's treatment of the story and declined to take the role. His wife Essie broke the news to Anderson in a letter:

The general public's idea of a Negro is an Uncle Tom, an Aunt Jemima, Ol' Mammy, and Jack Johnson. These types have always been sold to the public deliberately. Well, now they don't exist anymore except in the sentimental minds of credulous people, and we feel that we certainly must not do anything in any way, to prolong their non-existent lives!!! We feel Mr. Robeson must play a Negro who does exist, who has something to do with reality (Zychowicz 1994: 81).

Efforts to find another possible replacement for Robeson in Bill Robinson, who was starring in a production of *The Hot Mikado* at that time, proved unsuccessful as well (Taylor 1991: 250). Ironically, with neither of these two men interested in *Ulysses Africanus*, Anderson and Weill were now lost without a star. This, coupled with the severe difficulties that Anderson encountered in securing the rights to the original novel, forced him and Weill to

give up on the project (Zychowicz 1994: 81). Even so, both Anderson and Weill would salvage material from *Ulysses Africanus* for later projects, most of all for *Lost in the Stars*.

According to Maxwell Anderson's diary, he and Kurt Weill revisited *Ulysses Africanus* briefly in July 1945, almost six years after they had originally planned it (Zychowicz 1994: 84). Drew (1987: 311) quotes an unpublished letter from Anderson to Weill in the same year, indicating plans to use 'Lost in the Stars' as the title song for a musical<sup>1</sup>. Even though the aspirations they had for the project during that time are vague today, it is clear that Anderson was also revising his own play *Winterset* during that same summer (Zychowicz 1994: 84). The language in the last scene of *Winterset* bears a striking resemblance to the language in the last scene of *Lost in the Stars* – language that refers to what we might call Maxwell Anderson's *lost-in-the-stars* theme (see chapter 7). It is remarkable in this instance because the song 'Lost [Out Here] in the Stars' was a definite part of the original *Ulysses Africanus* project. Anderson clearly had his own *lost-in-the-stars* theme in mind when he returned to both *Winterset* and *Ulysses Africanus* collectively.

Weill was even more persistent than Anderson in returning to *Ulysses Africanus*. When the initial project was terminated in 1939, he had already developed three songs extensively – 'Lost in the Stars', 'Lover Man' (which would later become famous as 'Trouble Man') and the duet 'Little Grey House' (Zychowicz 1994: 83, 84). He completed first versions of both 'Lost in the Stars' and 'Trouble Man' for an album of six songs recorded by Bost Records in 1943. On the album Weill plays the piano and his wife Lotte Lenya sings – with her infamous Viennese accent! – in a black southern dialect. Additionally, he registered 'Lover Man' for copyright in 1944 and released 'Lost in the Stars' in a piano-vocal score in 1946 (Zychowicz 1994: 85).

The next departure in creating a Weill and Anderson musical collaboration came in 1947. Their idea was to create a musical that involved space travel, with a plot much along the lines of the later film *Planet of the Apes* (Sanders 1980: 375). A letter from Weill to Anderson on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July during that year outlines ideas for this musical (Zychowicz 1994: 85). Earlier that week,

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<sup>1</sup> This letter is in possession of the Weil/Lenya Archive at Yale University.

Weill had discussed the project with John Wharton, a fellow member and lawyer of the Playwright's Company. In Weill's letter, he relayed some of Wharton's opinions to Anderson:

So his idea includes a real trip on the spaceship, and I think he has a nice idea to have the people arrive, after [a] hundred years of travelling, at a place which is really earth again, but a different kind of earth, different not in appearance or in more technical perfection, but in spirit and emotion. He thinks that would give you a good opportunity to say, in an amusing, light way, a lot of things you want to say about the world we live in.

In Anderson's response to this letter, he cautioned Weill against discussing the project with John Wharton again:

I shouldn't have mentioned my theme, for it's an invitation to amateur suggestions. And I still don't know what I can do with it – or whether. At the moment it begins to seem to me like a plain play – with a few songs in it. That's not a form at all – or not one I've even heard of, yet this seems to fall into it. [...] I know, of course, that the kind of play *Lost in the Stars* seems to turn into may be disappointing to you, but I'm not exactly in control of my imagination – and I have to follow where it leads (Zychowicz 1994: 86).

Apart from romantic notions of 'following his imagination where it leads', Anderson's letter makes it clear that he was unsure about the form to arrange his ideas in. But perhaps he was also embarrassed by the idea of a musical about a spaceship that travels through time<sup>1</sup>. Anderson's insecurities about the form of this spaceship-version *Lost in the Stars* betrays a surprising ignorance of Weill's European works: his statement that a plain play with only a few songs in it was not a form at all – 'or not one I've even heard of' – should have amused Weill, who knew this form intimately from his associations with Bertolt Brecht in Weimar Germany<sup>2</sup>. Had Anderson decided to pursue a similar avenue as Brecht, then Weill could have given him valuable advice. Then again, it may have soured the generous friendship and creative partnership that had

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson had already written a play on this exact theme, called *Star Wagon*. And even if it seems ludicrous for a play or a musical, the film version of *Star Wagon* gave Dustin Hoffmann his first big role.

<sup>2</sup> Brecht termed it *Songspiel*, as opposed to *Singspiel*.



developed between Weill and Anderson (they even lived on the same street). Back in Germany Weill and Brecht had finally parted company over this delicate matter: Weill wanted to compose music on an operatic scale, while Brecht insisted on straight-jacketing Weill's music inside the *Songspiel* format.

Even beyond questions of form, the exchange of letters on the spaceship musical brings two other salient points to light. First, the basic theme of an odyssey is present, and it is especially evident in Weill's letter from the 10<sup>th</sup> of July: Instead of Ulysses wandering through America's Deep South for ten years, someone would now trek through the stars on a spaceship for a century. The spaceship was simply a new plot device for an old idea. Second, Anderson even gives the project a title, *Lost in the Stars* – the title that he would later give to his musical adaptation of Alan Paton's novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*. At the end of the same letter, Anderson even mentions the idea of a Negro singing the title song 'Lost in the Stars' (while washing dishes) at the play's opening – an idea that was originally destined for *Ulysses Africanus*. Also, his idea for a great voyage over a long period of time, social commentaries, and a love interest for the protagonist could all be superimposed from *Ulysses Africanus* onto this new project (Zychowicz 1994: 86).

But the spaceship musical was never developed beyond these incipient ideas. It is also unclear if the two authors were planning an all-black spaceship musical. If they had, then their work could have borne a strong resemblance to another musical play – *Songspiel* – Marc Connelly's *The Green Pastures*, written in 1929. Weill's biographer Ronald Sanders (1980: 376) noticed the similarity between the two works, while Anderson's biographer Alfred Shivers names *The Green Pastures* as one of the works the playwright admired most (Shivers 1983: 142). The action and characters for *The Green Pastures* come from the Old Testament but are relocated into the black culture of America's Deep South, replete with fish fries and negro spirituals. An entirely black cast plays out the familiar stories of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, Joshua fighting the battle of Jericho, Noah building the Ark, and Moses leading the exodus from Egypt. A part of the action even takes place in paradise and depicts a fallible and peripatetic God, quite similar to the one that Anderson depicts in *Lost in the Stars* (Connelly 1939: 202, 203, 227, 229, 230). This play has a few musical items (spirituals) sung for commentary by the Hall Johnson

Choir Sanders 1980: 376). Such a black Greek chorus would eventually feature prominently in the structure of Weill's music for the final *Lost in the Stars*. For a time Anderson and Weill even sought the services of John L. Haynes, who had played Adam in *The Green Pastures*, to play Stephen Kumalo in *Lost in the Stars* (Sanders 1980: 376).

Judging from the evidence, work on *Lost in the Stars* had essentially begun even before Alan Paton had written *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Weill and Anderson actually chose this novel for adaptation when they already had a pre-established framework in mind. Would this framework be an effective vehicle for the new play or would it only straightjacket it? We will now discuss the final version of *Lost in the Stars* in depth, all the while comparing it with *Cry, the Beloved Country* in an effort to see how the two works correlate, and also to understand better why Alan Paton was so unhappy with the musical adaptation of his book.

## 5 PLANNING THE MUSIC OF AN AMERICAN OPERA

When Kurt Weill and his wife Lotte Lenya arrived in America on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1935, they planned only to stay for a few months (Taylor 1991: 215). Weill was in the country to finalise a new version *Der Weg der Verheissung*, an original collaboration between himself and Franz Werfel now turned into *The Eternal Road*. However, when this production suffered from prolonged postponements Weill was forced to make other deals for money (Taylor 1991: 220). Consequently he stayed on in America and took an oath of citizenship on 27 August 1943 (Drew 1987: 65).

America offered Weill and Lenya a stable home away from the threat of European fascism. Weill was a Jew, and both he and Lenya were famous left-wing artists. They had fled Germany overnight (Lenya 1959: 48). Had they stayed on in either one of their German or French homes, they would almost certainly have perished in some ghetto or camp. On the other hand, the two immigrants would have to make significant compromises in order to accustom themselves to their newly adopted country. There is some evidence that Weill consciously withdrew himself from a German identity in order fully to absorb an American one (Drew 1987: 9). As Hitler's intentions with German Jewry became more apparent, so did Weill's alignment with America. Eventually (in 1947) he could write to *Life Magazine*, and complain of them labelling him as a German composer:

Although I was born in Germany I do not consider myself a 'German composer'. The Nazis obviously do not consider me as such either and I left their country (an arrangement which suited both me and my rulers admirably) in 1933. I am an American citizen and during my dozen years in this country have composed exclusively for the American stage (Jarman 1982: 140).

This rejection of his earlier culture entailed the adoption of two new languages, one to speak with and another to compose in (Jarman 1982: 141). Weill adopted both with vigour. For the latter he spent a great deal of effort relearning his technique (Robinson 1997: 3). Various sketches and exercises survive to show that between 1936 and 1938 the composer set out to attune

himself to the structure and materials of the American theatre song (Robinson 1997: 3). Even the conventions of large-scale dramaturgical form were different in America: Weill had to learn the art of the reprise; in the thirties American shows depended on extensive repetition of music, so that often the last act consisted of nothing other than hits rehashed from the other acts (Robinson 1997: 7).

Weill's new environment was distinctly foreign from any of the 'jazz' music he had imagined for the *Amerika* that featured so prominently in *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. His primary outlets for music were Broadway and Hollywood. Probably because he started off on the East Coast, Broadway caught his attention first, and in the shape of a particular work. Weill attended one of the last rehearsals of *Porgy and Bess* in the Alvin Theatre, just before its world premiere on 10 October 1935 (Taylor 1991: 218). He was there on the invitation of the show's librettist, Ira Gershwin, whom he had met days before in a party at George Gershwin's home. By all accounts the occasion was momentous for Weill's artistic development, and *Porgy and Bess* had a lasting impression on him throughout his American career (Hirsch 2002: 135; McClung & Laird 2002: 169; Taylor 1991: 218). Ronald Sanders, one of the earlier biographers on Kurt Weill, even has him leaning over to Ira Gershwin during the rehearsal and saying, 'It's a great country where music like that can be written – and played' (Sanders 1980: 219).

Therefore it is perhaps not surprising that Weill also chose a black story with which to pursue the establishment of an American operatic tradition. In one sense the choice signals his recognition of the pervasive influence that black American culture had on the development of music in his century. But exoticism is also a conventional part of opera. An American opera about a black South African priest could be no less exotic than a French opera about Spanish gypsies (*Carmen*), a German Singspiel that features Egyptian high priests (*Die Zauberflöte*), or an Italian opera about a Japanese geisha (*Madama Butterfly*).

There are a few American works that precede *Lost in the Stars* as black musical-dramatic compositions (Mordden 1978: 303; Riis & Sears 2002: 140). *Porgy and Bess* (1935) remains the most famous, but there were also *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1934), *Carmen Jones* (1943), *Cabin in the Sky* (1940), *St Louis Woman* (1946), and *The Green Pastures* (1930). The first three works

were operas, then next two were musicals, and the last was a play with musical chorus. *Lost in the Stars* has elements of each.

Supposedly the major appeal in casting an opera or musical with a black cast and story was the chance of incorporating a jazz element into the score. It was thus also an opportunity to add sex appeal to the music and attract a large audience. So Ethan Mordden (1978: 320, 321) tells us in *Sacred, Profane, Godot*, his study on opera in the twentieth century, that '*Lost in the Stars* borrowed Paton's South Africa to continue the history of black American folk opera, for Weill had so naturalized himself by then that the jazz of Johannesburg speaks of hot Harlem'. It is a sweeping statement of which very little is true. Kurt Weill did not naturalize himself to 'hot Harlem' and he did not know anything about 'the jazz of Johannesburg' either.

*Lost in the Stars* does not have a jazz score. Rather, it owes its sound to the traditions of Tin Pan Alley that Weill mastered when he first arrived in America (Robinson 1997: 4). Weill's reputation as a 'jazz' composer was established in Europe, where he composed *Die Dreigroschenoper* and *Happy End*. Listeners familiar with the English language versions of these two shows (versions created after his death) eagerly transfer that reputation onto the works that he created specifically for Broadway. But even the German works are a world away from any kind of black American jazz. There is no improvisation in Weill's European *Songs*, there are no chord sheets, and there are no blues<sup>1</sup>. And the same applies to his American output.

That said, America's black culture did influence him. The catalogue of his library in Brook House (his home on South Mountain Road) lists an impressive collection of printed folk music (Drew 1987: 431). They include *The Minstrel Encyclopedia* by Walter Ben Hare, *A Treasury of Blues* by W.C. Handy, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* by James and Rosamund Johnson, *The Screamline Minstrel Book* by Arthur LeRoy Kaser, *Negro Folk Songs as Sung by Lead Belly* in an anthology by John and Alan Lomax, *The Southern Harmony Songbook*, and *American Negro Songs and Spirituals* collected by John Work. In *toto* the quantity of American folk music that he owned far exceeded that of any European art music (Drew 1987:427-430). His record collection consisted

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<sup>1</sup> Weill's European jazz style shows a harmonic language learnt from 'jazz' tutor books that were popular in Germany at that time (Robinson 1997: 4). Improvisational jazz was then still very much an American performance practice, typical in Chicago and New York.

mostly of folk songs, boogie-woogie, swing, and pop songs (Drew 1987: 432). Weill's inordinate interest in Americana – which ran concurrent with him relegating his European past – was part of the self-education that allowed him to adapt to a new marketplace. Folk traditions like those found in the spiritual, or in the Appalachia, were the backbone to creating an American opera in the root of American song. When the critic Olin Downes complained to Weill in a private letter that the music for *Lost in the Stars* had relied too extensively on popular AABA song form, and that this form was unsuited to a work of operatic scope, the composer defended its legitimacy (McClung & Laird 2002 : 173):

Personally I don't feel that this represents a compromise because it seems to me that the American popular song, growing out of American folk-music, is the basis of an American musical theatre (just as the Italian song was the basis of Italian opera), and that in this early state of the development, and considering the audiences we are writing for, it is quite legitimate to use the form of the popular song and gradually fill it with new musical content (Clurman & Downes et al 1994: 10).

Besides, a study of the score reveals that Weill made extensive use of forms more complex than popular song form. When he did use simple AABA form he made sure to vary something in the accompaniment with each repetition of the main theme. And when he decided against the form Weill made sure to write simple and catchy melodies for the music to remain approachable (Hirsch 2002: 317).

The AABA (popular song) form became a staple of Broadway in the 1930s when second generation Tin Pan Alley composers chose the form over the verse-chorus form (ABABAB), a structure that alternates the verse and chorus three times (Robinson 1997: 5). Most of Weill's German popular songs are in the verse-chorus form, so adopting the popular song form would only be a natural part of steering clear from his past. He also eliminated 'the homogenous foxtrot rhythm' that was so integral to his European sound (Robinson 1997: 6). His new American style kept one distinct characteristic that can be traced back to the influence of Busoni – Weill called it 'semitonal instability', a harmonic process where a chord or complex resolves into another by shifting in semitones (Waterhouse 1964: 897). 'Murder in Parkwold' shows multiple examples of this trait (Weill 1950: 79-80).

The following musical numbers are examples of works in popular song form: The chorus 'Cry, the Beloved Country' is in AABA form, but Weill varies its accompaniment throughout and introduces a chorus for added effect; 'The Little Gray House' has an extensive coda which lengthens its form and reinforces its end; as does the title song 'Lost in the Stars', with an added chorus to boot; and lastly, Stephen's song 'Thousands of Miles' alternates the popular song form with two big C sections (AABA C AABA C).

There are other forms to be found in *Lost in the Stars*: 'Big Mole', 'Who'll Buy' and 'Stay Well' rely on multiple alternating A and B sections (alternating verse and chorus, usually repeated three times); 'Trouble Man' has two A sections followed by two B sections in a new tonal field; while 'Fear!', 'The Hills of Ixopo', 'The Search', and 'O Tixo, Tixo, Help Me!' are through-composed works in operatic scope. Furthermore, Weill had much greater control over the final soundscape of his show than other Broadway composers did, because unlike most of them he orchestrated his own music.

*Lost in the Stars* is orchestrated for three wind sections (various combinations of clarinets, tenor and alto saxophones, a flute, bass clarinet and English horn), a trumpet, a piano or accordion, a harp, timpani, two violas, two cellos and a double-bass (Weill 1950: iv).

There are two distinct layers of music in *Lost in the Stars* (McClung & Laird 2002: 173; Sanders 1980: 381). The first is the chorus, which Weill and Anderson had planned to comment on the action – what Anderson called 'a plain play with music' (Zychowicz 1994: 86). But eventually other music was also included, creating a second layer of Broadway songs that would be sung by some of the characters. The chorus music is far more serious than the songs, except perhaps for Stephen's melodrama 'O Tixo, Tixo, Help Me!', which reminds the listener of Florestan's dungeon aria in *Fidelio* (an opera which also concerns itself with the theme of brotherhood). It is striking that *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* has similar degrees of musical type alternating through the story, one conventionally operatic and another much closer to popular song. Weill could incorporate his popular and operatic styles into a single work and he did so both in Germany and America.

Weill recognized that American opera was still in its infancy and he understood the implications of creating a new tradition. Why else would he and Anderson call *Lost in the Stars* a 'musical tragedy'? It gave both their efforts a serious purpose. Anderson could continue with his programme of keeping tragedy alive in drama – a concern we see in many plays and also in his published book *The Essence of Tragedy*. Weill could follow in the footsteps of opera's great reformers, by renewing an old form on ancient precepts. Like Monteverdi, Gluck and Wagner before him, Weill was (re)creating opera in the mould of Greek tragedy. Most critics agree that he succeeded in that task (Hirsch 2002: 305, Sanders 1980: 381). Like the reformers before him he emphasized the importance of the chorus, for which he composed the best music of the show (though sometimes one feels that he automatically assumes *call* and *response* to be a generic component of African music).

This choice of tragedy as vehicle for their story may very well explain the original pre-occupation with Ulysses. His is one of the great stories of Greek culture and it embodies the irrationality of human suffering. The long and difficult years that Odysseus spent travelling back to Ithaca are a metaphor for the human condition. Illuminating that condition was Weill's supreme commitment in opera, something we know from his European days as a music critic: 'For ultimately what moves us in the theatre is the same as what affects us in all art: the heightened experience – the refined expression of an emotion – the human condition' (Kowalke 1979: 459).

Furthermore, he carried that commitment over to the audience and saw himself breaking away from a tradition of artists who are 'filled with disdain for the audience, [and] continue to work toward the solution of aesthetic problems as if behind closed doors' (Kowalke 1979: 478). Even though we can trace a break from his German past in Weill's American technique, we need not go looking for it in his ideological creed. Too long have historians dismissed his American works as a 'selling-out' to popular taste, when there is every indication in his German work as a critic and composer that Weill was always concerned with creating artworks that were progressive and accessible at the same time. He actively sought to create *Verbrauchsmusik* (sic) which was 'capable of satisfying the musical needs of broader levels of the population without giving up artistic substance' (Kowalke 1979: 506). He also believed in



the topicality of theatre, 'that great art of all periods was topical in the sense that it was intended not for eternity, but for the time in which it originated, or at least for the near future, to whose formation it was intended to contribute' (Kowalke 1979: 510).

Weill was not an inconsistent composer who suddenly worked to different criteria when he crossed the Atlantic. He may have adapted his technique and started work in a popular medium, but that is not really any different from what he did in works like *Die Dreigroschenoper*. As an opera composer he was constantly moving away from the yoke of convention, from what he called opera's 'splendid isolation' and social exclusion from the other art forms (Kowalke 1979: 487). *Lost in the Stars* is *gesellschaftsbildend* – a 'socially-creative opera' – as much as any one of Weill's European works. Broadway was his ideal environment for creating socially-creative opera, exactly because he was assured of an audience, not only in the theatre but, if a work was successful enough, in Hollywood as well. Weill was prepared, and able, to walk the line of balancing popularity with artistic integrity.

The composer was also convinced that if he succeeded 'in finding a musical language which is just as natural as the language of the people in the modern theatre, it is also possible to deal with the monumental themes of our time with purely musical means in the form of opera' (Kowalke 1979: 508). These words were printed in the *Berliner Tageblatt* on 31 October 1929, exactly twenty years before the opening of *Lost in the Stars*. And yet what he wrote there holds true for the aim he and Maxwell Anderson had when they set out to work on *Lost in the Stars*: to tell a story that promoted racial tolerance and understanding, one of the monumental themes of our time.

## 6 A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SOURCE NOVEL AND ADAPTATION

Any adaptor who would want to dramatise *Cry, the Beloved Country* would very early on be confronted by its disjointed narrative. The chapters are short and nearly always fragmented, and they do not necessarily follow in sequence. Many chapters are purely lyrical descriptions of social and political conditions, didactic in nature with very little issue in advancing the action of the story. Then, on a much larger scale, the adaptor will have to overcome another difficulty. Alan Paton conceived *Cry, the Beloved Country* in three broad sections: books one, two, and three. The timeframes in books one and two overlap considerably, while they are separated by different perspectives. Though by no means intractable, these narrative problems require careful planning and restructuring of the story in order to make any dramatic adaptation effective. One possibility (used in *Lost in the Stars*) is to telescope book one and book two and alternate their scenes in one continuous flow of action. But then, how to cope with the many descriptive chapters that are not integral to the action? Maxwell Anderson equated them directly with a Greek chorus:

And to keep the plot and the dialogue in the form you gave them would only be possible if a chorus – a sort of Greek chorus – were used to tie together the great number of scenes, and to comment on the action as you comment in the philosophic and descriptive passages (Avery 1977: 221).

Although the whole novel is read through the innocent eye of a third-person storyteller, book one treats Stephen Kumalo as its protagonist, while book two introduces James Jarvis who is the novel's second protagonist. Effectively book one treats the story from a black perspective, while book two retraces much of the same timeframe (and plot) from a white perspective. Book three concerns the *denouement* of the story.

Paton's close friend Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr was one of the first South Africans to read the typescript of *Cry, the Beloved Country*<sup>1</sup>. The novel was

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<sup>1</sup> Though he is largely forgotten today, Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr was a political force in his time and was poised to lead South Africa after Jan Smuts retired. When the Nationalist Party took control of South Africa in the parliamentary elections of 1948 both Smuts and Hofmeyr were relegated to opposition politics. Both men died before the next national elections took place, and left a gulf in

dedicated jointly to Paton's wife Dorrie and Hofmeyr. Unlike most of its readership, Hofmeyr was not euphoric after reading it. Instead he criticized it bluntly in a letter to Paton (Alexander 1995: 215). He pointed out some of its inherent problems: the title is awkward; the overall construction is weak and the *denouement* is too long and drawn out; and though Gertrude's character is built up considerably at the start of the book, she virtually disappears from the novel and returns only briefly, very close to its end. Other problems that Hofmeyr failed to mention are: Arthur Jarvis is too saintly to be a plausible character; his murder is overloaded with coincidence (both the murderer and the murdered once lived in the same rural village); and however empathetic its treatment, *Cry, the Beloved Country* is in its greatest part a story of black struggle as told by a white author.

Dealing with the crucial problems of form – the disjointed narrative, the drawn-out end of the book – makes it imperative for the adaptor to distil an essence from the original. The problems with plot and characters might then also make it necessary for the adaptor to eliminate or change parts of the original for maximum effect in the adaptation. Thus Anderson removed numerous characters from the original novel but adapted and inserted new episodes that clarified the consequent missing portions of plot (Matlaw 1975: 268).

When comparing *Cry, the Beloved Country* with *Lost in the Stars* Matlaw (1975: 260, 261) called for a consideration of their genres, reminding us that there are 'obvious but all-too-often forgotten generic distinctions' between works of fiction and drama. First and foremost, the two media have dissimilar creative processes: *Cry, the Beloved Country* has only one author, while *Lost in the Stars* was created collaboratively through the efforts of a writer and composer, but also – where any live performance of the work is concerned – through the auxiliary efforts of the director, producers, actors, stage technicians, scenic designers, costume designers, stage technicians and musicians. Secondly, the two media engage their audience in a distinct manner: reading the novel is an interior act that is customarily performed in solitude at a pace and even in a sequence that the reader controls, whereas watching the Broadway musical is an exterior act that happens in a communal setting and proceeds at a pace and

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the leadership of South Africa's liberal politics.

in a sequence outside the control of individual audience members. Thirdly, they differ completely in length: as a novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* did not have to be simple, direct, or instantly clear in its language or plot, while, as a musical play, *Lost in the Stars* could only function successfully if its action and dialogue were instantly clear and direct.

Evaluating the novel and the musical play independently within the specific parameters of their genres – and not simply dismissing *Lost in the Stars* as a ‘feeble replica of a powerful novel’ – is the first step to appreciating the different ways in which both works strive for similar emotive effect (Matlaw 1975: 262).

Alan Paton’s stylized prose sets the emotional tone more than anything else in the book (Matlaw 1975: 262, 263). The author softens many important action scenes in the novel by only alluding to them; for example, the violent murder at the centre of the story is conveyed in a newspaper article instead of being described directly. He also uses certain phrases like hooks and repeats them for effect, either in close proximity or throughout the larger scale of the novel – the novel’s title, for instance, occurs at different points in the text. The style creates a sense of place that is both biblical and pastoral and, at least where the novel’s black characters are concerned, it creates the literary space occupied by the ‘noble savage’.

In contrast, the theatre thrives on action. Things need to happen for a play to propel forward. Works like *Godot* and *Parsifal* that do not depend on action are the exception. Allusions are too indirect for Broadway. Instead ‘speech and action, taking the place of the written word, must move more rapidly, simply, and clearly’ (Matlaw 1975: 267). The conventional format of Broadway musicals presents its own set of limitations. The creators of *Lost in the Stars* were already pushing at the boundaries of the form by giving it a tragic perspective, and even though their project was operatic in its nature they had to conform to certain norms in order to make their work commercially viable. They had to insert comedy, sex appeal, romance, and sentimentality into a novel that had none of these elements (Matlaw 1975: 267). By inserting generic musical numbers that effectively break the flow of the story they could incorporate these moods. A love song or a comic song would, with rhyming lyrics and musical accompaniment to boot, set the necessary tone.

When Myron Matlaw (1975: 267) compared *Lost in the Stars* with *Cry, the Beloved Country*, he argued that Maxwell Anderson ‘strove not only to dramatize Paton’s story but also to communicate Paton’s attitudes, to recreate the effects Paton had sought, and to evoke comparable responses.’ Paton’s own words suggest that Anderson failed in his attempt. Comparing the two works now we will see that, though they might be similar in places, they are ultimately different. The discussion will follow the scheme of three books that Paton devised for *Cry, the Beloved Country*. The analysis of *Lost in the Stars* is inserted according to its telescoped plot of two acts. Specific differences between the two plots will be stated. Otherwise the stories correspond.

The action of *Cry, the Beloved Country* takes place in South Africa during the years immediately after the Second World War. The book was meant to comment on that particular time and place, yet it gained a much broader relevance. Edward Callan (198: 49) argues that it achieves universal value ‘by incorporating into the actualities of South Africa’s physical and social setting a fundamental theme of social disintegration and moral restoration.’ He continues that ‘this theme is worked out through two complementary, or counterpointed, actions: Stephen Kumalo’s physical search for his son Absalom, and James Jarvis’ intellectual search for the spirit of his son Arthur.’ These two searches are the main catalysts for the story.

## BOOK ONE

The pastoral scene that Alan Paton depicts in the first chapter of *Cry, the Beloved Country* was reproduced to open *Lost in the Stars* as well. Kurt Weill took what was just over a page of text from the novel and set it directly to music, so that in **Act I scene 1** the curtain rises on a chorus that echoes the striking opening of the original.



Leader *p*  
There is a love-ly road that runs from Ix-o-po in-to the hills.

Chorus (unison)  
*ppp* (Hm)

Fl. VI. *p*

Cl. Vc. *p*

(Weill 1950: 1, 2)

Two clichéd techniques suggest an African flavour in the music, a pentatonic melody and a chorus that sings in call and response. Nonetheless, the musical result is effective. Even the saccharine quality of a humming chorus makes for a plausibly exotic sound.

The action of *Cry, the Beloved Country* begins in its second chapter when Stephen Kumalo sets off in search of his son Absalom, a departure that Anderson already includes in his first scene. The *umfundisi*<sup>1</sup> Kumalo lives in the (fictional) village of Ndotsheni. In both stories a letter that he receives asks him to travel to Johannesburg to help his sister Gertrude. In the novel, the letter comes from reverend Msimangu at the Anglican Mission House in Sophiatown (Paton 1949: 14). That provenance is changed for *Lost in the Stars* when the playwright has the letter come from Stephen Kumalo's own brother (Anderson 1951: 11). Where the letter's original salutation had been 'My dear brother in Christ', in the adaptation John Kumalo addresses his brother as 'Dear Stephen, you old faker in Christ.' When we learn in the novel that Gertrude needs her brother's help, Paton only tells us that she 'is very sick'. On the other hand Anderson pulls no punches and lets the audience know immediately that she is a prostitute. Apart from their immediate obligations to Gertrude, Stephen and his wife also express concern in both stories over the whereabouts of their only son, Absalom. Just like Gertrude he has left his rural home to make a living in a big mining city. At this point Weill introduces a second musical number to the musical's first scene. Stephen sings 'Thousands of Miles' and sets out one of

<sup>1</sup> The Zulu word *umfundisi* literally means teacher, but in this context is a title of respect that refers to a reverend.

the story's most important themes, that distance (both physical and emotional) between a father and a son must be overcome through love. 'But when there is love, then distance doesn't matter at all – distance or silence or years' (Anderson 1951: 13).



doesn't matter at all - distance or silence or years. **Stephen**  
*mf*  
 How many miles - to the heart of a

Hrp.  
*mf*

child? - Thousands of miles, - thousands of miles. - When he

(Weill 1950: 10)

At the entry of each verse the melody is once again pentatonic. Leading into the chorus the text states that love can bridge the distance between a parent and child, and the music breaks into a more definite F major tonality, introducing both the fourth and seventh degrees of the scale. Love will take Stephen Kumalo back to his son.

Stephen travels to Johannesburg by train in chapter three of book one (**Act I scene 2** of *Lost in the Stars*). It is the first time in his life that he has made such a long journey. In the novel there is nothing momentous about the departure and Stephen is out of his depth and riddled with uncertainties. That mood was altered completely when Weill introduced a choral number into the musical's corresponding scene. There is a looming excitement at the prospect

of travelling to a far off place. Weill's musical imagination infuses the scene with vitality and even creates the sound of a locomotive to stunning effect. Instead of concentrating his efforts solely on the orchestration, Weill uses vocal effects to achieve the desired sound. Words like 'Johannesburg' are scanned in a severely jaunted rhythm and sung over the leap of an octave to suggest the turning gears and wheels of the train. The broken pattern of semiquavers (played by the violins) accompanies this effect and, as it resurfaces throughout the piece, only serves to emphasise the general sense of forward motion.



Chorus (unison)

Jo - han - nes-burg, Jo - han - nes-burg, Jo -

Jo - han - nes-burg, Jo - han - nes-burg, Jo -

Weill (1950: 18)

Other words like 'clink, clink, cluckety' and 'Whoo-oo-oo-oo!' serve an onomatopoeic effect to suggest the sounds of the train's engine and whistle. In performance, the sound result is thrilling and even bears some traces of ululation.



2 SOPRANOS  
2 TENORS

pp

Whoo

Clink Clink Clink Clink Clink Clink Clink Clink

Cluckety Cluckety Cluckety Cluckety

Weill (1950: 33)



The lyrics for 'The Train to Johannesburg' are about the rampant urbanization of young black men:

Train go now to Johannesburg – Farewell, farewell, go well, go well!  
This boy we love, this brother, go to Johannesburg.  
White man go to Johannesburg, he come back, he come back.  
Black man go to Johannesburg, go, go, never come back (Anderson 1951: 17).

Its theme is faithful to the novel and to South African reality. In a spoken introduction to his song 'The Train,' Hugh Masekela underlines the exact same idea.

There's a train that comes from Namibia and Malawi. There's a train that comes from Zambia and Zimbabwe. There's a train that comes from Angola and Mozambique. From Lesotho, from Botswana, from Swaziland. From all the hinterlands of southern and central Africa this train carries young and old African men who are conscripted to come and work on contract in the gold and mineral mines of Johannesburg and its surrounding metropoli.

Masekela's 'The Train' is very similar to Weill's 'The Train to Johannesburg'. He also imitates the whistle of the coal train in a high falsetto, he sings 'chook, chook, chook' to mimic the sound of the engine, and he uses percussive elements to emphasize the movement.

**Telescoping:** Anderson introduces three characters from book two and three of *Cry, the Beloved Country* into **Act I scene 2** of *Lost in the Stars*. He invents a scene entirely absent from the novel.

Three generations from the Jarvis family arrive at the train station. James Jarvis is there to greet his son Arthur and grandson Edward<sup>1</sup> who have been 'vacationing' on his farm and must now also travel to Johannesburg. In the novel the reader never meets Arthur Jarvis, and only learns of him after his murder. Anderson now creates a history of friendship between Arthur Jarvis and Stephen Kumalo that even further underscores the improbability of his murder (Stephen's son Absalom, who is 'thousands of miles' away, will unwittingly shoot his father's friend dead in a household robbery). When Arthur spots

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<sup>1</sup> The grandson character has no name in the original.

Kumalo at the train station he leaves his father's side to go and speak to the old black man. James Jarvis is incensed by such apparently outrageous behaviour and he scolds his son for it: 'If you had struck me across the face you couldn't have hurt me more' (Anderson 1951: 19). We see that there is a distance between the white father and son as well, an important theme that resembles Anderson's relationship with his own father (see chapter 7).

**The following plot of *Cry, the Beloved Country* is omitted from *Lost in the Stars*.**

In *Cry, the Beloved Country* Stephen Kumalo is frightened by the vibrancy of Johannesburg when he arrives there. It is an alien environment which he does not understand (the noise, traffic lights, and buying a bus ticket all startle him). 'Tixo, watch over me, he says to himself. Tixo, watch over me' <sup>1</sup> (Paton 1949: 23). With the help of a stranger he eventually finds the Mission House in Sophiatown where he meets the Reverend Msimangu who had written the letter that had brought him there. Msimangu is an important character who accompanies Stephen on his search throughout the novel.

The reader learns that Kumalo is unused to eating with a knife and fork, using running water, and a modern lavatory – 'When you were finished, you pressed a little rod, and the water rushed in as though something was broken. It would have frightened you if you had not heard of such things before' (Paton 1949: 26).

Kumalo meets many priests at the Mission House, 'both white and black,' and shares the first of many meals with them. (Note: Paton stresses that the priests were 'both white and black,' implying just how unusual it was for white and black men to eat at the same table.) At their first meal the men discuss various social problems that the country faces. Kumalo speaks of rural problems: 'how it was a land of old men and women, and mothers and children; how the maize grew barely to the height of a man; how the tribe was broken, and the house broken, and the man broken; how when they went away, many never came back, many never wrote any more' (Paton 1949: 26). In turn, he hears of urban problems – mainly crime; one of the priests shows him a newspaper headline: 'OLD COUPLE ROBBED AND BEATEN IN LONELY

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<sup>1</sup> Tixo is the Xhosa word for God.

HOUSE. FOUR NATIVES ARRESTED' (Paton 1949: 27). This conversation sets the tone for similar discussions throughout the book – not only by the characters in the novel, but also by the omniscient narrator.

When Msimangu and Kumalo are alone again they talk openly about Gertrude's *sickness* (remember that Paton has not yet disclosed her prostitution). We learn from Stephen Kumalo that Gertrude and her child had originally lived with him in Ndotsheni. But she had a husband – the child's father – a mine worker in Johannesburg. When they did not hear from him, Gertrude decided to go with her child to Johannesburg and search for him. Msimangu then tells Stephen news of his sister. 'I do not know if she ever found her husband, but she has no husband now [...] It would be truer to say that she has many husbands' (Paton 1949: 27). She is a prostitute, she makes and sells liquor, a man has been killed where she lives, and she has been in prison on various occasions.

Stephen then asks after his son, his 'greatest sorrow'. Absalom Kumalo had also come to Johannesburg. He had come to look for Gertrude and then never returned. Stephen decides now to search for both of them. This series of failed searches makes little narrative sense. Paton was possibly still finding his feet in his own plot.

On the following day the two men travel to Claremont and Stephen confronts his sister. He is angry with her for shaming him (a priest) and demands to take her and her child back to Ndotsheni. That afternoon Stephen takes Gertrude and her son away from Claremont to the house of Mrs. Lithebe, the home that Msimangu arranged for Stephen during his stay in the city.

'And that night they held prayers in the dining-room, and Mrs. Lithebe and Gertrude punctuated his petitions with Amens. Kumalo himself was light-hearted and gay like a boy, more so than he had been for years. One day in Johannesburg, and already the tribe was being rebuilt, the house and the soul restored' (Paton 1949: 35, 36).

Stephen Kumalo's actions toward Gertrude are noble but they also betray the misogynist in him. Gertrude is chattel and he takes her betrayal very personally. *How could you do this to us?* he asks angrily. When she lies on the

floor sobbing, *His eyes fill with tears, his deep gentleness returns to him. He goes to her and lifts her from the floor to the chair.* And then for her redemption, he says that *God forgives us, who am I not to forgive?* In these examples the prose moves swiftly from anger to forgiveness. We are presented with a moral stereotype: women tempt men and women are responsible for that sin; men only have to forgive if they can. In context this part of the novel also explains a lot about Alan Paton. If we remember that he used writing to distract himself from sexual temptation and red-light districts, then the search for Gertrude takes on a whole new meaning.

Was he wrestling with his own desires when he wrote this section of the novel? Stephen Kumalo's train journey at the start of *Cry, the Beloved Country* mirrors Alan Paton's (real) train journey into Trondheim on 25 September 1946 – a day that moved him enough to begin writing this novel on that same night (Paton 1980: 267-9). If the author has his novel's protagonist emulate his own journey into an unknown country, then the purpose of that journey – finding a prostitute – may very well have occurred to Paton as well. The search for Gertrude is built up considerably at the beginning of the novel, but then Paton abandons that thread of the storyline abruptly only to concentrate on Stephen's search for his son Absalom.<sup>1</sup>

**The plot for *Lost in the Stars* now rejoins that of *Cry, the Beloved Country*.**

In chapter seven (**Act I scene 3**) Stephen Kumalo visits the shop of his brother, in the hope that John Kumalo might know where to find Absalom. The two brothers are worlds apart and John, a fighting politician in the black struggle, is revealed in both stories as an agitator and an antihero. Urban life has disconnected him from his cultural and religious roots. This severed connection has turned him into a selfish and corrupted agent. In *Cry, the Beloved Country* John dismisses his brother's clerical duties because he has become disaffected with the political voice of the Church.

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<sup>1</sup> The storylines of *Too late the Phalarope* and *Ah, but your land is beautiful* (Paton's two subsequent novels) both include a white man who prostitutes a black woman. In 1968, Paton would even go to court to face a charge of contravening the Immorality Act (Alexander 1995: 351-354). Although a sympathetic judge dismissed the case against Paton, all the evidence (including Paton's subsequent medical treatment for pubic lice) suggests that he did in fact pay for sexual intercourse.

It is true that the Church speaks with a fine voice, and that the Bishops speak against the laws. But this they have been doing for fifty years, and things get worse, not better' (Paton 1949: 39).

For *Lost in the Stars* Anderson changed this discontent into scepticism. John is depicted as a misanthropist. He mocks Stephen repeatedly for being a priest and consigns the care of their sister to him: 'Brother, I want our sister out of this town. There's a limit to the number of bastard nephews a respectable tradesman can have' (Anderson 1951: 22).

When Stephen eventually asks after his son, John directs him to a textile factory in Doornfontein where Absalom had been working. Stephen sets off on a trail in search of Absalom with the address in Doornfontein as his only clue. Msimangu accompanies him throughout *Cry, the Beloved Country* but for *Lost in the Stars* he has an altogether different companion. Anderson has scrapped Msimangu and all the other priests at the Mission House from his story. Instead Gertrude's little son (named Alex in the musical) takes his place. Even though Gertrude never appears in any of the scenes for *Lost in the Stars*, Stephen relays information of an intervention between himself and Gertrude in **Act I scene 4**. In this new chain of events she has refused to leave her brothel but nevertheless handed the care of her son over to Stephen. Anderson praised fidelity in his women (both real and fictional) and may very well have eliminated Gertrude because of her fallen state (Shivers 1983: 83). On the other hand her son is elevated because there are questions in the mouths of babes that older characters would not necessarily ask. Alex is an innocent observer at crucial points in the plot.

Anderson followed the original storyline quite closely when he recreated the search that sends Kumalo and his companion through many parts of Johannesburg. Both the novel and the musical portray the search in episodic snatches, but where Paton digresses over several chapters and makes ample pause for social commentary in order to give a sense of extended time to the undertaking, Weill uses one continuous musical scene to create the same effect.

When Kumalo reaches the textile factory in *Cry, the Beloved Country* he learns that Absalom had stopped working there a year before. A black factory

worker sends him back to Sophiatown, to the home of a Mrs Ndlela. He has no luck there as well. When Mrs Ndlela gives him an address in Alexandra it is night and Stephen is forced back to the Mission House.

On the following day Kumalo and Msimangu have to walk eleven miles to Alexandra because of a bus boycott on that route. Paton uses this fictional incident to recall historical boycotts that protested against unreasonable transportation fees. In the novel a friendly white driver stops to offer the two black men a lift to their destination. When they eventually reach the house in Alexandra and enquire after Absalom they find a hesitant landlady. Mrs Mkize says that Absalom has not lived with her for a long time and that she does not know where he went. She is afraid of their questions and will not answer them forthrightly (Paton 1949: 48).

Have no doubt it is fear in her eyes. Have no doubt it is fear now in his eyes also. It is fear, here in this house.

- I saw nothing wrong, she said.
- But you guessed there was something wrong.
- There was nothing wrong, she said.
- Then why are you afraid?
- I am not afraid, she said.
- Then why do you tremble? asked Msimangu.
- I am cold, she said.

Stephen fears that Absalom has turned into a criminal but cannot bring himself to ask that question directly. Mrs Mkize in turn fears that the two men at her doorstep may have come from the police. Kumalo leaves without any answer as to the whereabouts of his son. Msimangu stays behind and convinces the landlady to trust him. She tells him that Absalom and a friend had been staying there, that they were thieves who kept many stolen goods in her house. She does not know where they are now but tells him to ask a taxi-driver by the name of Hlabeni. The two men find Hlabeni at the bus rank and pay him to take them back to Sophiatown in his taxi. Hlabeni is also afraid to speak openly about Absalom but Msimangu persuades him to: 'I heard he was gone to Orlando, and lives there amongst the squatters in Shanty Town. But further than that I do not know' (Paton 1949: 51). The two priests return unsuccessfully to the Mission House once again.

Chapter nine is the second 'chorus' chapter of the novel. Paton uses it to describe the various social problems that black people had to face in Johannesburg. These include the consequences of urbanisation, lack of employment, insufficient housing, squatting, and disease.

In Shanty Town Kumalo learns that Absalom had been caught stealing and that a magistrate had sent him to a reformatory in Orlando. At the reformatory an administrator tells him that Absalom had been let out one month before, 'because there was a girl who was pregnant by him' (Paton 1949: 65). The reformatory in *Cry, the Beloved Country* is a fictional copy of Diepkloof Reformatory and the administrator is similar to Alan Paton. The author's sabbatical tour of European and American reformatories coincided with the writing of *Cry, the Beloved Country* and evidently influenced it.

This part of the action which takes two days in *Cry, the Beloved Country* is distilled into one day for *Lost in the Stars* (**Act I scene 4**). Anderson eliminates Mrs Ndlela (at the house in Sophiatown) from his scenario and has a white foreman at the factory send Kumalo straight to Mrs Mkize's house in Alexandra. The music for the scene starts immediately as the previous scene ends. A male chorus sings the address '14 Krause Street Textile Company' in an *ostinato* (together with a timpani, cello and double bass pizzicato) while Stephen sings the refrain from 'Thousands of Miles'. This reprise is a typical feature of musicals that Weill had to grow accustomed to when he was learning the ropes of being a Broadway composer. A musical from this era could consist of only a few hit-numbers that repeat throughout the work, either in full, in vocal excerpt, or as 'so-called "utilities": bow music, exit music, fillers, and so forth' (Robinson 1997: 7).

Stephen *p*

Not miles, or

Tex-tile Com-pa-ny, Four-teen Krau-se Street, Tex-tile Com-pa-ny, Four-teen Krau-se Street,

Timp. Vc. Bss. pizz.

Str.

walls, or length of days, Nor the cold doubt of

Tex-tile Com-pa-ny, Four-teen Krau-se Street, Tex-tile Com-pa-ny, Four-teen Krau-se Street,

(Weill 1950: 37)

Weill and Anderson are relating the distance between father and son sung about in Act I scene 1 with this scene they call 'The Search'.

Dialogue sections in this scene are joined to the sung parts with through-composed instrumental accompaniments (utility music). When Kumalo speaks to the foreman of the factory the verse melody of 'Thousands of Miles' is played by a trumpet supported by strings in harmony, as well as the timpani, cello and bass *ostinato* that repeats throughout this whole scene (Weill 1950: 39).

Foreman

Yes, they did work here. (etc. dialogue)

Trp.

*pp* Str.



The music modulates from B flat major to E major as the search shifts towards finding Mrs Mkize's house. Furthermore Anderson and Weill repeat Paton's sentiments of Mrs Mkize's fear. The chorus, now including female voices, sings in b minor, 'Make no doubt, it is fear that you see in her eyes. It is fear' (Weill 1950: 40). Weill's music becomes more dramatic (operatic) as the suspense of the search grows on. The music shifts to g minor, which turns into the diminished seventh degree of d minor and then alternates through a series of diminished and augmented chords. This finally resolves five pages later into a solitary d semibreve played by a cello (bar 78-148). In the meantime the chorus sings an ostinato pattern that emphasizes the futility of the search.

A taxi driver, known as Hlabeni,  
Taxi stand; in Twenty-third Avenue,  
What you must find is always a number,  
A number and a name.  
Though it sear the mind, say it over and over,  
Over and over,  
A boding song,  
Searing like a flame (Anderson 1951: 27).

This commentary strives to create the same disconcerting effect that Paton created with the many descriptive sidetracks in the novel (descriptions of the bus boycott and the incendiary social environment of the black population).

In the adaptation Hlabeni already knows that Absalom has been in jail for stealing. He sends Stephen to a parole officer called Mark Eland (Paton called him a reformatory administrator). There Kumalo learns the same news as in the novel, that Absalom is out on parole and is living with a girl who is pregnant with his child. The only exception is that Paton's story carries on immediately while Anderson stops his scene here. When Kumalo (in *Lost in the Stars*) asks the parole officer to take him to Absalom that same night the prison officer asks him to come back the next day instead. Though Kumalo is unhappy with this news he is (mistakenly) relieved that things are not worse. Weill recalls the refrain from 'Thousands of Miles' once more now that father and son are almost reunited (Weill 1950: 48):



home. This is not what I hoped for my one son, But  
E.H. —

how much worse could have come!  
Chorus BASS *pp*

This is heav - y heav - y for me, O,

In *Cry, the Beloved Country* the administrator takes Kumalo and Msimangu to Pimville on the same day, so that they may see where Absalom lives and hopefully meet him. When they get there they only find the young girl who carries his child. She tells the white man that Absalom had left for Springs three days before and not returned home (in violation of his parole). Msimangu turns bitter and tells Stephen to abandon his search, that there is nothing more to be done. They leave her house and at the gate of the village the young white man telephones the factory where Absalom is supposed to be working, only to find out that Absalom has not returned to work either. He is angry that the rehabilitation has failed.

Later that night, when Kumalo and Msimangu are back at the Mission House, a white priest shows them a copy of the *Evening Star*. The headlines read: 'MURDER IN PARKWOLD. WELL-KNOWN CITY ENGINEER SHOT DEAD. ASSAILANTS THOUGHT TO BE NATIVES' (Paton 1949: 70). It turns out that the man murdered was one Arthur Jarvis, a 'courageous young man, and a great fighter for justice.' He was a prominent member of the Church, the president of an African Boys' Club in Claremont, and the only child of a farmer

in Carisbrooke, which is near Ndotsheni. Stephen Kumalo knows of the father: 'His farm is in the hills above Ndotsheni, and he sometimes rode past our church' (Paton 1949: 71). He also remembers the now murdered son vaguely, 'a small bright boy' who also rode past the church occasionally. After they read the newspaper report the priests fall silent. Paton then introduces the title of his novel for the first time:

Sadness and fear and hate, how they well up in the heart and mind, whenever one opens the pages of these messengers of doom. Cry for the broken tribe, for the law and the custom that is gone. Aye, and cry aloud for the man who is dead, for the woman and children bereaved. Cry, the beloved country, these things are not yet at an end (Paton 1949: 72).

Kumalo goes to bed shaken by the news of the murder. 'This thing. Here in my heart there is nothing but fear. Fear, fear, fear.' He fears now that his son could commit such a murder. Msimangu offers to pray with him, but Kumalo says that there is no prayer left in him, that he is dumb inside and that he has no words at all. They say good night and do not pray. 'Msimangu watched him go up the little path. He looked very old. He himself turned and walked back to the Mission.' And then Paton ends the chapter with an idea that Maxwell Anderson set great store by. 'There are times, no doubt, when God seems no more to be about the world' (Paton 1949: 73).

Even though *Lost in the Stars* is ultimately about a God that abandons the world Anderson ignored its correspondence at this point in Paton's plot. He had no Mission House and no Msimangu in his story so he had to use that idea later. Instead we find Kumalo in **Act I scene 5** as he puts young Alex to bed and sings him a lullaby about a little grey house in Ndotsheni were they will both go to live.

**The following plot of *Cry, the Beloved Country* is omitted from *Lost in the Stars*.**

Chapter twelve is another important 'chorus' chapter in *Cry, the Beloved Country*. It describes the fear caused by crime, specifically how white men fear native crime. The author has various white voices in the chorus cry with frustration and anger. It has a strong effect and resembles a truth about white

South Africans still relevant today, that black crime makes for good dinner conversation.

Cry, the beloved country, for the unborn child who is the inheritor of our fear. Let him not love the earth too deeply. Let him not laugh too gladly when the water runs through his fingers, nor stand too silent when the setting sun makes red the veld with fire. Let him not be too moved when the birds of his land are singing, nor give too much of his heart to a mountain or a valley. For fear will rob him of all if he gives too much (Paton 1949: 79).

In chapter thirteen Kumalo visits a Mission for the blind called Ezenzeleni. He has had news that the police are also looking for Absalom, and though he has a foreboding of the truth he does not yet know why they want his son. Paton reintroduces the theme of 'the broken tribe' to reflect Kumalo's inner turmoil and his sense that the old traditions of his culture are eroding. Msimangu preaches to the blind congregation and his sermon reassures Kumalo's faith that 'the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary' (Paton 1949: 87). His hope is destroyed when the white man from the reformatory brings news that Absalom has murdered James Jarvis. He has had two accomplices, one of whom was his cousin Matthew (John Kumalo's son).

At last Stephen finds his son, but too late. When they meet in prison the atmosphere is strained. Absalom will hardly look at his father. It appears that Absalom has no remorse and that his tears are only for himself. Stephen has a severe crisis of faith: 'It seems that God has turned from me, he said' (Paton 1949: 102). But Father Vincent, the leader of the Mission House, urges him to pray for all those affected by this murder and also to rest; but not to contemplate the ways of God, or to ask the meaning of life – for they are secret.

In **Act I scene 6** of *Lost in the Stars* we find a scene absent from *Cry, the Beloved Country*. As the stage lights up a night-club singer named Linda starts to sing a song called 'Who'll Buy'. The setting is a dive in Shanty Town, Anderson's closest approximation of a shabbeen. Matthew Kumalo and Johannes Pafuri are there with their girlfriends and Absalom Kumalo also sits alone in a corner. Linda's song is suggestive of prostitution and was probably meant to capture some essence of Gertrude from *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

Linda *mf*



Who'll buy— my juic-y ru-ta-ba-gas? Who'll buy— my

yel-low corn?— Who'll buy as-par-a-gus, or car-rots, or po-ta-toes?

*r.h.*  
(Vlc)

(Weill 1950: 61)

The dotted rhythms, striding foxtrot and dissonances in Kurt Weill's music remind of his Weimar days, but Maxwell Anderson's lyrics unintentionally turn the whole enterprise banal.

The lyrics that follow those in the example above read, 'Who wants my peppers and my ginger and tomatoes / The best you bit into since you were born' (Anderson 1951: 34). Linda continues to name a cornucopia of goods for sale, such as black-eyed peas, melons, apricots, prickly pears, persimmons, nectarines and trimmings. She also sings that 'The garden of Eden had nothing like these! / You'll feel like flying, like a bird on the wing; / You'll stay up there like a kite on a string; / They're satisfactory, and they got a sting' (Anderson 1951: 34). The men in the dive join in with Linda's song. Johannes Pafuri (jokingly?) accedes to buy Linda's goods. Anderson then introduces a mock court scene into the dialogue, replete with judiciary puns. Linda admits that she has no licence to sell her goods. Matthew then demands that she appear before the court and Johannes 'arrests' her. The language is full of misunderstood double meanings. Anderson was trying to imitate similar scenes in the plays of Shakespeare – take for example the foul puns that flow between Katharina and

Petruchio when they meet for the first time in *The Taming of the Shrew* – but Anderson fails to pull it off convincingly, as if the vulgarity in his ‘courthouse’ scene comes pre-bowdlerized.

The ‘courtroom’ ends when the women go outside and leave their men to speak business with Absalom. Immediately they discuss arrangements for a domestic robbery already in planning. When Matthew asks just how they will break into the house Johannes answers that breaking would not be necessary, that the owner never locks his doors. Apparently he has ‘some theory. He says, “If anybody wants what I’ve got he can come in and take it” ’ (Anderson 1951: 38). Absalom does not want to take his gun along to the robbery, but his friends remain adamant that they might need it. Unlike Paton, Anderson introduces a motive for the robbery – the three men want money to travel to newly-discovered gold fields (Odendaalsrust in *Cry, the Beloved Country*).

Matthew and Johannes exit the stage while Irina (a young pretty Zulu girl) enters. Irina is Absalom’s girlfriend. She looms much larger in the adaptation of the novel and now even has a name. The creators of *Lost in the Stars* were striving to create a love interest where Paton first had none.

Irina brings news that Absalom’s parole officer is looking for him. She wants him to return home and also go back to his work at the factory that following day. Absalom refuses and tells her of his plan to go to ‘the new gold fields. There’s a new rich strike, Irina. If you go there as a free man, not in a labour gang, you can sometimes get ahead and save something’ (Anderson 1951: 40). Absalom wants a better chance in life with just enough money to set up a little shop and buy a better house. His choice of words – ‘labour gang’ – indicates an American desire for suffrage instead of a South African one. There is also an argument that he will steal for a reasonable cause, that stealing is his only way of opting out on an unjust life. Irina pleads with Absalom not to go but when Johannes and Matthew reappear take him away with them.

**The plot for *Lost in the Stars* now rejoins that of *Cry, the Beloved Country*.**

In *Cry the Beloved Country*, on the day after Kumalo learns the truth about the murder, he returns to Pimville to tell the girl with child that her ‘husband’ is now in jail for killing a white man. Stephen then offers to accept her as a daughter into his family if she will marry Absalom in the Church. But he also interrogates

the young girl until she starts sobbing (much in the same way as he interrogated Gertrude when he took her away from prostitution). He learns that Absalom will be her third 'husband' and, later, that probably she is only sixteen years old.

And he said to her, Will you now take a fourth husband? And desperately she said, No, no, I want no husband any more.

And a wild thought came to Kumalo in his wild and cruel mood.

– Not even, he asked, if I desired you?

At first she says that it would not be right, but then that she 'could be willing' (Paton 1949: 108). It is a trick to test her loyalty to Absalom. When the girl realises, this she falls to 'sobbing, a creature shamed and tormented. And he, seeing her, and the frailty of her thin body, was ashamed also, but for his cruelty, not her compliance' (Paton 1949: 108). Stephen relents with pity and blesses her. He asks her only to consider the 'quietness' of life in Ndotsheni, and what she would do 'in this quiet place when the desire' was upon her (Paton 1949: 109). She assures him that she *desires* quietness. Paton repeats her statement and emphasises the 'desire'. The language throughout this chapter reminds one of the reconciliation with Gertrude.

**Act 1 scene 7** of *Lost in the Stars* is similar except in two instances: First, this is the first time that Stephen and Irina meet, not the second as in the novel (Anderson actually condenses Paton's two meetings into one); and secondly, the murder has not happened. Anderson's Kumalo also does his best to tempt Irina and also manages, but when this girl finally breaks down she fights back (Anderson 1951: 45):

Why did you come here? How would I know what you think – or what you want?

I don't know what power you have – or what you will do! I'm alone here. I'm to have a child, and Absalom is gone [...] and I love him! I want only Absalom. He brought me only trouble – but I love him!

The character is much nobler than Paton originally conceived her, and not necessarily only a victim of her fate. Stephen owns up to his mistake and asks her forgiveness. He leaves his address with her, asks for any news of Absalom's whereabouts and promises the same. When Stephen exits Irina

sings one of Weill's most famous songs, 'Trouble Man'. The lyrics describe her torment as follows: that Absalom has only brought trouble into her life but that his troubles are precisely what attract her in the first place. It is a different characterization from the one in *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Irina is a woman waiting at home, who only wants to settle down her 'trouble man'.

Finding the footprints out where you ran,  
Asking, 'Aren't you coming home, trouble man?  
Trouble man! Trouble man! Trouble man! Trouble man!  
Saying, 'All day long you don't catch me weeping,  
But, oh, God help me when it comes time for sleeping,  
When it comes time for sleeping here alone!' (Anderson 1951: 47)

Arthur Jarvis is murdered in **Act I scene 8** of *Lost in the Stars*. Anderson postponed the murder in his sequence in order to build up a climax at the end of the first act. Except for scene 9 he does not yet include any part of the plot that Alan Paton wrote for books two and three of *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Scenes 8 through 12 portray a vivid picture of the murder and its consequences, where in the novel it is always relayed (through newspaper articles, conversations, and the court case) and has a subdued and filtered quality (Zychowicz). Anderson did not deviate from the details of the murder as relayed in different parts of *Cry, the Beloved Country*. The action is swift and accompanied by music. Once finished it moves directly into a striking choral number, 'Murder in Parkwold'. Weill's harmonies shift upwards chromatically with each phrase – like a siren. The words 'murder in Parkwold' are set so that the interval of a fifth is always replaced by an augmented fourth/diminished fifth (Weill 1950: 79)



**Agitato assai** **Negro Chorus** **Woman's voice**  
He was shot at night.

SOPRANO  
ALTO  
TENOR  
BASS

Mur-der in Park - wold! \_\_\_\_\_ Mur - der in

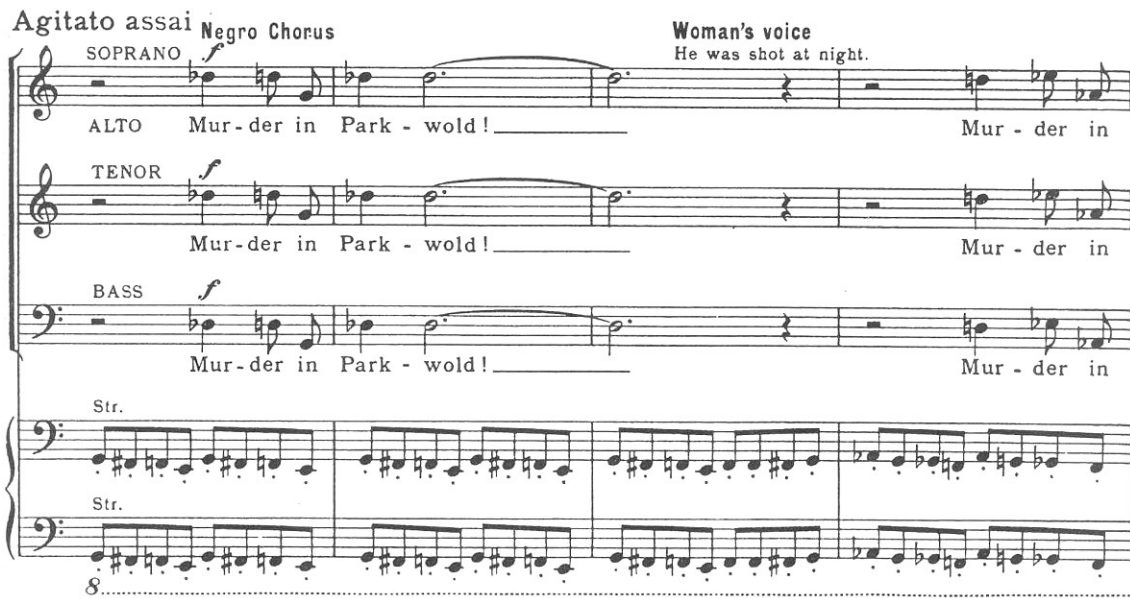
Mur-der in Park - wold! \_\_\_\_\_ Mur - der in

Mur-der in Park - wold! \_\_\_\_\_ Mur - der in

Str.

Str.

8.....



**Woman's voice**  
Nobody knows why or by whom.

**White Chorus**

Park - wold! \_\_\_\_\_ Mur-der in Park - wold! \_\_\_\_\_

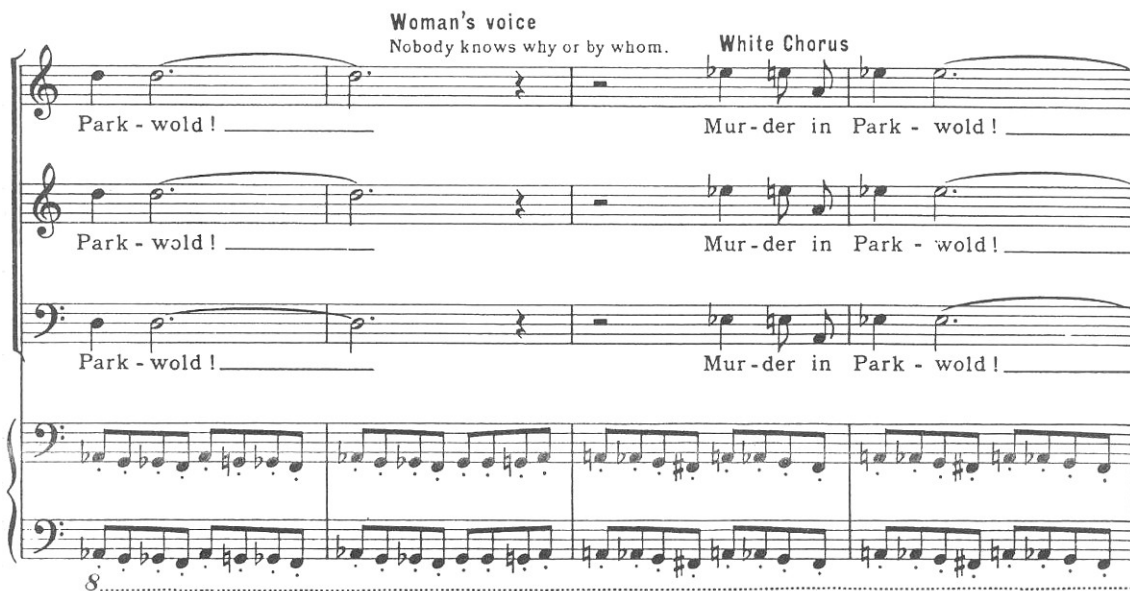
Park - wold! \_\_\_\_\_ Mur-der in Park - wold! \_\_\_\_\_

Park - wold! \_\_\_\_\_ Mur-der in Park - wold! \_\_\_\_\_

Str.

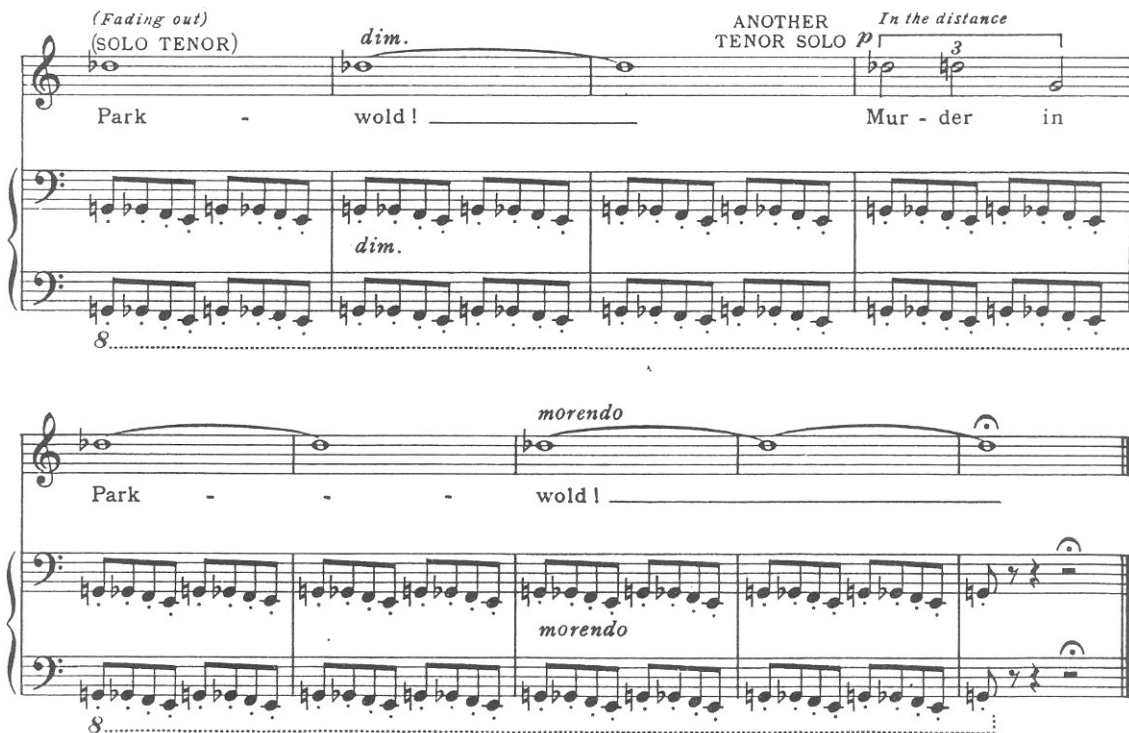
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8.....



The authors make use of a white chorus and a black chorus that alternate one another (*chori spezzati*) to show the divisive nature of such a crime, and the quasi-tribal loyalties that placed white against black. When the upward chromatic shift comes to its end the two choruses join together. They sing in repeated block chords that are spread out through all voices and now move downwards in whole tones: 'In Parkwold among the great [*diminished seventh chord on e*] / houses, among the [*diminished seventh chord on d*] / lighted streets and the wide [*diminished seventh chord on c*] / gardens [*g major roof*]' (Weill 1950: 81, 82). Two solo tenors then sing 'Murder in Parkwold'

alternately again (supposedly a white tenor and a black tenor) while the tonality comes to rest on a tritone g and d flat.



(Fading out)  
(SOLO TENOR) *dim.* ANOTHER TENOR SOLO *In the distance*

Park - wold! Mur - der in

*dim.*

*morendo*

Park - - - wold!

*morendo*

(Weill 1950: 82)

**Act I scene 9** is telescoped from book two of *Cry, the Beloved Country*. It is not out of place here but presents the audience with James Jarvis, a character that Paton only introduces in book two of his novel. Anderson's scene is unremarkable. It takes place in the library of Arthur Jarvis and merely presents James Jarvis speaking to Mark Eland about his dead son. James is angry that his son, 'an advocate of Negroe equality should have been killed by a Negroe. There's only one course with them – a strong hand and a firm policy' (Anderson 1951: 51). The dialogue is uninspiring and shows no promise of the extraordinary development we will see in the James Jarvis of *Cry, the Beloved Country*. In *Lost in the Stars* he lacks a sense of brotherhood.

The music that begins **Act I scene 10** overlaps with the dialogue that ends the previous scene. Weill recalls the murder with two tenor solo calls of 'murder in Parkwold,' sung on the same g and d flat tritone as before. After this short introduction the music for 'Fear' accompanies a pantomime. Stage lights come up to reveal an empty street in Shanty Town. Two residents run through

the street and knock at all the doors to rouse the neighbourhood. Zulus come out of their houses and assemble to read about the murder in three newspapers. A policeman's whistle blows off-stage and warns the black street residents to hide. The policeman comes through the street but finds no one. When he leaves the residents come out of their homes again. Two white people then enter the black street, and they are filled with fear at the sight of its black residents.

The pantomime then turns into a chorus about fear. Anderson took his theme for this scene from Kumalo's gentle words, spoken on the night he went to bed after first hearing about the murder: 'This thing. Here in my heart there is nothing but fear. Fear, fear, fear' (Paton 1949: 73). It also echoes a salient line from the novel, 'Cry, the beloved country for the unborn child who is the inheritor of our fear' (Paton 1949: 79). Weill and Anderson rework these soft words into a bravura musico-dramatic display called 'Fear'. It is their best equivalent for the stage of the didactic chorus chapters found in the novel. Anderson's lyrics capture the spirit of Paton's descriptive prose and Weill's choral music is at its most dramatic in this scene. Weill again exploits the tritone interval to stunning effect. The whole scene is sung as a call and response, by soloists and two alternating black and white choirs. Chromatic scalar passages in the string section add to the ominous effect (Weill 1950: 87):



The image shows a musical score for the scene 'Fear'. It consists of four staves. The top staff is for the Contralto Soloist, with the label 'CONTRALTO SOLO' and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The lyrics 'It is' are written below the notes. The second staff is for the 'Negro Singers'. The third staff is for the 'w.w.' (white choir), with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The bottom staff is for the piano accompaniment, featuring a chromatic scalar passage in the left hand. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4.



fear! —  
BASS SOLO  
It is fear! —  
It is fear! It is fear!

Str.

The dramatist tells us that South Africans cannot enjoy their lives because they fear too much. A soloist from the black chorus asks ‘Who can enjoy the lovely land, / The seventy years, / The sun that pours down on the earth, / When there is fear in the heart?’ (Anderson 1951: 53). A white soloist then asks, ‘Who can walk quietly in the dusk / When behind the dusk there are whispers / And reckless hands?’ (Anderson 1951: 54). Emotions run high as the two choirs continue alternating with one another in response to newspaper accounts of the murder. Finally both choirs sing in unison (Weill 1950: 98, 99):

White and Negro Singers



*fff*  
Fear of the few for the man - y,  
*fff*  
Fear of the few for the man - y,  
*fff*  
Fear of the few for the man - y,  
*fff* *ff*



Fear of the man - y for the few! \_\_\_\_\_

Fear of the man - y for the few! \_\_\_\_\_

Fear of the man - y for the few! \_\_\_\_\_

In **Act I scene 11** of *Lost in the Stars* Kumalo finally learns that his son has been arrested on suspicion of murdering Arthur Jarvis. The reunion between father and son is histrionic compared with the same meeting in *Cry, the Beloved Country* (Anderson 1951: 56):

STEPHEN I have searched in every place for you – and I find you here. Why have they charged you with this terrible crime? (*There is no answer*) Answer me, my child.

(*Absalom is still silent*)

ELAND You should rise when your father speaks to you, Absalom.

ABSALOM Yes, sir. Oh, my father, my father!

(*He reaches through the bars to his father*)

As Paton renders the meeting, both characters are far more reticent so that the absence of language underscores their estrangement. In the novel Absalom is afraid even to look at his father; here he reaches out to him through the bars of his prison cell. At first Stephen will not believe that his son could be guilty of murder. He believes that justice will prevail and that Absalom will return with him to be content in the quietness of Ndotsheni. ‘The hills are as beautiful as ever, Absalom. You will be happy there again’ (Anderson 1951: 57).

**Scene 12** is the high point of the first act. Stephen tries to write a letter ‘to the mother at home’ and explain that his search for Absalom has failed and that their son will not return home. Kumalo then calls on God: ‘O *Tixo*, *Tixo*! O God of all lost people and of those who go towards death, tell me what to say to her! How can I say this to the mother, O my *Tixo*?’ (Anderson 1951: 60). Young Alex disagrees, ‘But Uncle Stephen, you are an umfundisi, and you can ask God to help you, and he will surely help you’. Kumalo is not sure that God will

help him and he sings the show's title song 'Lost in the Stars'. This song explains Stephen's desolation and his loss of faith in his god. Furthermore, this scene links the fracture between Stephen and his god with his final realization that the rift between him and his son cannot be healed.

The song 'Lost in the Stars' describes an original contract between God and the earth. God has since broken that contract leaving mankind *lost in the stars*. According to Maxwell Anderson the earth ran through God's fingers and fell off to one side which prompted him to hunt 'through the wide night air / For the little dark star on the wind down there' (Anderson 1951: 60). According to Anderson it was then, when God found his little star, that he promised 'to take special care/ So it wouldn't get lost again.' Anderson's imagined contract warps the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Instead of Adam and Eve breaking their first pledge, Anderson creates a new dogma. Original sin and free will are no longer to blame for human suffering. Instead, just as is the case with *The Brother's Karamazov*, God is held accountable (Anderson 1951: 60):

But I've been walking through the night and the day  
Till my eyes get weary and my head turns grey,  
And sometimes it seems maybe God's gone away,  
Forgetting the promise that we heard him say –  
And we're lost out here in the stars –  
    Little stars, big stars,  
    Blowing through the night,  
    And we're lost out here in the stars.

'Lost in the Stars' is a Broadway song in the showstopper tradition of Jerome Kern's 'Ol' Man River' (Sanders 1980: 385). It may seem out of place because it contrasts with the operatic music that precedes it, or even because it was conceived so long before the musical to which it eventually gave a title. This song has 'a distinct Weill intonation, an almost foreign undercurrent,' which 'makes it seem quite appropriate for the never-never land, not quite African, not quite American. That Anderson and Weill have created in this play' (Sanders 1980: 385).

## BOOK TWO

Paton starts book two of *Cry, the Beloved Country* with the same famous lines that opened book one ('There is a lovely road that runs from Ixopo into the hills...'), but in the third paragraph he departs from the original to describe a white farm, 'one of the finest farms of this countryside' (Paton 1949: 121). As it turns out it is High Place, the farm of James Jarvis. Though, by this point, he has already featured prominently in *Lost in the Stars*, it is the first time that readers of the novel meet him.

Immediately Paton spends some pages discussing agriculture. It appears that the author has a sound theoretical knowledge of farming methods, specifically those aimed at alleviating the socio-economical problems of a particular landscape and its surrounding community. There is a drought in the valley that even the prosperous farm of a white man cannot bear. We understand that the valley needs rain desperately, and Paton prepares the reader for the physical and moral uplift that rain will bring to the community. He also concerns the reader with specific problems that relate to black land ownership: old men and women work on the farms because urbanization has drawn their young people to the cities; the farms are too small to operate profitably; black landowners still need the proper education to modernize their farming methods; and white farmers who want black workers to till their lands – for all white farmers need black workers – do not understand how to address these issues.

The action of the story continues when two policemen arrive at High Place and break the news of Arthur's murder earlier that afternoon. Arthur's parents leave Natal that night and fly up to Johannesburg. Unlike Kumalo's train journey, Paton makes nothing of their flight.

In Johannesburg the Jarvis parents live with the Harrisons, the family of their dead son's wife. We learn quickly from discussions amongst the characters that Arthur Jarvis had a formidable intellect and was a catalyst for liberal change in his country. James admits to quarrelling with his son many times, specifically over 'the native question' (Paton 1949: 129). Ironically Arthur was writing a paper on 'The Truth About Native Crime' when three young natives broke into his house and Absalom shot him dead.

After visiting the Police Laboratories (the morgue) to identify Arthur's body, the family returns home and talks further. The murder has shocked all the other residents in the suburb of Parkwold. Messages have poured in from the Bishop, the Acting Prime Minister, the Mayor, dozens of other white people, but also from native organizations like the Daughters of Africa, from Jews, coloured people, and Indians. James had not known that his son was so admired in every stratum of society. He learns further that Arthur had learnt to speak Afrikaans fluently, a language he did not have, and also that Arthur was planning to become a parliamentary representative of the black population <sup>1</sup> (Paton 1949: 130). James Jarvis learns a great deal about his son that he did not know before (Paton 1949: 131):

For this boy of his had gone journeying in strange waters, further than his parents had known. Or perhaps his mother knew. But he himself [the father] had never done such journeying, and there was nothing he could say.

James Jarvis will now set off on that journey so that he may understand his son's mind. Even though his search for Arthur is not a physical one, it runs parallel to Stephen Kumalo's search for Absalom. Maxwell Anderson recognised this theme with Ulysses. The search of a father for his son would be translated into the pre-existing odyssey that he already had in the unfinished *Ulysses Africanus* (see chapter 7).

In the third chapter of book two, we find James in his son's house looking at all the papers and books in his study. He finds an entire bookcase devoted to literature about Abraham Lincoln. Another was packed with books about South African politics and wildlife. A third held a collection of Afrikaans literature, a fourth held books on criminology, sociology and religion, and a fifth had novels and poetry and Shakespeare. On the walls there were pictures, among them one depicting Christ's crucifixion and another of Abraham Lincoln. Arthur's papers contain letters to and from various social organisations, including the

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<sup>1</sup> Again Paton portrays himself in one of his characters. The author of *Cry, the Beloved Country* shared some important characteristics with Arthur Jarvis: Paton learnt to speak Afrikaans because he attached great importance to the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek; he had political aspirations and eventually led the Liberal Party under apartheid rule; and he also frequently published articles on 'the native problem' – *The Long View* and *Save the Beloved Country* are collections of such published articles.



Society of Jews and Christians (the same society that played such a big part in the novel's conception), an African Boys' Club, and the Methodist and Anglican Church. James reads one of Arthur's papers citing white complicity for the native problem and he also reads Lincoln's famous Gettysburg address, which he had not known until then. James is now fully engaged in searching for Arthur's mind. It is surprising that Anderson ignored any mention of Lincoln in his adaptation of the novel. It would have been familiar territory for him.

Arthur's funeral reflects his social standing. There are people of every colour and the Bishop speaks of 'a life devoted to South Africa, of intelligence and courage, of love that cast out fear, so that the pride welled up in [James's] heart, pride in the stranger who had been his son (Paton 1949: 138). For the first time in their lives Arthur's parents sit in church with people of another race, and shake hands with them. The night after the funeral the two old white men have another armchair political discussion. Harrison's talk is typical of white South Africans even today – black crime; how it threatens white South Africans; how he can foresee no real solutions; how he treats his own black workers; Harrison even insists dubiously that he is 'not a nigger-hater,' that he gives them 'a square deal, decent wages, and a clean room'; he talks about industry and mines dependant on cheap black labour; how everything would collapse if blacks were paid more; he even starts an invective against the Afrikaner hope to withdraw from the Commonwealth and create a Republic in South Africa (Paton 1949: 140). His talk throughout is of *them*, the *other*, the *black danger*, the Afrikaners. But something has changed inside James Jarvis. He dismisses himself from the discussion, says that he wishes Arthur were there to argue the point properly with Harrison, and goes to bed.

The day after the funeral James finally reads Arthur's paper on 'The Truth About Native Crime.' It moves him deeply because it challenges his Christian beliefs. Edward Callan has noted that many readers of *Cry, the Beloved Country* valued the book precisely 'for its challenge to their own sterile Christianity' (Callan 1968: 22). The argument in brief runs like this: 'We believe in the brotherhood of man, but we do not want it in South Africa' (Paton 1949: 144). Paton also criticizes the doctrine of churches like the *Nederduits Gerformeerde Kerk* which argued that God created black men subservient, giving 'Divine Approval to any human action that is designed to keep black men

from advancement' (Paton 1949: 144). In the hands of these religious apologists for racial discrimination 'our God becomes a confused and inconsistent creature.' Paton (Arthur Jarvis) clearly blames the oppression of black people on complacent white people. They ignore their Christian duty and the call of their God. Maxwell Anderson would invert this sentiment in *Lost in the Stars* and portray a God who ignores his people.

All of the above plot from book two of *Cry, the Beloved Country* is absent from *Lost in the Stars*. Anderson ignored the mirror construct in Paton's book – there is also a white father looking to understand his estranged white son. The relationship between Arthur and James is an important one and it could have been incorporated more thoroughly into *Lost in the Stars*. Perhaps the playwright was more interested in the Kumalo story because his own father had been a clergyman too.

**Act II scene 1** begins with a chorus called 'The Wild Justice'. A leader sings most of the lyrics while being supported by a humming choir that also echoes some of his words. Kurt Weill's musical setting is another fine example of dramatic music for Broadway, but it flounders because of Maxwell Anderson's pedestrian poetry (Anderson 1951: 61):

Have you fished for a fixed star  
With the lines of its light?  
Have you dipped the moon from the sea  
With a cup of night?  
Have you caught the rain's bow in a pool  
And shut it in?  
Go hunt the wild justice down  
To walk with men.

Further on in the poem Anderson rails against the death penalty: he finds it unjust because 'when the books are balanced' and a murderer receives this penalty, then two are dead, instead of one. The author is already anticipating a capital punishment even though Absalom has not even been tried yet.

After the chorus **scene 1** continues with composite events taken from two different chapters of the novel. First, Stephen and his brother John meet again in John's tobacco shop. They discuss the testimonies of their sons.

Absalom is adamant to plead guilty and not to lie anymore while Matthew and his friend Johannes plan to deny the charges laid against them. John then urges that Absalom should do the same. 'He doesn't want to die – and you don't want him to die. If you want him to live, tell him to plead not guilty' (Anderson 1951: 64). When John leaves the stage Stephen sings 'The Soliloquy,' an aria wherein he asks for Tixo's help, but his plea is not answered. The two men have a similar conversation in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, but in the novel John Kumalo does not care at all what happens to Absalom, as long as his own son is protected.

(The rest of scene 1 will be discussed in conjunction with the relevant chapter from the novel).

We move to Court where Absalom Kumalo, Matthew Kumalo, and Johannes Pafuri are tried for the murder of Arthur Jarvis. Paton spends a page of lyrical prose describing the traditions and procedure of the court<sup>1</sup>. Absalom pleads guilty without intent to kill (culpable homicide), while the other two accused plead not guilty. Through Absalom's testimony we learn that the three accused had broken into Arthur Jarvis's home in Parkwold, Johannesburg on Tuesday 8 October 1946. They had hoped that nobody would be home at half past one in the afternoon, but instead they came across both the house servant and master. The servant found them first and shouted to alert Arthur. He was then struck over the head with an iron bar by Johannes Pafuri, the third accused. Arthur then came into the passage where these men were. Absalom, who had a revolver in his hand all the time, got frightened and shot Arthur dead. The three black men fled the scene immediately. They separated only to meet later that night at the home of Baby Mkize to discuss further plans. Absalom then left them to bury the murder weapon at a plantation. On the second day after the murder he left Johannesburg and went to hide in Germiston for fear of being discovered. But the police would find him there, and it was then that he confessed to shooting Arthur Jarvis and also identified his two accomplices. Absalom insists that there is no lie in his claims, 'I shall not lie any more, all the rest of my days, nor do anything more that is evil' (Paton 1949: 154). Absalom repents his actions now and throughout the rest of the book. At the reformatory

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<sup>1</sup> Paton would have had practical experience of many court cases trying the crimes of black delinquents in his capacity as principal of Diepkloof Reformatory.

Absalom had already had the chance to mend his ways but had not done so. His fate is ineluctable.

When the court adjourns, Paton takes to Stephen Kumalo again (Paton 1949: 155):

And Kumalo looks and sees that it is true, there is the father of the man who was murdered, the man who was murdered, the man who has the farm on the tops above Ndotsheni, the man he has seen riding past the church. And Kumalo trembles, and does not look at him any more. For how does one look at such a man?

Chapter six departs from the main plot. It is another didactic chapter. This time Paton describes a gold rush at Odendaalsrust in the Orange Free State. Paton describes his worry that another city as big as Johannesburg could grow there because of the overpowering economic forces that drive a gold rush: 'No second Johannesburg is needed upon the earth. One is enough' (Paton 1949: 159). The mines would bring vast moneys into the hands of white businessmen and white shareholders, but they would once again deprive the black workers who stream into compounds and work the mines. In the way that South African mines have been made to operate they can only *break the tribe*. Anderson made brief use of Odendaalsrust in his adaptation; in *Lost in the Stars* the reason that Absalom kills Arthur Jarvis is because he wants to steal money that can help him travel to Odendaalsrust where, because of the gold rush, he might make a better life for himself as a free man, away from the labour gangs.

The next chapter of the novel also has a didactic purpose, but Paton achieves it through the main plot. James Jarvis decides to visit the house of his dead son once again and he reads another one of Arthur's articles, called 'Private Essay on the Evolution of a South African'. In this essay Arthur Jarvis criticizes his parents for teaching him nothing of the realities of South Africa. James is upset when he reads this but he presses on nevertheless. He reads that his son wished to devote all of his time and energy and talents to the betterment of South Africa: 'I shall do this, not because I am noble or unselfish, but because life slips away, and because I need for the rest of my journey a star that will not play false to me, a compass that will not lie' (Paton 1949: 161).

Maxwell Anderson took special note of this sentence. The imagery of stars was very dear to him and we find it throughout his plays (as will be shown later). And the mention of a compass would only stir his memories of the lost slave in *Ulysses Africanus*. But there is more – one sentence further Arthur explains his refusal to ignore morality for expedience: ‘I am lost when I balance this against that, I am lost when I ask if this is safe, I am lost when I ask if men, white men or black men, Englishmen or Afrikaners, Gentiles or Jews, will approve’ (Paton 1949: 162). Arthur Jarvis is *lost* in the *stars*.

Chapter eight of book two concerns a moving episode where the fathers of the two doomed sons meet coincidentally. James Jarvis and his wife go to Springs to visit with their niece. When the women decide to go into town James is left alone at his niece’s house. He soon finds an *umfundisi* knocking at the kitchen door but he does not notice that this is the *umfundisi* from the parish at Ndotsheni close to his own farm. Kumalo recognizes Jarvis, but is shaken for not having anticipated this unexpected meeting. He even sits down on a step to recover from the shock. When – eventually he recovers, Kumalo reveals the purpose of his visit. He has come in search of a woman originally from Ndotsheni, the daughter of one Sibeko. (When he first left Ndotsheni Kumalo had promised Sibeko to go looking for his daughter. Jarvis’s niece had taken this girl long with her when she moved from Ndotsheni to Springs.)

Jarvis knows nothing of Sibeko’s daughter but he now recognizes the *umfundisi*. Kumalo’s face fills with suffering at the thought of the murder, and at Jarvis not knowing that it was his son who had murdered Arthur. But the white man insists to know what the matter is with Kumalo, insists that the telling of it will lighten Kumalo. The parson answers that ‘this thing that is the heaviest thing of all my years, is the heaviest thing of all your years also,’ and he then confesses, ‘It was my son that killed your son’ (Paton 1949: 166, 167). Jarvis does not react with anger. Though he is shocked by the discovery he understands and calmly accepts Kumalo’s condolences on the death of his son. When the two women return from town Jarvis takes it upon himself to enquire after Sibeko’s daughter. But his niece does not know where she is anymore. The young girl had been arrested for brewing liquor in her room and not been allowed back thereafter. So yet another one of Kumalo’s searches for the lost

sheep in his flock fails. He leaves, and the two old men greet in the customary Zulu manner – Go well, *umfundisi*, and Stay well, *umnumzana*.

This meeting between the two protagonists takes place in **Act II scene 1** of *Lost in the Stars*, after Stephen sings his ‘Soliloquy’. Anderson moved its location from Springs to Johannesburg, at the Jarvis home. It is not coincidental in the adaptation, which is more credible seeing as the plot of *Cry, the Beloved Country* relies on far too many chance encounters between the same set of characters. Unfortunately Anderson twists the nature of the scene. What was mutual compassion and empathy in the novel now becomes an ugly confrontation between a black man and a white man. Kumalo is there expressly to ask that Jarvis might intercede for Absalom, seeing as he did not mean to kill. Jarvis refuses bluntly and wants Absalom to pay with his life for the one that he took. His language turns racist, steering the character in a direction quite different from what Paton had intended.

Umfundisi, there are two races in South Africa. One is capable of mastery and self-control – the other is not. One is born to govern, the other to be governed. One is capable of culture and the arts of civilisation – the other is not. The difference between us is greater than that I live on a hill and you live in a valley (Anderson 1951: 69).

**Act two scene 2** takes place in Irina’s hut. She sings ‘Stay Well,’ a text that Anderson wrote to emulate Paton’s recurrent use of greetings like ‘stay well’ and ‘go well’. According to Hesper Anderson (2000: 113), these words had meant a great deal to her family. When her mother (Maxwell’s second wife Mab) committed suicide, Hesper chose ‘STAY WELL’ as the inscription for the headstone (Anderson 2000: 113). Both here and in the story it is a farewell from a girl who stays behind. In *Lost in the Stars* this song was the second solo for Melba Moore. The character of Irina had grown out of all proportion from the one in the novel. Stephen appears in the same scene to tell Irina that Absalom’s trial will begin the next day. They also make arrangements for Irina to marry Absalom.

Chapter 9 of *Cry, the Beloved Country* is didactic again. John Kumalo delivers a speech in public, asking that black workers get a decent share of the

wealth of gold recently discovered. There is talk of a strike. At most this is a rehash of themes discussed in chapter six.

Gertrude and Mrs Lithebe feature once more in the next chapter. Again Mrs Lithebe berates Gertrude for associating with indecent people, ‘those who are ready to laugh and speak carelessly’ (Paton 1949: 176). The old woman feels Gertrude has behaved in stark contrast with the young girl who is pregnant with Absalom’s child, who ‘desires to please the *umfundisi*. And indeed it should be so, for she receives from him what her own father denied her’ (Paton 1949: 177). Later that night, at a church meeting with the others in the household, Gertrude hears a young black woman speak to the congregation of her desire to become a nun, ‘how God had taken from her that desire which is in the nature of women’ (Paton 1949: 178). Gertrude now imagines that she should become a nun as well. But when the time finally comes for commitment Gertrude runs away, presumably to take up her old ways. Again the episode is extraneous to the main plot. All we have is a negative representation of black women in a dichotomy of saint or slut.

The case against Absalom concludes with a guilty verdict in court; he is sentenced to death by hanging. Matthew Kumalo and Johannes Pafuri are found not guilty because the arguments against them were not conclusive; they are free to go.

Instead of spreading its appearance out as Paton did, Anderson incorporates the entire court case into one scene. Apart from that, **scene 3** does not deviate from the novel. Absalom is sentenced to hang because he is prepared to admit his guilt, while Matthew and Johannes, who deny any involvement in the murder, go free because their guilt cannot be proved by the evidence given in court.

**Act 2 scene 4** is linked to the previous scene with music. The setting is a prison cell and the lights come up on a chorus that sings ‘Cry, the Beloved Country’. The playwright incorporates original text from the novel which Weill then set to music. Stephen performs the wedding rites for Absalom and Irina. After that father and son must say goodbye to one another for the last time. Absalom will be sent to a prison in Pretoria to be hanged there. ‘Where I go there will be no wife or child or father or mother! There is no food taken or given! And no marriage! Where I go! O *Tixo, Tixo!* (Anderson 1951: 82).

At the end of book two in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, the Kumalo family goes to visit Absalom in jail. Arrangements have been made for him to marry his pregnant girlfriend in jail. Father Vincent performs the ceremony in the prison chapel. Absalom breaks down when talk comes of his impending death sentence. He will soon leave for a prison in Pretoria where his hanging will eventually be carried out. Stephen has to leave Absalom behind but promises to look after his wife and child in Ndotsheni. He also goes to greet his brother John before he sets off to complete his journey (odyssey) back home. Interestingly Paton inserts a page of James Jarvis's story at this point – he departs back to Ndotsheni that very day, but not before he leaves a gift of a thousand pounds to fund the administration of an African Boys' Club that Arthur had been involved with before his death.

All the threads of the plot concerning Johannesburg and the characters that stay behind there must come to an end. Msimangu announces his retirement into an ascetic religious community. He seems to have made some peace with the quarrels raging inside him, his dark night of the soul: 'I am a weak and sinful man,' he says, 'but God has put His hands on me' (Paton 1949:197). It might be noted at this point that Maxwell Anderson eliminated Msimangu's character completely when he translated Paton's novel into *Lost in the Stars*. Why would he eliminate this one character that identified so strongly with his own religious anxieties? Obviously he did not like the final resolution of that character's arch. After all, when Msimangu asks Kumalo to pray for him in this new venture Kumalo answers, '[...] may God watch over you always.' When they rise the next morning to leave for Natal they find that Gertrude has stolen away in the night, and that she has left her boy in their care.

### **BOOK THREE**

The denouement of *Cry, the Beloved Country* is some fifty pages long. That length is unusual in such a short book, but effective nevertheless. If book one concerns Stephen Kumalo's physical search for his doomed son, and book two has to do with James Jarvis's intellectual and emotional search for his dead son, then book three involves the two older men finding one another. Both odysseys have been circular, leading them back to Ndotsheni where they



began. The task now is the thing that Paton says is not 'done lightly' in South Africa – a white man and a black man must embrace one another, for their own sake and for the good future of their country.

Jarvis left for Natal by train the previous day. Kumalo and his entourage do the same now. We return from the moral destruction of the city to the barren suffering of the countryside. 'It is a wasted land, a land of old men and women and children, but it is home' (Paton 1949: 203). When they reach Ixopo on the last leg of their journey some of the locals start recognizing Kumalo. He dreads their questions and is ashamed to relay the truth of his search, that Gertrude and Absalom were found but not saved. Instead of Gertrude or Absalom he has brought home a pregnant daughter-in-law and a grandson. At Ndotsheni some louder members of the community call out the return of the *umfundisi* to all in the village. Then Paton introduces rain as a figure of literary remembrance: Jarvis was searching the October sky for rain at the start of book two; and Kumalo sees at the start of book three that his people still 'cry for rain' (Paton 1949: 203). Their own streams are dry, so they must now use a river that belongs to the Jarvis farm. This rain motif will recur again before the plot runs out. When Kumalo finally approaches his church there is a crowd waiting for him. They break into a song which Paton describes in musically questionable terms, but which more importantly presents a view of the divine that would be alien to *Lost in the Stars*:

[...] one breaks into a hymn, with a high note that cannot be sustained; but others come in underneath it, and support and sustain it, and some men come in too, with the deep notes and the true [...] It is a hymn of thanksgiving, and man remembers God in it, and prostrates himself and gives thanks for the everlasting mercy (Paton 1949: 204, 205).

Kumalo then prays to *Tixo* asking for rain, for the blessing of the newly arrived, and for the forgiveness of Absalom the murderer. Paton ends the episode by reminding the reader of 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika'.

Yes, God save Africa, the beloved country. God save us from the deep depths of our sins. God save us from the fear that is afraid of justice. God save us from the fear that is afraid of men. God save us all.

The language has a powerful effect. It is important to the story and is an accurate indicator of South African culture, of the irony that God was invoked by white and black sides of the struggle, by both the perpetrators and the victims. Maxwell Anderson's absent God exists, but ignores both sides. He also ignores the protagonist of *Lost in the Stars* at this very junction in the plot. Anderson's Kumalo thinks to abandon his calling at Ndotsheni because of an irresolvable religious crisis, his own dark night of the soul. Alan Paton's Kumalo contemplates it because he is ashamed to be the father of a murderer and the brother of a prostitute (Paton 1949: 207). The difference is paramount.

In chapter two of book three, Paton discusses the restoration of Ndotsheni which ultimately reads as the restoration of *the broken tribe*. The uplift he describes is that of a black agricultural society. A return to tribal roots could heal 'the disastrous effect of a great and wicked city on the character of a simple tribal [people]' (Paton 1949: 183).

Kumalo approaches the chief of the tribe and the headmaster of the school and petitions them to try and keep more black people in the valley 'by caring for the land before it is too late' (Paton 1949: 211). He proposes an educational campaign in conjunction with the white school inspector and the white magistrate. The drought is an incessant force biting at their heels and Ndotsheni will need the miracle of rain to overcome it. Kumalo remembers the mission at Ezenzeleni and the hope restored to him there. He prays constantly: 'Into thy hands O God, I commend Ndotsheni' (Paton 1949: 214).

Kumalo returns home after his petitions, where he unexpectedly meets the grandson of James Jarvis. The boy has been riding on horseback and stops to talk to the *umfundisi*. In the conversation it comes out that the black children of the village, some of them dying, have a drastic need for milk and water. Jarvis hears of it and delivers a steady flow of milk to those in need. This is the catalyst for Jarvis's further involvement in the betterment of the black village. He has never been involved before and this uncharacteristic behaviour is a clear result of his newfound sympathy with the ideals of his dead son.

Chapter three brings news that there will be no mercy granted to Absalom by the governor-general. The first possibility of rain appears when clouds gather in the sky. Jarvis comes into the valley to meet with the

magistrate and the chief to make plans for the building of a dam. The storm intensifies and finally it rains. Jarvis needs shelter from the rain and asks Kumalo if he may use his church. The two men sit there together in silence under a leaking iron roof in what is one of the novel's most effective scenes. The rain obviously relieves the drought, but it also has the metaphorical function of washing away all the hindrances – social barriers, the murder – that should have kept these men apart. Jarvis learns that there is no mercy for Absalom so that the two men now share an understanding in the mutual fates of their sons. The two men have found each other.

The next chapter sees the arrival of an agricultural trainer at the church. Jarvis has sought him out and sent him on to the village to teach them better and modern farming methods. If all goes well the valley will be restored to its proper condition and the tribe will recover.

Together with the Bishop of Pietermaritzburg, Kumalo leads a service of confirmation for young girls and boys in his parish. It shows a renewed strengthening of Christian faith that runs parallel with the promise of more rain to come. Yet there is bad news: Mrs Jarvis, the farmer's wife, has died. Kumalo sends a note of condolence to Jarvis, grieving for the death of his wife. He adds, 'We are certain also that she knew of the things you have done for us, and did something in it' (Paton 1949: 235). When they are alone, the Bishop also suggests to Kumalo that he should leave his see at Ndotsheni, in lieu of the homicide that now links Stephen with his neighbour, James Jarvis. The bishop is unaware that these two men are reconciled to their fate and have become good neighbours, that they don't need a mending wall between them. Kumalo is too humble to contradict his superior and it is only when a note of thanks arrives back from Jarvis that the bishop learns the truth. In the note Jarvis writes that his wife 'had the greatest part' in all the kindnesses recently bestowed on the black community. 'These things we did in memory of our beloved son' (Paton 1949: 239). He also tells of one of her last wishes: she wanted a new church to be built for Kumalo and his parish. Both Kumalo and the bishop read this note with astonishment. Stephen then explains all the restitutions that the white farmer has made to Ndotsheni. 'It is one of the most extraordinary things that I have ever heard,' the Bishop says (Paton 1949: 240). He understands that the murder is no reason to take Kumalo away from his parish, but still has one

concern. He attaches some shame to Stephen's new daughter-in-law who will have to raise a child without its father. At first Stephen had felt that shame too though he quickly abandoned it.

– We have prayed openly before the people, my lord. What more could be done than that?

– It was the way it was done in the 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 (Paton 1949: 240).

When the Bishop leaves, Stephen looks out over the valley of the Umzimkulu and feels an intimation of the divine: *Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people; these things will I do unto you, and not forsake you* (Paton 1949: 240).

Once more, the second last chapter focuses on the agricultural uplift of the valley. Paton describes specific techniques and describes what they will yield with time. If *Cry, the Beloved Country* is 'a story of comfort in desolation' as its subtitle proposes then that is the point of all this emphasis on the physical restoration of the landscape. With the renewal of their environment the suffering people of Ndotsheni are strengthened, and the novel's two protagonists (Stephen Kumalo and James Jarvis) are comforted. With Maxwell Anderson's reading of the novel in mind, we should perhaps also note that the last scene in this chapter has Kumalo standing 'for a moment in the dark, where the stars were coming out over the valley that was to be restored' (Paton 1949: 246).

Anderson jettisoned most of book three from the plot for *Lost in the Stars*. **Act two scene 5** follows directly after the chorus has sung 'Cry, the Beloved Country'. At this point the playwright decided to introduce a frivolous musical number into the story. 'Big Mole' was a respite 'between the heartbreak of the choral 'Cry, the Beloved Country' and the quiet sadness of the ending' (Anderson 2000: 17). It was written to be sung by Stephen's grandson Alex. While he sings it James Jarvis's grandson Edward enters the stage. Throughout the scene Anderson transfers the bond that Paton created between Kumalo and the Jarvis grandson to one that is formed between Alex and Edward. Similar to the novel, the two boys also talk about Zulu vocabulary and they discuss the need for milk in the village (Anderson 1951: 86, 87).

Jarvis sees the boys talking and is angry at his grandson for talking to black child. He then admits defeat:

I have lost so much that I don't know why I go on living, or what's worth saving. I don't know anymore why any man should do his tasks or work for gain or love his child. I don't know why any child should obey – or whether good will come of it or evil. But I do know this; there are some things that I cannot bear to look on (Anderson 1951: 88).

In the same scene Kumalo decides to give up his post at Ndotsheni, though for a different reason than in the novel. In *Cry, the Beloved Country* he is ashamed that his son is a murderer and feels responsible for it. The tribe is broken and Absalom, even though he is the perpetrator of a terrible crime, is also victim to that destruction. Stephen feels unfit now to lead his congregation when he could not even prevent his own child's downfall. He confesses as much in *Lost in the Stars*, but mainly he wants to stop preaching because he no longer believes in God. 'I am not sure of my faith. I am lost. I am not sure now. I am not sure that we are not all lost. And a leader should not be lost. He should know the way, and so I resign my place' (Anderson 1951: 94). The chorus then sings the hymn-like 'A Bird of Passage'. Stephen believes that the parish will be better off without him. They had turned to Jarvis for financial assistance before. Now the priest believes, because of the murder, Jarvis would refuse to help them as long as Stephen stayed on there. Anderson approaches the character differently than Paton did. In *Cry, the Beloved Country* one can argue that Arthur's murder shakes his father out of his complacency and inspires a new liberal generosity in the old man.

Chapter seven of book three is the last in the novel. It has Stephen going up into the mountain above Ndotsheni the night before Absalom is executed. He goes alone, because his wife decides to stay with the pregnant girl whose term is nearing its end. **Act two scene 6** differs from its source in the novel. In *Cry, the Beloved Country* Kumalo meets Jarvis while climbing the mountain. The old white man is on horseback and only speaks haltingly to the priest. The burdens of custom still prevent the two men from communicating openly. Nonetheless Paton achieves a strong effect by what remains unsaid between the two men.

We understand that they share a mutual grief, that very soon both their sons will be dead. In *Lost in the Stars* Jarvis comes to Kumalo's house and tries to convince the priest to stay on at Ndotsheni. He had stood outside the church on the previous day and overheard Kumalo's resignation. He now pledges to help with anything the church might need materially, to 'do whatever my son would have done' (Anderson 1951: 92).

In the musical Jarvis sits with Kumalo to wait out the time at which Absalom will be hanged. Eventually the two men even embrace one another. Jarvis's attitudes toward black people have changes drastically, and much quicker than in the novel. Again, he urges Kumalo to continue preaching in Ndotsheni but Kumalo is unsure.

If I stayed, do you know what I would preach here? That good can come from evil, and evil from good! That no man knows surely what is evil or what is good! That if there is a God He is hidden and has not spoken to men! That we are all lost here, black and white, rich and poor, the fools and the wise! Lost and hopeless and condemned on this rock that goes 'round the sun without meaning (Anderson 1951: 94).

This metaphor that was so important to Maxwell Anderson, it misses the hope that swells at the end of *Cry, the Beloved Country*. At the end of the novel Kumalo sits alone on a mountaintop watching the sunrise:

For it is the dawn that has come, as it has come for a thousand centuries, never failing. But when that dawn will come, of our emancipation, from the fear of bondage and the bondage of fear, why, that is a secret (Paton 1949: 253).

*Cry, the Beloved Country* was meant as *a story of comfort in desolation*, a phrase that we find in the novel's subtitle<sup>1</sup>. 'It is quite true that Stephen Kumalo, when he learned that his son had killed a man, suffered a sense of God's desolation,' Paton admitted. But he then qualified it by insisting that it was not the overall theme of his book (Paton 1988: 20, 21). In comparing *Lost in the Stars* with *Cry, the Beloved Country* we have already seen the many instances

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<sup>1</sup> The full title of the novel is *Cry, the Beloved Country: A Story of Comfort in Desolation* (Paton 1949: 3).

where Anderson had to adapt the tone and plot of the original story because his theme of divine abandonment conflicted so severely with Paton's sense of religious hope. So why would Anderson choose specifically to adapt *Cry, the Beloved Country* if it would mean such a radical departure from the original?

The very first letter that Maxwell Anderson wrote to Alan Paton gives us our first clue, a warning that Paton missed – one that, at least in retrospect, seems a clear indication of where Anderson wanted to steer the project (Avery 1977: 222):

It would be our task – as we see it – to translate into stage form, without dulling its edge or losing its poetry, this extraordinarily moving tale of lost men clinging to odds and ends of faith in the darkness of our modern earth. For the breaking of the tribe is only a symbol of the breaking of all tribes and all the old ways and beliefs.

The probable reason that he and Weill chose to depict 'the breaking of all tribes', instead of Paton's specifically South African 'tribe', is because they had little knowledge of it. Their understanding of South Africa – its politics and the layers of its society – was limited entirely to what they had read in *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

## 7 WHY SO LOST?

There is a theme of loss that runs like a thread through Maxwell Anderson's plays. The more specific idea of loss 'in the stars' appeared many times before Anderson used it for *Lost in the Stars*. To his mind, Paton's novel was the perfect vehicle for articulating an idea that had intrigued him for decades: that god had for some reason abandoned his duty to care for men. It insulted Alan Paton's faith. The very literal idea of 'The Shepherd' abandoning his flock flies in the face of an ever-present literal Christianity that pervades institutions of home, school and state in South Africa to this very day.

Even now our discourse on god is fraught with dialectic opposites. There is little room for people to question their gods, and even when some do they carry a particular scorn reserved for atheists. We have a culture where one may either believe in an almighty, benevolent and blameless god, or else one may believe that god does not exist. Maxwell Anderson used a totally different approach. He took the idea of a broken promise from the garden at Eden and turned the doctrine of original sin on its head. God was now to blame for breaking an original pledge and god was the one who left paradise behind. Instead of denying or doubting god he chose to write, time and again, of a god who has gone away and abandoned his post to roam the stars freely.

The idea of divine apathy was not new. Matthew Arnold heard a melancholy, long, withdrawing roar at *Dover Beach* in 1867, the sea of faith retreating, 'to the breath of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear and naked shingles of the world' (Simpson 1972: 221). And though Nietzsche is universally known for the *death of God*, he also transmitted the idea of a God who had run away or emigrated. In *Also sprach Zarathustra* this God is implored to return: 'No! come back, with all your torments! Oh come back to the last of all solitaires! [...] Oh come back my unknown God!' (Armstrong 1993: 420). It is also intrinsic to the Old Testament book of *Job*.

Perhaps because Anderson always wrote about this god who had gone away his daughter Hesper could claim that none of their immediate circle of family and friends 'believed his avowals of atheism' (Anderson 2000: 206). Instead she wrote that, 'In his plays, one of the main themes was the struggle



between faith and the lack of it, or the struggle to reclaim a bit of faith after the loss of it.' In other words it was a quarrel in which he never chose sides. Yet she chooses his plays as an indicator of his personal beliefs. Perhaps to avoid any confusion of metaphor and licence in understanding Anderson's (dis)belief, we should begin with a statement not quoted from a play or poem.

When the Carnegie Institute invited Maxwell Anderson to deliver its Founder's Day Address in 1937, the playwright chose to speak out in public on what he believed. *Whatever Hope We Have* was the title of his lecture, a piece published later in his collection of essays, *The Essence of Tragedy*. It tries to define 'the artist's faith', examines 'the artist's place in his universe' and posits theatre as a temple of democracy (Anderson 1939: 18, 19).

The human race, some two billion strong, finds itself embarked on a curious voyage among the stars, riding a planet which must have set out from somewhere, and must be going somewhere, but which was cut adrift so long ago that its origin is a matter of speculation and its future beyond prophecy [...] Some men speak of gods that govern our destinies, but no one of them has had proof of his inspiration or of the existence of a god.

The human race is 'riding a planet' which has been 'cut adrift'. It is little different from the 'rock that goes round the sun without meaning' mentioned at the end of *Lost in the Stars*. In his essay Anderson sketches out a graphic picture of doubt with language that avoids the kind of metaphor found in some other plays such as *High Tor* (1936).

For this story Anderson reworked the legend of *The Flying Dutchman* so that a ghostly Dutch Crew appears one night on a mountain called High Tor. (It is an actual mountain. Both Anderson and Weill lived on South Mountain Road in New City, near the Tor.) In the play, the Dutchman's crew is *lost* because 'the great master devil sits on top of the world stirring up north and south with a long spoon to confuse [the] poor mariners' (Anderson 1937: 56). There are references throughout the play to the crew being *lost* because it cannot navigate properly by the *stars* anymore. Also, the play's action starts at sunset and ends the following morning. When dawn comes and 'points with one purple finger at a star to put it out,' the ghost ship and crew disappear again; because of the daylight they are now lost in, or with, the stars. (Anderson 1937: 81).

Another example of metaphor comes in the middle of Anderson's *Joan of Lorraine* (1946) when the character Jimmy Masters answers the question of another character in the play: 'Why can't a fellow just live by common-sense, without faith, dreams or religion?' Masters answers that the universe is presented as 'a totally dark room measuring two billion light-years across – and with walls that shift away from you as you go toward them' (Anderson 1947: 82, 83). There is need for a 'flashlight' in this uncertain terrain: 'The flash can show you where your feet are on the floor; it can show you the furniture or the people close by; but as for which direction you should take in that endless room it can tell you nothing.' It is a metaphor for being lost in the stars<sup>1</sup>. The many instances in which Anderson uses this imagery confirm a literal truth that Anderson felt abandoned by god. What does his obsession with abandonment and loss indicate? In short: Why was Maxwell Anderson so lost in the stars?

To begin with an answer we may return to Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History*. Toynbee's work is supposed to have inspired the creation of *Lost in the Stars*. Just how much of it Anderson ever read is unclear, but it can be no accident that the first chapter of the first volume begins with a quotation of Xenophanes that Anderson the 'atheist' would enjoyed (Toynbee 1945: 1).

The Aetiopians say that their Gods are snub-nosed and black-skinned and the Thracians that theirs are blue-eyed and red-haired. If only oxen and horses had hands and wanted to draw with their hands or to make the works of art that men make, then horses would draw the figures of their Gods like horses, and oxen like oxen, and would make their bodies on the models of their own.

It is a simple maxim that men have created gods in their own image and not necessarily the other way around. But for that matter the god that *Lost in the Stars* presents us with is cast in the hellfire and brimstone of Anderson's evangelical Baptist childhood.

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<sup>1</sup> Two other notable plays in which Anderson refers to a (dis)belief in god are *Both Your Houses* (1933) and *Key Largo* (1939). In the former a character compares himself to Jacob wrestling with the angel (the angel gets tired of the fight and runs away), while in the latter a soldier fighting in the Spanish civil war looks up at the empty sky and declares that there is no God (Anderson 1935: 774; Jackson 1973: 28).

Perhaps Maxwell Anderson's abandonment anxieties can be traced back to the time when he was left behind after a holiday at his grandmother's farm in Atlantic. Alfred Shivers recounts this incident in his biography of Anderson: someone in the family, probably Maxwell's father, had the idea that Maxwell should remain at the farm with his grandmother and aunt through winter and help to work the land (Shivers 1983: 19). 'Gilda [Maxwell Anderson's third wife] tells us that from this incident dates a certain dreadful, recurring dream of his lasting well into adulthood, in which he always figured as a child being abandoned' (Shivers 1983: 20). The biographer tells us of two later creative works by Anderson that shed light on this period of his life (1902). The first is a novel called *Morning, Winter and Night*, in which Anderson sets out in near pornographic terms the erotic archetype of his ultimate woman. Anderson's madonna is based on a real girl, named Hallie Loomis, whom he met in the time that he spent at his grandmother's farm. In his play *The Star-Wagon* there is a similar female love interest for that story's protagonist, one Hallie Arlington. The play's protagonist, an inventor called Stephen Minch, builds a machine to travel back in time to 'the eastern Ohio of 1902' in order to marry this Hallie who is his lost love (Shivers 1983: 21).

We have already seen one link between the musical tragedy *Lost in the Stars* and the play *The Star-Wagon*: at one point in its evolution Weill and Anderson had actually considered making a spaceship musical about a star ship that travels back in time, a project that would probably have meant setting the already published play of *The Star-Wagon* to music. Even though that adaptation was never realised, some textual signposts still remain to link the two stories, two of which are striking. In some way both stories are about stars (as is clear just from reading their titles), and the protagonists Stephen Kumalo and Stephen Minch share their first name.

Even though Shivers only contemplates the erotic implications of this stressful time in Anderson's life, we can also stop to speculate on the implications it had for his faith. Here was a boy whose father – a preacher – had left one of his own children behind to see to another flock: 'The boxes and crates were packed into the wagon [is this a star-wagon?], his family – including his beloved mother – climbed aboard, and off they drove down the road waving to him. For a time he found solace in the love and friendship of the real teenage

Hallie Loomis, but eventually she would also abandon him when her family moved away' (Anderson 2000: 175). Two archetypes were created at this juncture and Shivers missed one of them; Hallie Loomis may have been the young virgin who comforted a sad boy, but Lincoln Anderson (Maxwell's father) is the man who got away. He left the farm because he had to preach elsewhere and chose to leave his son behind, just like the peripatetic god who leaves men behind and travels through the stars.

To judge from his recurring nightmares, it seems that the author remained fixated on this critical juncture of his childhood throughout the rest of his life. We can see it in his writing as well. He reworked his own loss in many variations through the years. His character Stephen Minch even builds a time machine to set right whatever went wrong in the past. The star-wagon travels back to 1902, which is close enough to the year when Anderson was on his grandmother's farm, 1908. His novel *Morning, Winter and Night* is even set in 1908 itself.

The pastoral scenes in *Cry, the Beloved Country* appealed to this man who harkened back to his own past on a rural farm in Pennsylvania. And the valleys which Paton describes in *Cry, the Beloved Country* are 'valleys of old men and old women [...] The men are away, *the young men and the girls are away* [my italics]' (Paton 1949: 12). Anderson read those words in the very first chapter of *Cry, the Beloved Country* and they corresponded with the theme and variations of his life. How noble Stephen Kumalo must have seemed to him. This father, also a preacher, does not abandon his own son. Instead the eventual purpose of that character's great voyage is a desperate search for his son. He was a better man than the Reverend Lincoln Anderson.

Any anger that Anderson had against his father was manifested in the total rejection of his Baptist faith. At the age of eight young Maxwell refused to be baptised, since he could see no evidence that God even existed (Shivers 1983: 7). Upon his high school graduation Maxwell Anderson rejected his father's proposal that the clergy would be a suitable career choice (Shivers 1983: 29). This ultimately meant a rejection of his father's god. In some part of Anderson's mind his father's god was equated with the frustrations that the young boy had lived through, and that god was now also culpable. Because his father left, god had also left.

If Anderson rejected his father so vehemently, he may very well have balanced that with a deeper affection for his mother. She is the key for us understanding why her son felt lost in the *stars*. Charlotte Perrimela Stephenson gave her name to the two Stephens of *The Star-Wagon* and *Lost in the Stars*. By taking his mother's maiden name for two protagonists that have important links with his own past, the playwright was effectively denying the lineage of his own father. An Anderson is a son of the *andros*, which means a son of a man. A Stephenson is a son of the *stephanos*, which means a son of a garland or a crown. And according to the playwright's biographer Charlotte Stephenson came from 'finer' stock than her husband. He descended from rural American farmers while she descended from mixed Irish and Scottish ancestors (Shivers 1983: 3).

Her son seems to have cherished his mother's Irish ancestry when he chose to emulate the talents of the playwright and poet Sean O'Casey. One interesting title among O'Casey's *oeuvre* is a play called *Plough and the Stars* (1926). The play is named after a flag which depicts the constellation commonly known as Big Dipper, in which seven stars form the outline of a plough in the sky. It was the original banner of the Irish Citizens Army and has subsequently been adopted by many of Ireland's republican movements, such as Sinn Féinn who still use it today.

We have certain proof that Anderson knew the play very well for he kept a copy of it in the cabin where he did all of his own playwriting and where he spent most of his days reading poetry and plays (Shivers 1983: 142). The Irish author inspired Anderson to write poetry and blank verse in his own plays when the rise of naturalism in the theatre was fast turning those devices into an anachronism.

Even if Maxwell Anderson's mother never took the Fenian cause to heart – for we have no evidence either way – her son cherished his mother's lineage. Perhaps as an adult, when reading *Plough and the Stars*, Anderson looked back on the time that he spent on his grandmother's farm. He would have remembered ploughing the land himself all the while longing to return to his half-Irish mother. Retrospectively he could have embraced a Fenian slogan for himself, James Connolly's instruction to plough one's own destiny into the stars.

So every time Anderson slips into his lost-in-the-stars mode we should perhaps bear in mind that, in some way, it reaches back to his childhood stay on his grandmother's farm. Though his biographers have documented that period of his life, and though his wife Gilda has indicated that it affected his dreams into late adulthood, no writer has yet identified its appearance in any of the plays that refer to 'loss' or 'stars'. It deserves further study. Why did this metaphor stay so important to him that he even gave it as the title to one of his works?

The Ulysses myth became a vehicle for the playwright to express his views. Anderson uses it in different ways: to describe a protagonist who sets off on a great voyage (Maxwell); to describe a lover in search of a lost partner (Hallie Loomis); or to describe a god who has abandoned his station in search of newer worlds (Maxwell's father). In *Lost in the Stars* Stephen Kumalo sets off on a great voyage from Ndotsheni to Johannesburg and back again, Irina longs for her 'Trouble Man', and god abandons the earth.

If we are aware of crucial aspects of Maxwell Anderson's biography, then we might be able to understand better than would Alan Paton why certain elements of *Cry, the Beloved Country* appealed more to him than others. Even though Anderson changed so much of the novel when he adapted it into *Lost in the Stars*, we now understand that how he identified (and accentuated) the themes of loss that were important to him. They are not the fabrication that Paton would have us believe.

## 8 CONCLUSION

In any dramatic adaptation of *Cry, the Beloved Country*, aspects of the original would inevitably be lost in translation. This is certainly true of *Lost in the Stars*. Paton's voice had to give way to another man's language and another man's music (Matlaw 1974: 272). We might suggest that Maxwell Anderson identified Stephen Kumalo's struggles with his own. It makes sense that the adaptor's personality, his fears, dreams, ideals, and his cultural environment will influence the original text – something we see most clearly in Maxwell Anderson being 'lost in the stars'. The 'new' author(s) may be grossly unfaithful to what the original author has written, and the original author is almost certainly bound to be disappointed in the adaptation, but there is a mutual sympathy that binds them. Alan Paton, Kurt Weill, and Maxwell Anderson all wanted to tell a story that showed the injustice of racial oppression to the world. *Cry, the Beloved Country/Lost in the Stars* is that story.

Paton loathed *Lost in the Stars* because he and Anderson had a different view of the world. Paton never believed that a Christian should be free from suffering, because Christ suffered: 'And I come to believe that he suffered, not to save us from suffering, but to teach us how to bear suffering. For he knew that there is no life without suffering' (Paton 1949: 208). Anderson did not afford himself that explanation because he rejected Christ as god.

A possible point of criticism is the assumption by the authors of *Lost in the Stars* that there had once been an original contract between man and god. As George Steiner says of a similar device in *The Brothers Karamazov*: 'there is, to be sure, not a shred of evidence that any such ticket [promise] was issued to man in the first place' (Steiner 1997: 160). Similarly, when Stephen sings in 'Lost in the Stars' that 'God stated and promised he'd take special care' it is pure assumption on the author's part.

Apart from religious objections, Paton seems to have had no real problem with *Lost in the Stars*. His son Jonathan has objected that it is severely Americanised, referring to the song 'Who'll Buy' as one of the culturally incongruent additions to the story (Meyburgh 1999). But there were other adaptations of the novel as well: Around the same time Paton received word from Anderson asking to adapt *Cry, the Beloved Country*, Alexander Korda

requested the film rights to the story (Alexander 1995: 221). When he saw the final cut of the film in 1951, starring Canada Lee and Sidney Poitier, Paton was relieved to find it much more to his liking than *Lost in the Stars* (Alexander 1995: 268). Thus he had no objections to Felicia Komai when she asked in 1954 to adapt the novel into a verse play that she called *Cry, the Beloved Country: A Verse Drama* (Callan 1968: 22).

Ironically, we perhaps have a better understanding of *Lost in the Stars* than Alan Paton ever had of it. As author of the original novel he had every right to regard its adaptation as he wanted. But Paton was not a purist like Arthur Miller, who rejected adaptations as ‘diluted beer or perfume sold with the brand name of the manufacturer who makes the original’ (Miller 1996: 217). If he were, he would not have allowed his work to be adapted again. The adaptation of a work from one medium into another is commonplace and legitimate. Operas, oratorios, contemporary musical theatre, and even instrumental programme music frequently adapt from other origins. Adaptation is a type of translation or an answering that can include any manner of forms such as ‘parody, thematic variations, travesty, [or] pastiche’ (Steiner 1997: 22, 23). Seen this way it is a process that has been a shaping force in the history of Western thought and art: “*Odysseys* are legion from Homer to Joyce and Derek Walcott. There have been a dozen *Antigones* this century. Oedipus cast his ever-renewed (reinterpreted) shadow from Sophocles to Freud.’ (Steiner 1997: 23).

Thanks to Maxwell Anderson and Kurt Weill, we now have the *Odyssey* as a subtext to *Cry, the Beloved Country*. The work for *Ulysses Africanus* left an indelible mark on *Lost in the Stars*, and that makes an impressive contribution to a novel whose story is already regarded a classic (Callan 1968: 22). We lose Alan Paton’s prose, but we gain the last music that came from Kurt Weill’s pen. We have the chance, with an informed director, to see the characters come alive on stage where they may inhabit our minds with more realism than they ever could on the printed page.

Whether *Lost in the Stars* will ever become part of the standard repertoire is uncertain. As one Weill biographer kindly put it: ‘overtaken by the realities of a post-apartheid South Africa, Anderson’s beautifully written history lesson might [be] relegated to an example of yesterday’s liberalism’ (Hirsch 2002: 318). Unlike many other musicals it was not shelved for good after its first



Broadway production. After receiving a \$105 000 grant from the Ford Foundation, Julius Rudel conducted a five-week season of contemporary American opera at the New York City Opera (Hirsch 2002: 335). *Lost in the Stars* was one of the ten scores Rudel selected for his festival. Other noteworthy revivals were as follows: At the Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts in Washington (1972); at the Boston Lyric Opera (1992); a version performed in German at the Nürnberg Opernhaus (1961); and finally a South African production at the Roodepoort City Opera (1998). *Lost in the Stars* even made its way to American television screens when Ely Landau released a motion picture version of it as part of his *American Film Theatre Collection* (Landau 1973). It remains a seminal work in the development of American opera and musical theatre.

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