HOW BELOVED IS ALAN PATON'S BELOVED COUNTRY?

A HISTORICAL APPRAISAL

by

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Table of contents

Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
APC	Alan Paton Centre
IWR	Industrial Workers of the World
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
TUC	Trade Union Congress
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
WASP	White Anglo-Saxon Protestant

List of Figures

Abstract

This research focuses on Alan Paton's 1948 novel *Cry the Beloved Country.* As one of South Africa's most renowned writers, Paton had the courage to write a novel about the plight of South Africans during a critical period of the country's history on the eve of Apartheid. Through the tale of the two main protagonists, Stephen Kumalo and James Jarvis, the reader is drawn into a mid-twentieth century South Africa in which Paton illustrates (albeit through a paternalistic perspective) the racial tensions, ethnic conflicts and socio-economic situations that impacted both white and black people on the eve of Apartheid. When *Cry, the Beloved Country* was originally published in 1948 there was an immediate hype surrounding the novel in the United States of America, Britain and South Africa, as seen in international and local newspapers. This study therefore aims to analyse the various receptions of the book in each country. It will also provide evidence that Paton can be described as a literary activist, despite being a fictional novelist. His novel formed part of the arsenal of the 'war of words' against South Africa's segregationist policies.

Keywords: Alan Paton. *Cry, the Beloved Country,* Historical Appraisal, Reception, Newspapers.

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This is dedicated to all those who believed in me. My mother, father, brother, partner and supervisor. Most of all, this is dedicated to my aunt and uncle, who can no longer share this joy with me.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> Cry, the beloved country, for the unborn child that's 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 if he gives too much.[1]

Alan Paton: the story that lies behind this unassuming name tells the tale of an exceptional man who can be likened to the myriad of colours, shapes and dimensions of a kaleidoscope. If we are to look closely at the life of Alan Paton we would discover that within him lived many different people. He was first and foremost an educator. Secondly he was a literary artist who found inspiration within writing poetry and fictional novels. Thirdly it was through his passion for writing that Alan Paton found himself in a position to speak out against injustices against humanity. In particular, he challenged forms of discrimination that were so prevalent from the early to mid-twentieth century South Africa.

This study focuses on the world renowned author, Alan Paton, and the reception that his 1948 novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* had, not only in South Africa, but also in other parts of the world. Even though first and foremost a fictional novelist, Alan Paton can also be regarded as a social historian in his own right. His experiences and reactions to South African society in the early to mid-twentieth century resulted in the writing of *Cry, the Beloved Country.* His perceptions arising from such experiences manifested in the many themes within the novel. These themes would be dominated by discussions concerning the period of segregation in South Africa. They also foreshadowed the immense evil that would follow. Some of these themes were also

[1] A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, p. 13.
It must be noted that there are multiple publications of *Cry, the Beloved Country.* This study will make use of the following version: A. Paton *Cry, the Beloved Country,* Penguin, New York, 2003.

experienced across the world and subsequently allowed for a form of resonance within other societies.

Two questions arise regarding the popular reception of Paton's novel: "how" was Paton elevated to these great heights and secondly, "why". The cultural debates concerning readership during the 1930s and 1940s exposes an intellectual field, which according to C. Sandwith, was "divided between the Romantic-individualist and socially oriented constructions of art, the latter reflecting, in part, the politics of cautious liberal-humanism.[2] At this particular moment, the champions of liberal-humanism still faced considerable opposition from those hankering for the benevolent orderings of a pre-capitalist society".[3] This, essentially implied that novels during the mid-twentieth century overwhelmingly tended to "choose" sides. *Trek,* a South African publication, in 1950 uses the example of the South African author, Olive Schreiner, which illustrates this point. According to this article Schreiner's "temper, and her biased, even angry, attitude has a harmful effect on her work. She hated bigotry but did not have sufficient experience in writing literary restraint and thus obtain objectivity".[4] Therefore, in overtly mixing the aesthetic of the novel with the moral compass of the author, these writers fail to attain universality and the "enduring prestige of world appreciation".[5] On the other hand, *Cry, the Beloved Country* attests to the power of universality. It did achieve world appreciation because Paton's message does not come from a particular political ideology. Its themes are not localised to the extent that they would seem foreign to an international audience, rather, they stem from a broad moral attitude to life that was relatable to all liberal audiences.[6] This consequently made this novel universally acceptable.

During mid-twentieth century South Africa, we find two congruent histories unfolding, that of white and black South Africa. This is introduced right from the beginning in the novel with a juxtapositioning of two landscapes, the one being an image of lush hills,

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[2] C. Sandwith, *World of Letters, Reading Communities and Cultural Debates in Early Apartheid South Africa,* p. 41.
[3] C. Sandwith, *World of Letters, Reading Communities and Cultural Debates in Early Apartheid South Africa,* p. 41.
[4] *Trek,* September 1950, p. 16.
[5] C. Sandwith, *World of Letters, Reading Communities and Cultural Debates in Early Apartheid South Africa,* p. 43.
[6] C. Sandwith, *World of Letters, Reading Communities and Cultural Debates in Early Apartheid South Africa,* p. 43-44.

representing the history of black South Africa, and a sterile valley, representing White orchestrated urbanisation.[7] These contrasting imageries also metaphorically represent a racial hierarchy which was clearly present in South African society at this time. This setting establishes the economic and social conditions of the characters but also represents the real people of South Africa.[8] The diminished economic and political status, as determined by race, in the urban areas was worse than in the villages, in that the rural area may be poor, "but the Africans have at least a land to call home; in the urban areas, where they have no land, they become squatters, living in a village of sack, plank and iron, where nothing truly grows."[9] This view, perpetuated by Paton, was indicative of the belief that white led urbanisation led to the economic and moral degradation of black people in South Africa's urban centres.

Into this milieu, we see the rise of Afrikaner nationalism. Afrikaner nationalism was a movement in which Afrikaner history was coloured by a mystical belief in the development of the "volk" (the people)[10] essentially the greatness of the Afrikaner culture.[11] Afrikaner nationalists believed that people were entitled to certain privileges based on their colour or race.[12] In many ways this particular ideology was enhanced by the Calvinistic interpretation of the Old Testament in the Bible[13]. Throughout the novel, the spectre of Afrikaner nationalism tacitly rears its head, as a contending force for the domination of South African society.

Thus mid-twentieth century South Africa epitomised division in terms of race, culture, and class, as well as its urban and rural geographic divide.

1.1. Research Methodology and Sources

This is essentially a literature study making use of both secondary and primary source material. Besides published books, it also uses both journal and webpage articles. However, at the core of the study are primary sources in the form of contemporary

[7] A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country.*
[8] N. Chiwengo, *Understanding Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 3.
[9] N. Chiwengo, *Understanding Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 3.
[10] H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaner: Biography of a People.*
[11] K. Smith, *The Changing Past: Trends in South African Historical Writing,* pp. 64-65.
[12] N. Chiwengo, *Understanding Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 2.
[13] H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaner: Biography of a People.*

newspaper articles published in the three different countries. These are analysed to gauge the reception of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in different contextual spaces: segregated South Africa; post-Great Depression United States of America (USA); and the post-War environment in the United Kingdom (UK). Here the historian's methodological tools of critical analysis and comparison are adopted.

Unconventionally the study will first include the use of autobiographies and biographies on Alan Paton in order to contextualise the subject matter. Historical texts on the USA, the UK and SA will be used provide insights into the national contexts in which the novel's reception can be analysed. Finally, the use of the primary material – the plethora of newspaper articles and clippings found in the archives of the Alan Paton Centre (APC) in Pietermaritzburg - will be analysed to study the reception of the novel abroad and in South Africa.

Newspapers, according to John Tosh, the author of *The Pursuit of History,* carry a twofold value.[14] Firstly, they offer an insight into the political and social climate of the times. Secondly they provide a record of day-to-day events which allows the historian to see the world through the lens of the past.[15] By using newspapers as the focal primary source in conjunction with Tosh's understanding of the importance of such a source, the purpose of this research will be an attempt to gauge the reception of the novel in the abovementioned countries.

National and international newspapers are analysed in detail for this study. The time period focused on will be around the date of the publication of *Cry, the Beloved Country,* namely, in February 1948. The aim of this is to understand local and international reaction to the novel itself. However, one must keep in mind that newspapers tend to print what is most popular and what will keep the allegiance of their readers[16] or attract new ones. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, a range of newspapers were consulted in order to gain a sense of the range of reactions. In addition to this, secondary sources will also be consulted to verify or counter the claims made in newspaper articles.

[14] J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History,* p. 96.
[15] J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History,* p. 96
[16] R.J. Shafer, *A Guide to Historical Method,* p. 86.

Considering that a number of sources used for this study comprise of subjective sources such as the *Cry, the Beloved Country* itself and the newspaper articles, an attempt to create a fair interpretation of the past is of great importance. As recommended by Tosh, a number of sources will be consulted in order to secure that the interpretation of the past is consistent with available evidence.[17] In addition to this, the methodology steps out of the historical realm and dabbles in other disciplines in order to promote an inter-disciplinary approach to historical writing. In particular, literary criticism, as practiced in English Studies, in its broader sense was used in assessing the novel while the historical tools of analysis, interpretation, criticism and comparison were applied.

In the process of using a wide variety of sources, both primary and secondary, R.J. Shafer's internal criticism also applied.[18] As Shafer points out, the historian is interested in both fabrications and truth, but he or she must be able to distinguish between the two. Therefore, the task of internal criticism is to determine the credibility of historical evidence.[19] This is of utmost importance to this study as a number of primary sources are used in tandem with secondary sources to substantiate, verify and interpret the primary sources and to assess the credibility thereof. It is thus in essence a comparative and analytical study.

In Tosh's *The Pursuit of History* he writes that literature as a historical source is a rather ''special case''.[20] He argues that even though literature does not carry the so called authority regarding historical reports or facts, it cannot be denied a place in historical writing. Creative literature is said to offer an insight into the social interpretation of a specific society.[21]

With reference to *Cry, the Beloved Country,* it can be seen as both a primary and secondary source, depending on how it is analysed. Literature tends to be the most accessible form of textual culture. Novels "provide a ready-made chronology, a coherent selection of events, and a strong sense of period atmosphere".[22] *Cry, the Beloved Country,* even with its criticisms, illustrates a detailed insight into mid-

[17] J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History,* p. 91.
[18] R. J. Shafer, *A Guide to Historical Method,* p. 149.
[19] R. J. Shafer, *A Guide to Historical Method,* p. 149.
[20] J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History,* p. 98.
[21] J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History,* p. 98.
[22] J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History,* p. 93.

twentieth century South Africa through the form of a story. It encapsulates the real situation of urbanisation through the characters within the novel in a way that is easy to read and understand. However, these themes within the novel need to be analysed in tandem with secondary sources and within the historical context.

1.2. Literature review

This literature review will identify and discuss the core sources that inform the contents of this study. They will be discussed thematically, with an emphasis first being put on the texts concerning Paton's life as well as sources which discuss *Cry, the Beloved Country* and its reception. The literature review will then discuss the sources which provided the national contexts in which the reception of the novel is discussed. Finally, it will provide a broad discussion on the principle repository from which primary sources were collected, namely the Alan Paton Centre in Pietermaritzburg.

The autobiography genre is an informative source for historical study due to the subjective insights it can provide. Bronywn Michler writes that the individual is significant to the historian "both as an individual and as a member of a certain society in a certain period, under the influence of the ideas, processes and events of that period".[23] Therefore, this research makes use of the autobiographical genre to gain an understanding of the experiences that molded Alan Paton as an author and an activist. In addition, David Westley points out that the autobiography in a South African context is of particular significance. Through this judgement Westley comes to ask the question "why is [the] autobiography such a predominant literary form in South Africa?"[24] and continues to answer it with the view that "fiction, poetry and drama were part of the scene during this century, but the art of autobiography has had dominance".[25] Essentially Westley comes to the conclusion that history within a South African context is so rich that there would be no need to dramatise and create a false history in order to "create a story that would sell".[26] Therefore, the autobiography, regardless of who is writing it, gives the reader an open window directly into South Africa's turbulent history. Paton's autobiography achieves this whilst simultaneously

[23] B.L. Michler, *Biographical Study of H.-A. Junod: the Fictional Dimension,* M.A. dissertation, U.P., 2003. p. 1.
[24] D. Westley, 'A Select Bibliography of South African Autobiography' *Biography* (17)3, 1994, p. 268.
[25] D. Westley, 'A Select Bibliography of South African Autobiography' *Biography* (17)3, 1994, p. 268.
[26] D. Westley, 'A Select Bibliography of South African Autobiography' *Biography* (17)3, 1994, p. 268.

contextualising the source experiences that underscores the major themes of the novel. Westley comments that:

> These autobiographies are of inestimable value now, for they give us more than a textbook view of South Africa. They are bound to become historical documents too. In the meantime they are one of the best ways of understanding the present of this complex and disturbing land.[27]

We can learn from the abovementioned statement, that making use of the autobiography genre is imperative for this research. Alan Paton, during his lifetime, produced two autobiographies. Namely, *Towards the Mountain: An Autobiography* (1980) and *Journey Continued – An Autobiography* (1988). The first is of relevance to this study as it covers the period leading up to Paton writing this novel. The latter focuses more on Paton's political career and therefore does not fall under the purview of this study and cannot be considered a core text. *Towards the Mountain: an Autobiography* provides context for many details of Paton's life, especially concerning his early life and the social interactions that informed his literary perspectives. In particular, Paton's relationship with Afrikanerdom, prejudice, violence and Christianity is discussed in detail in the autobiography. We learn thus through his autobiography the confluence of factors that drove the man behind *Cry, the Beloved Country* to write such an impactful novel.

Another way in which *Towards the Mountain: an Autobiography* contributes to the analysis of Paton as a man, is in his discussions of early contact with prejudice. Paton describes how his early life in Pietermaritzburg was imbibed with an awareness of British traditions, the history of conquest, racial hatred and displacement.[28] These are all ever present themes in *Cry, the Beloved Country.* As depicted in the autobiography, the epistemological cause of their inclusion in the novel lie in the experiences of Paton in Pietermaritzburg during his youth.

As a youth, Paton was exposed to paternal violence. This is also discussed in *Towards the Mountain: an Autobiography.* This exposure were formative with regards to his

[27] D. Westley, 'A Select Bibliography of South African Autobiography' *Biography* (17)3, 1994, p. 271.
[28] A. Paton, *Towards the Mountain: an Autobiography,* p. 7.

approach to his work in the Diepkloof Reformatory, which in turn manifested in *Cry, the Beloved Country* through the themes of forgiveness for violence. Specifically, the nature of the bond between Jarvis and Khumalo, focusing on reform and forgiveness and the discarding of hate, is a fundamental concept in the novel. It is possible that the root of the inclusion of this concept can be found in the lessons learnt about violence by Paton in his youth.[29]

A final contribution of the autobiography is the role of Christianity as a cornerstone of Paton's conception of reform, forgiveness and being. In his youth, Paton was an adherent to the Christadelphian faith, which was a combination of Calvinism and Puritanism, and was marked by the isolation of its adherents from the outside world.[30] In time, Paton evolved away from his particular branch of Christianity's isolationism, and in turn came to believe in a more universal doctrine that was inclusive of all denominations. It transcended race, class and privilege. Paton's religious universalism and belief in the power of Christian redemption manifest in *Cry, the Beloved Country.* It is evident at the end of the novel when both Jarvis and Khumalo have lost their sons, but find comfort in their universal Christian perspectives.[31]

This study is presupposed by the assumption of universality found in the themes of the novel. In chapter two of this study, the sources of these themes are located in the biographical sketch of Alan Paton. As such, *Towards the Mountain: an Autobiography,* is a core text in the study insofar as it indicates where these universal themes came from. When these themes are linked to the national contexts of USA, Britain and South Africa, it becomes apparent why there was general agreement that the novel was a powerful uniting tool that spoke to a segment of the national consciences of these countries.

Many scholars have studied Paton's autobiography. Their works are also used extensively in this study. Below are reviews of some of the chief scholars who explored the autobiography. The title of Andrew Nash's article, *The Way to the Beloved Country:*

[29] A. Paton, *Towards the Mountain: an Autobiography,* p. 179.
[30] A. Paton, *Towards the Mountain: an Autobiography,* p. 57.
[31] A. Paton, *Towards the Mountain: an Autobiography,* p. 59.

History and the Individual in Alan Paton's Towards the Mountain: An Autobiography[32] (1983) so aptly stitches together the life of Alan Paton and the historical processes that led to his writing of the book. The aim of this article is to begin to unravel how Alan Paton became the man that wrote *Cry, the Beloved Country.* Nash points out that the book comprises of thirty-four chapters that, allows the reader into the very private life of Alan Paton. Nash analyses his very stern religious upbringing, his experiences at Natal University College, his training as a teacher, marriage, his life-changing experience as the principal at Diepkloof Reformatory, his close friendship with Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr (to whom the book is also dedicated), and his ever-broadening intellectual, political and spiritual horizons.[33]

Nash highlights four aspects in order to "discover the routes which took Paton on the impossible dilemma expressed in *Cry, the Beloved Country".*[34] Firstly, one can ask how Paton conceived the "world" around him and in turn how he responded to it. Secondly, one can examine the way in which Paton understood the "self" and "subjectivity" in the aforementioned conception of the "world" he experienced. Thirdly, digging deeper into how he conceived the Christian belief which so heavily dominated his early life and consequently continued to play an ever-changing role right throughout his life. Finally, and probably most importantly, one can ask how Paton conceived literature, the medium through which he expressed all of his responses and understandings of his experiences which can be clearly seen interwoven through many of the themes in *Cry, the Beloved Country.*[35]

The early reviews of *Towards the Mountain: An Autobiography* all highlight very similar key themes occurring throughout Alan Paton's autobiography. Firstly, Lucy Mair, a British anthropologist, draws attention in her review in *African Affairs* (1981) to the fact that Paton deeply emphasised his "devotion to penal reform".[36] Martin Rubin, in his review of the autobiography in *Research in African Literature* (1982), writes that Paton, even many years after leaving his position as principal of Diepkloof Reformatory, was

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[32] A. Nash, 'The Way to the Beloved Country: History and the Individual in Alan Paton's *Towards the Mountain', English in Africa* (10)2, 10-1983, p. 11.
[33] B. Young, Review in *Canadian Journal of African Studies* (16)1, 1982, p. 152.
[34] A. Nash, 'The Way to the Beloved Country: History and the Individual in Alan Paton's *Towards the Mountain', English in Africa* (10)2, 10-1983, p. 15.
[35] A. Nash, 'The Way to the Beloved Country: History and the Individual in Alan Paton's *Towards the Mountain', English in Africa* (10)2, 10-1983, p. 15.
[36] L. Mair, 'Review', *African Affairs* (80)320, 1981, p. 426.

still very proud of his stewardship over the institution.[37] Both Rubin and Mair note that it was through "Paton's devotion to penal reform"[38] that he attempted to discover a more progressive form of penal reform[39] which resulted in him travelling to the United States in 1946 which consequently allowed for the time and space for him to write *Cry, the Beloved Country.*

In addition to this, early reviews on *Towards the Mountain: An Autobiography* all seem to point out Paton's ongoing internal debate regarding Afrikaans nationalism. Both Bruce Young and Rubin comment on the fact that although Paton admired the resoluteness and spirit of the Afrikaners, he still deeply hated the segregationist and later apartheid ideology.[40] This is an interesting aspect to highlight considering that this internal struggle about racism and discrimination is reflected in many of the themes in *Cry, the Beloved Country.* It is also apparent later on when he eventually joins the political arena. This autobiography is indeed a useful lens, albeit retrospectively, into the life of Paton prior to the writing of the books.

Paton's autobiography and its associated academic studies provide great insight into the factors that affected the thematic presentation of *Cry, the Beloved Country,* particularly because they delve into the subjective attitudes of the author. Other principle texts that provide insight into such factors are some of the biographies of Paton. Two biographies in particular informed various aspects of this study. They were P.F. Alexander's *Alan Paton, a Biography* (1994) as well as his *Alan Paton: Selected Letters* (2009) and E.C. Callan's *Alan Paton* (1982). The two biographies mentioned above were used at length to supplement the information gained from Paton's autobiography. They were of great value as they were written from an outside perspective and as such contextualised the subjective nature of the autobiography. Greater value to this study was to be found in Alexander's *Selected Letters.*

Peter Alexander, who was an acquaintance of his, and who wrote Paton's biography, was the editor for an impressive compilation of Paton's private letters. It was titled, *Alan Paton: Selected Letters* and was published by the Van Riebeeck Society. This

[37] M. Rubin, 'Review', *Research in African Literature* (14)2, 1983, p. 262
[38] L. Mair, 'Review', *African Affairs* (80)320, 1981, p. 426.
[39] M. Rubin, 'Review', *Research in African Literature* (14)2, 1983, p. 265
[40] B. Young, 'Review', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* (16)1, 1982, p. 152; M. Rubin, 'Review', *Research in African Literature* (14)2, 1983, p. 262.

selection of letters opened a new perspective into the private life of Paton. In these letters, we are able to see developments and concerns through the eyes of Paton as well as the evolution of his life from before *Cry, the Beloved Country* was published right until days before his death in 1988. In particular the subjective attitudes of Paton, as well as the core thematic elements that are present in the novel, found form in many of these letters.

Alexander carefully selected 330 from an archive of some 2,500 letters. What makes this particular historical work exceptional is that Alexander provides a helpful chronology of Paton's life.[41] Alexander divides Paton's life into five distinct periods, being: early life (1922-35), the era of World War II (1935-45), the time of *Cry the Beloved Country* and the rise of grand apartheid (1946-52), liberalism in South Africa (1953-68), and finally, Paton's last years (1969-88).[42] Alexander's work is insightful because it provides introductions to each era, and contains many lucid and helpful explanatory footnotes for the letters. The work is also neatly contextualised by the presence of biographies of Paton's chief correspondents, as well as of Paton himself. Alexander's work is an essential tool in any study of Paton's life and works, as in his many letters to fans, friends and colleagues, the mind of Paton is apparent.[43] Many of these letters were used in this study.

A good example of such letters' value to this study can be found in Paton's correspondence with his publisher, Charles Scribner. These letters gave insight into how the reception of the novel was evolving through the eyes of the book's publishers. Another great example was in his correspondence with his wife in which he discussed his tours of different penal systems in Europe. In these letters we peer into the thinking of Paton with regards to the purpose and form of penal reform. Finally, Paton's correspondence with Lewis Nkosi indicates Paton's response to critique and as such provides clear cut personal motivations behind his work.

Other sources were also used for the purposes of both literary analysis as well as for the biographical sketch in chapter two. Apart from Alexander, H. Bloom's *Modern*

[41] P. Alexander (ed), *Alan Paton: Selected Letters,* p. xx–xxvii.
[42] P. Alexander (ed), *Alan Paton: Selected Letters,* p. xx–xxvii.
[43] K. Wilburn, 'Book Reviews' in *African Studies Quarterly,* 12(1), pp. 73-74.

Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country[44] and A. Van der Vlies' *South African Textual Cultures*[45] also contributed to the literature on Paton's life and works. Van der Vlies and Bloom provide critical deconstructions of the novel *Cry, the Beloved Country,* while making solid references to the context in which themes of the novel took place. All of the above authors give insight into the novel itself, and they all contextualise the novel through references to Paton and the localised factors that influenced his thinking when writing the novel. These are by no means the only authors who treated these concepts in their works. More authors are referenced throughout this study. These are but a few of the key contributors to the discourses central to this thesis.

All of the abovementioned sources were used to contextualise the study as knowledge of the themes and motivations behind the book informed its reception worldwide. This is the central thesis of this study. This study is premised on an analysis of the relation between themes, reception and national contexts. Some of the sources that follow were used to provide the national contexts of the USA, Britain and South Africa.

As previously mentioned, various histories will be included in this study. The fact that this dissertation vastly relies on the novel itself, along with contemporary newspaper articles, it is important that secondary sources are consulted in order to historically contextualise the study.

The main historical studies referenced in the contextualisation of the USA in this study is that of Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* (2001)*;* George B. Tindall's *America: A Narrative History* (1984)*;* George D. Moss's *America in the Twentieth Century* (1997)*;* and Douglas Tallack's *Twentieth Century America: The Intellectual and Cultural Context* (1991)*.* These secondary sources, focus mainly on twentieth century America, and provide the historical background. Together they provide context concerning World War I, the Great Depression, the New Deal, World War II and the Civil Rights Movement. A major contribution made by Howard Zinn is his understanding of the importance of social history in the preface of Vijay Prashad's historical book, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (2008)*:*

[44] H. Bloom (ed), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country.*
[45] A. Van Der Vlies, Local Writing, Global Reading, and the Demands of the Canon, The Case of Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country, South African Historical Journal* 55, 2006, p.20.

> Once, historians looked only at society's upper crust: the leaders and others who made the headlines and deeds survived as historical truth.[46]

Zinn, then goes on to write that once history is turned on to its "head [it] opens up a whole new world of possibility":[47]

> Not surprisingly, as the lens shifts the basic narratives change as well. The history of men and women of all classes, colours, and cultures reveals an astonishing degree of struggle and independent political action. Everyday people played complicated historical roles, and they developed highly sophisticated and often very different political ideas from the people who ruled them. Sometimes their accomplishments left tangible traces; other times, the traces are invisible but no less real.[48]

This excerpt so succinctly explains the importance of social history of the respective countries. The inclusion of these general historical writings are vital when using sources such as literature and newspapers, such as is the case in this study. The abovementioned sources all discussed elements of American history that made *Cry, the Beloved Country* palatable for American readers.

General historical writings on Britain's history are used in its contextualisation exercise. Some of the sources that were consulted include that of David McDowall's, *A Short History of England* (1989)*;* and T.O. Lloyd's, *The British Empire, 1558-1995* (1997)*.* The abovementioned books provide an analysis of the inter-War era with a specific focus on class divisions, the welfare state, racial thinking and social degradation in Britain. These national experiences were those that acclimated British readers to the themes of *Cry, the Beloved Country.*

Standard secondary sources such as Robert Ross's *A Concise History of South Africa* (2008)*;* Hermann Giliomee and Bernard Mbenga's *New History of South Africa* (2003)*;* R. Davenport and C. Saunder's *South Africa: a Modern History* (1994) as well as D. Oakes' *Illustrated History of South Africa, the Real Story* (1989) were used to provide a concise overview of South African history. These sources establish a broader understanding of general historical concepts which are important to the understanding

[46] V. Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World,* p. ix.
[47] V. Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World,* p. ix.
[48] V. Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World,* p. ix.

of the events and developments within *Cry, the Beloved Country,* as well as why the reception of the novel in South Africa was so dichotomous.

In addition to these general histories, the history revolving around the Witwatersrand during industrialisation and urbanisation, will be gleaned from secondary sources such as C. van Onselen's *New Babylon, New Nineveh: Everyday Life on the Witwatersrand 1886-1914* (2001). This will lay the foundation of understanding the impact that urbanisation had on the various communities of South Africa. In addition, L. Callinicos's *Working Life 1886-1940* and *A Place in the City, the Rand on the Eve of Apartheid* (1987) will provide a period specific understanding of urbanisation in Johannesburg particularly as regards the period in which *Cry, the Beloved Country* is set. This will create a more holistic understanding of the events happening on the Witwatersrand during the twentieth century as experienced by the characters within the novel.

Finally, this literature review must make reference to the Alan Paton Centre in Pietermaritzburg to which so much is owed for making this study feasible. The reception of the book is measured qualitatively through newspaper reviews. These newspaper articles were sourced at the Alan Paton Centre, and included reviews from publications including but not limited to: *The New York Times, Los Angeles* and the *Boston Herald* in the USA, *London Sunday Times, Church Times* and *Fighting Talk* in Britain and *The Torch, Transvaler,* and *Cape Times* in South Africa. The Alan Paton Centre is a remarkable repository of primary and secondary sources related to Alan Paton and his works.

1.3. Organisation of the study

In Chapter 1 (Introduction) the purpose and rationale of this study is set out. It provides an outline of the research methodology adopted. It also includes a brief literature review which indicates the value obtained by the principle sources and collections used in the study.

Chapter 2 (The Man, The Book) provides a biographical sketch of Alan Paton so as to understand Paton's historical context that led him to write *Cry, the Beloved Country.*

This chapter will then segue into the novel itself which will focus on the themes and characters which will provide a backdrop to the following chapters.

Furthermore, Chapters 3, 4 and 5 will essentially focus on the reception and the varying interpretations of the novel in America, Britain and South Africa respectively. Chapter 3 (America Reads *Cry, the Beloved Country*), Chapter 4 (Britain Reads *Cry, the Beloved Country*) and finally Chapter 5 (South Africa Reads *Cry, the Beloved Country*) contain the core aspects of this study, namely how the novel was received in different national contexts.

Finally, Chapter 6 (Conclusion) will incorporate the elements of an epilogue as opposed to being a conclusion. This form is necessary because the afterlife of *Cry, the Beloved Country* continues to echo well into present times. Essentially this chapter will contrast and reflect on the reception of the novel, contemporaneously and to this day.

III. The Man, the Book

i. Introduction

Alan Stewart Paton was a man of diverse interests and activities but chief among these was his apt social commentary on South African society through his most significant novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country.* Peter F. Alexander, a long-time friend and more importantly the writer of the most comprehensive biography on Paton, writes that 'he was commonly spoken of as South Africa's most famous novelist by those who admired his political stance, and as a dangerous radical by those who did not'.[49] It is interesting to note that Paton's roots did not begin in the tolerant and all-encompassing tradition that he came to represent, but rather in a narrow-minded, overzealous, religious and class-conscious family. The journey of this profoundly flawed individual, beginning in violence and repression and finally ending in enlightenment and the acceptance of all people, mirrors the struggle to achieve a free and democratic South Africa.[50]

Since the man and the book are so intertwined, this chapter will essentially be a brief biographical sketch of Alan Paton, in which a variety of sources will be integrated in order to construct a narrative sketch of Paton's life

ii. Biographical Sketch – History and the Individual

Alan Stewart Paton was born on the 11th of January 1903 shortly after the South African War (1899-1902), in the city of Pietermaritzburg, in Natal. At the time this was part of the British colony in South Africa,[51] Natal which, was one of four territories which would only be united as part of the Union of South Africa in 1910. This Union was an exclusively white affair which bolstered the place and position of the white population as opposed to the segregated black population.[52] It is clear to see that

[49] P.F. Alexander, *Alan Paton, a Biograhy,* p. xv.
[50] R.L. Berner, Comparative Literature: States of the Art, *World Literature Today* (69)2, 1995.
[51] Callan, E, *Alan Paton,* p. 21.
[52] R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa,* pp. 80-81.

Paton's 'beloved country' did not yet exist as a national or political entity, or even conception, during his early years.[53]

During Paton's childhood, Pietermaritzburg, even though steeped deeply in British traditions, told of a history of conquest, racial hatred and displacement,[54] a history of which Alan Paton as a child knew nothing. This English colony was founded in the year 1838 by *Boer Trekkers,* led by Piet Retief seeking a place outside of British control. After the Battle of Blood River, in which the Zulu nation sustained a heavy defeat and were consequently displaced, the settlement of Pietermaritzburg proceeded rapidly.[55] However in 1843 the Boers, who had displaced the Zulus were themselves displaced through the British annexation of Natal. Bitterly, they headed northwards to the Transvaal to once again escape British rule.[56] As Alexander aptly puts it, 'the very map of the town is a palimpsest of dispossession.[57] It was in this English-speaking community that Paton grew up and it was in this community that he did not hear a word of Dutch or of its descendant, Afrikaans.[58] It was only in later years that he would become aware of the political and social situation around him. For instance, at times during his early years Paton became subtly aware of the tensions within the country, especially in the relationship between the English and Afrikaans speaking communities. He could recall how, at the age of twenty-one whilst en route to his graduation ceremony in Pretoria, such tension was born in the interaction between those going to the graduation and the Afrikaans white labourers that they passed:

> We graduates, with a smattering of Afrikaans, shouted jokes at the white labourers. The jokes were not obscene, but the exhibition was unmannerly. It aroused intense anger. It was an example of British arrogance and contempt at their worst. Of the potential harm that we were doing, we had no conception whatsoever.[59]

53 P.F. Alexander, *Alan Paton, a Biograhy,* p. 1.
54 R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa,* pp. 80-81.
55 R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa,* pp. 82.
56 R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa,* pp. 82-83.
57 P.F. Alexander, *Alan Paton, a Biograhy,* p. 2.
58 P.F. Alexander, *Alan Paton, a Biograhy,* p. 2.
59 A. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, p. 4.

Paton would note years later that the city of Pietermaritzburg was a hub of British imperialism, 'it was the seat of the British Governor, of the Natal Legislative Council, of the Supreme Court of Natal, of the Bishop of Natal, and it was the garrison town of British regiment'.[60] Growing up in such a place of British power, and knowing how its people were at odds with their Afrikaans counterparts, shed light on the anxiety of this relationship.

The Supreme Court in Pietermaritzburg was of particular importance to the Paton family as Alan Paton's father, James Paton, worked in the court as a 'lowly'[61] shorthand writer. However, if the Supreme Court had not been in Pietermaritzburg, Alan Paton would not have been born there and neither would he have grown up there. In that case he would have missed the idyllic beauty of the countryside in Pietermaritzburg which so heavily influenced his pastorally imbibed writing style which is evident in all of his writings and is particularly in *Cry, the Beloved Country.*[62] It was growing up in this environment that formed Alan Paton. He was awakened to the beauties of the natural world by his father who was often out of the Paton household taking long walks in the countryside. If it was from his father that Alan Paton learnt his love for the natural world, it was also from his father that he learnt hate. It was this deep rooted hatred that powerfully formed his character as much as love had.[63]

James Paton was a deeply religious man who followed the Christadelphian faith, a branch off of Christianity founded by John Thomas in 1848.[64] Growing up in a household that followed this particular influence of Christianity played a profound role in the lives of all the Paton children. The Christadelphian faith shares many of the common denominators of traditional Christianity, but draws an almost obscure relation to Calvinism and Puritanism in that the followers isolate themselves within their faith.[65] They essentially kept themselves away from worldly influence except in such a circumstance that required them to take necessary measures to keep themselves alive. Followers of this religion followed unspoken rules in that they did

60 A. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, p. 15.
61 P.F. Alexander, *Alan Paton, a Biograhy,* p. 1.
62 P.F. Alexander, *Alan Paton, a Biograhy,* p. 2.
63 P.F. Alexander, *Alan Paton, a Biograhy,* p. 3.
64 P.F. Alexander, *Alan Paton, a Biograhy,* p. 4.

not gamble, use foul language, or go to the theatre. However, awareness must be drawn to the fact that pleasure was not forbidden, but sobriety was prescribed in any such enjoyment.[66] Growing up in the Paton household was a strange mix of a deep love of faith but also a deep hatred of human emotions.

It is also important to note that Christadelphians did not marry "non-believers" and in the same breath their sexual codes were puritanically strict. This omnipresent force had a profound influence over budding friendships and relationships for all of the Paton children. James and Eunice Paton wanted very much to keep their children 'unspoiled'[67] from the world, even to the point that they were not allowed to go anywhere unsupervised and any of their friends were as a rule chosen by their father.[68] It can be said that this ever-present authority exerted by his father created an awareness in Paton of what passive and overt violence could lead to. Growing up, Paton did not experience a happy home life. His father was apparently a violent bully who enforced his will through savage beatings.[69]

It was during these formative years that Paton began to develop strategies to resist authority. Only when Paton was an old man could he look back at the role his father played in his young life, he recalls as follows:

> His use of physical force never achieved anything but a useless obedience. But it had two important consequences. One was that my feelings towards him were almost those of hate. The other was that I grew up with an abhorrence of authoritarianism.[70]

He maintained, throughout his life, this detest of authoritarianism, and his fierce determination to resist it.[71] In many ways these attitudes contributed to his methodologies and expectations later in his life when he began working as a teacher and later still, when he began working at the Diepkloof Reformatory. It was here that

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66 A. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, p. 12-13.
67 A. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, p. 13.
68 A. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, p. 13.
69 P.F. Alexander (ed), *Alan Paton: Selected Letters,* p. xi.
70 P.F. Alexander, 'The Life of Alan Paton', in *Race Relations in Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 23.
71 P.F. Alexander, 'The Life of Alan Paton', in *Race Relations in Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 23.

he attempted to resist violent reform methods, instead allowing these young men liberties that they had not experienced before.[72]

In 1920, when Alan Paton was seventeen years old, he entered Natal University College. He majored in science and obtained his Bachelor of Science degree with a distinction in physics. However, Paton's interests remained broad and he was active in the University's literary and dramatic societies.[73] 'He enjoyed writing poetry and soon began to acquire a reputation as a poet.'[74] He was also very active in the Students' Representative Council at the same time that the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) was coming into being.[75] Paton also became the sub-editor of the *Natal University College Magazine.* It was through this perceived moral leadership that Paton became a prominent influence on many of his peers.[76] So much so that as a token of appreciation his fellow peers sent him to Britain in October 1924 as their representative at the Imperial Conference of Students in London. This conference was aimed at bringing students together from various dominions of Britain to discuss issues regarding governance.[77] We can see that Paton, an intelligent young man, was already creating a foundation which would eventually result in creating one of South Africa's greatest literary pieces of work and an active political life.

In 1925, Paton completed his studies and began his first job as a teacher at Ixopo. However, it is interesting to note that even though Paton detested authoritarianism all throughout his young and adult life, it was during this period that Paton in many ways adopted his father's cruel forms of discipline. Paton quickly became unpopular among the students and in many ways was hated by them. His tendency to use the cane with viciousness was an unexpected trait to emerge from a man who so deeply detested violent obedience.[78] The girls at the school in many ways hated him more than the boys. On them Paton utilised his father's weapons of humiliation and ridicule.[79]

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72 P.F. Alexander (ed), *Alan Paton: Selected Letters,* p. x.
73 E. Callan, *Alan Paton*, pp. 25-26.
74 E. Callan, *Alan Paton*, p. 26.
75 E. Callan, *Alan Paton*, p 26.
76 P.F. Alexander (ed), *Alan Paton: Selected Letters,* p. x.
77 P.F. Alexander (ed), *Alan Paton: Selected Letters,* p. x.
78 P.F. Alexander (ed), *Alan Paton: Selected Letters,* p. x.
79 P.F. Alexander, 'The Life of Alan Paton', in *Race Relations in Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 27.

Gradually over time Paton would succeed in overcoming this unattractive side to his personality.[80]

During his time of teaching in Ixopo Paton would oftentimes go on long walks in which he would walk many kilometres. It was through these walks that Paton gained intimate knowledge of Ixopo's surroundings which he would eventually use as a motif for his novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country.*[81] During this time he also met and fell in love with Doris Lusted, who he would marry. She was five years his senior. At the time of their meeting she was married to a man, her great love, who was dying of tuberculosis. However, Paton was relentless in his desire to have her as his wife. This was not an easy marriage as Doris remained deeply attached to her first husband, an issue that was contentious throughout their marriage.[82] Much to his chagrin, Doris continued to wear her first husband's wedding band on her wedding ring finger, while wearing Paton's on her right hand.[83]

In an attempt to start afresh, the two newlyweds moved to Pietermaritzburg where Paton began teaching at his old school, Maritzburg College. It was this teaching position that matured him. He achieved more success as a teacher than he had in his early teaching years at Ixopo.[84] During these years Doris and Paton lived a relatively happy married life, in which they had two children, David and Jonathan. When reading about these years, it can be seen that this small family lived a simple but content life. Things would change dramatically in 1934, when Paton became very ill with enteric fever and nearly died.[85] While he was bedridden Paton realised that he no longer wanted to be a teacher.

One of Paton's greatest experiences would come from the moment in which he was assigned as a principal at one of the three reformatory institutions in the Union. When he received his post in 1935 at Diepkloof Reformatory, Paton decided that the already crowded, prison-like institution needed a dramatic change.[86] Shaping and improving

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80 P.F. Alexander (ed), *Alan Paton: Selected Letters,* p. x.
81 P.F. Alexander, 'The Life of Alan Paton', in *Race Relations in Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 23.
82 P.F. Alexander, 'The Life of Alan Paton', in *Race Relations in Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 27.
83 A. Paton, *Towards the Mountain,* p. 33.
84 P.F. Alexander (ed), *Alan Paton: Selected Letters,* p. x.
85 P.F. Alexander (ed), *Alan Paton: Selected Letters,* p. x.
86 E. Callan, *Alan Paton*, p 37.

Diepkloof became Paton's sole purpose.[87] Through courageous experiments he developed an innovative system for rehabilitating the young men at Diepkloof Reformatory by allowing them increased liberties and freedoms.[88] Through perseverance he was able to remove all fences around the property and the young men were allowed to roam freely. Apart from his own qualities of humanism, there was little in Paton's background that would prepare him for this new experience. Fortunately, Paton's keen insight into society allowed him to realise that the boys coming under his care were chiefly products of Johannesburg's African slums. They were habituated to poverty and convicted of crimes such as petty theft, rape and murder.[89] Knowing this allowed Paton to approach their rehabilitation sensitively and intuitively. Paton began to see his work at Diepkloof as a map to reforming South Africa as a whole. Many sections in *Cry, the Beloved Country* draw influence from his experience at Diepkloof. During Paton's short years working at Diepkloof, he transformed it from a prison into a functioning school in which the boys were given a new lease on life.[90]

It is interesting to note that Paton's reforms at Diepkloof was severely attacked by Hendrik Verwoerd, the future architect of apartheid, in his newspaper *Die Transvaler.*[91] However, his friendship with Jan Hofmeyr, the Minister of Education, allowed Paton to keep up his work,[92] especially after Diepkloof was transferred from the Department of Prisons to the Department of Education.[93] Paton and Hofmeyr were good friends, their connection formed through a religious bond.

As the National Party with its racially discriminatory policies were politicking in the run-up to the 1948 elections, Paton must have recognised that he was losing the war of somehow finding a way to bring civil liberties to South Africa. He needed to find another way of reaching the hearts of a wider audience.[94] It was only when Paton turned forty-five that he would manifest his fully formed love of literature into one of South Africa's

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87 P.F. Alexander (ed), *Alan Paton: Selected Letters,* p. x.
88 P.F. Alexander (ed), *Alan Paton: Selected Letters,* p. x.
89 E. Callan, *Alan Paton*, p 37.
90 E. Callan, *Alan Paton*, p 40.
91 P.F. Alexander (ed), *Alan Paton: Selected Letters,* p. x.
92 P.F. Alexander (ed), *Alan Paton: Selected Letters,* p. x.
93 P.F. Alexander, 'The Life of Alan Paton', in *Race Relations in Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 27.
94 P.F. Alexander, 'The Life of Alan Paton', in *Race Relations in Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 23.

most popular literary pieces in history, namely *Cry, the Beloved Country.* Part psalm, part prophecy, this novel appeared three months before apartheid was fully institutionalised in South Africa.[95] According to R. Armstrong, 'Fear, specifically fear of the South African race war to come, tormented Paton as he wrote *Cry, the Beloved Country,* so much so that he had to leave his country to write it.'[96]

iii. The Book, *Cry, the Beloved Country*

Cry, the Beloved Country is set in the 1940s in South Africa. This story encompasses two men on a journey of reconciliation. The reader is drawn into a mid-twentieth century South Africa in which Paton realistically illustrates the racial tensions, ethnic conflicts, socio-economic situations and fear that dictated the lives of both white and black people prior to the promulgation if apartheid policies.

The novel is situated in the time of the Alexandra township bus boycotts and the resistance against the pass laws in 1944. Throughout the novel the reader is made aware of the blatant class and racial division of South Africa during the mid-twentieth century.[97]

The novel begins with two stark images of South Africa during the period of segregation.

> There is a lovely road that runs from Ixopo into the hill. There hills are grass-covered and rolling, and they are lovely beyond any singing of it. The road climbs seven miles into them, to Carisbrooke; and from there, if there is no mist; you look down on one if the fairest valleys of Africa. About you there is grass and bracken and you may hear the forlorn crying of the titihoya, one of the birds of the veld. Below you is the valley of the Umzimkulu, on its journey to the Drakensburg to the sea; and beyond the river, great hill after great hill; and beyond and behind them, the mountains of Ingeli and East Griqualand.[98]
>
> The grass is rich and matted, you cannot see the soil. It holds the rain and the mist, and they seep into the ground, feeding the streams of every kloof. It is well-tended, and not too many cattle feed upon it; not too many fires burn it, lay in bare the soil. Stand unshod upon it, for the ground is holy, being even as it came from the Creator. Keep it, guard it, care for it, for it keeps men, guard's men, cares for men. Destroy it and man is destroyed.[99]

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95 P.F. Alexander, *Alan Paton, A Biography,* p. 13.
96 R. Armstrong, Arrested Development, *Biblio,* 1998.
97 N. Chiwengo, *Understanding Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 2.
98 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 7.
99 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 7.

Thus right from the opening of the novel Paton creates an idyllic world illustrating his own Christian values which could influence his readers. This is the ‘’beloved country’’ Paton so cares for. However, directly after this, Paton draws on a stark comparison which brings the reader directly into the issues of segregation brought upon the people of South Africa, as described below:

> Where you stand the grass is rich and matted, you cannot see the soil. But the green hills breakdown. They fall to the valley below, and falling, change their nature. For they grow red and bare; they cannot hold the rain and mist, and the streams are dry in the kloofs. Too many cattle feed upon the grass, and too many fires have burned it. Stand shod upon it, for it is course and sharp, and the stones cut under the feet. It is not kept, or guarded, or cared for, it no longer keeps men, guards men, cares for men. The titihoya does not cry here anymore.[100]
>
> The great red hills stand desolate, and the earth is torn away like flesh. The lightning flashes over them, the clouds pour down upon them, the dead streams come to life, full of the red blood of the earth. Down in the valleys women scratch the soil that is left, and the maize hardly reaches the height of a man. They are valleys of old men and old women, of mothers and children. The men are away, the young men and the girls are away. The soil cannot keep them anymore.[101]

This novel remains relevant today in its provision of an understanding of how the mining business destroyed African families and consequently resulted in chaotic urban migration, poverty, moral degradation and crime.[102] Despite many heart-breaking events throughout the novel, the story ends on a hopeful note, typical of the pastoral Christian style that is seen throughout Paton’s writing.

The first journey tells a story of Stephen Kumalo, a black Anglican priest, who is searching for his son Absalom in the city of Johannesburg. Despite his strong Christian faith, fear paralyses him as he discovers his sister and brother have fallen into immoral lifestyles and that his son has been involved in criminal activity. A fellow priest, Theophilus Msimangu, helps him as he travels throughout the city looking for his son and family members.[103]

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100 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* pp. 7-8.
101 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* pp. 7-8.
102 S. Fetherolf, Paton, Alan. Cry, the Beloved Country, *Kliatt* 6(42), 11-2008.
103 S. Fetherolf, Paton, Alan. Cry, the Beloved Country, *Kliatt* 6(42), 11-2008.

The second journey tells the story of a wealthy white man named James Jarvis searching for the truth about how his son, Arthur Jarvis, had been murdered by Absalom during a botched robbery attempt. Ironically, Arthur Jarvis had been a champion for justice in racial issues.[104] Consequently Stephen Kumalo and James Jarvis are drawn together by their mutual grief and their quest for reconciliation. The novel tells the poignant story of this connection and closes with a flicker of hope, that one day, South Africa will be a free country:

> For it is the dawn that has come, as it has come for a thousand centuries, never failing. But when that dawn will come, our emancipation, from fear of bondage and bondage of fear, why, that is the secret.[105]

Some of the core themes of the novel are: reconciliation between fathers and sons, the vicious cycle of inequality and injustice and how injustice in South Africa stood at odds with the Christian faith. One of the dominant themes in *Cry, the Beloved Country* is fear. The novel ultimately ends with Kumalo sitting on top of a mountain, symbolically at the same level as James Jarvis, in which, Paton as an author, includes both men grappling with the fates of their sons and finally come to a deeper understanding of the human experience.[106] In the context of the subheading of the book "finding comfort in desolation,"[107] one is drawn into the depths of this core theme of the novel. Turning first to the title of novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* we already see that there is a distinctly negative connotation in the use of the word "cry".[108] It is almost an instruction from the author to be sad, to weep. In contrast, the country, South Africa, is however described as "beloved",[109] a term of endearment. This juxtapositioning reflects on the extreme tensions that are apparent in the quoted extract.

The subheading to the book is also loaded with contradictory words, and also emphasises the contrasting events, evident in the phrase: ''a story of comfort in desolation".[110] The quoted extract begins and ends with the word "fear".[111] The author

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104 S. Fetherolf, Paton, Alan. Cry, the Beloved Country, *Kliatt* 6(42), 11-2008.
105 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 236.
106 N. Chiwengo, *Understanding Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 4.
107 The sub-heading of the novel.
108 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* cover page.
109 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* cover page.
110 Subheading of the *Cry, the Beloved Country.*
111 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 13.

addresses the “unborn child”,[112] a reference to the failure of humanity as seen in the last few lines of the quote, “to not give too deeply, too gladly, too much as fear will rob him”.[113]

It is clear from the above discussion how these themes arose in the consciousness of Paton. His own relationship with his father was a source of inner turmoil. Through his characters he found redemption. Furthermore, the latter two themes arose from Paton’s own observations of fear, inequality, the ills of urbanisation and reforming capacity of Christianity. These central themes found resonance across the English speaking world in which this novel was read. When examining the novel’s reception, it is first necessary to take heed of these themes, so as to determine how they might have been received in particular national contexts.

[112] A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 13.
[113] A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 13.

Chapter III
America reads *Cry, the Beloved Country*

Introduction

It is chiefly to its reception in the United States of America (USA) that *Cry, the Beloved Country* owes its success. Penned by an unassuming South African man and after a whirlwind publication through the American publishing house, Charles Scribner's Sons, no one anticipated that this novel would by the end of its first year in American bookshops be considered a stroke of genius by literary critics and the general public alike. It is to this first episode of the reception of *Cry, the Beloved Country* that this chapter turns. It considers the way it was received and suggests some reasons for this response.

On the day preceding the publication, in the Sunday edition of the *New York Times,* Richard Sullivan labelled the novel "beautiful", a "rich, firm and moving piece of prose" and a "poetic and profound spiritual drama" which "in other hands might have made merely an interesting sociological document".[114] Most early American reviewers reverberated this positive appraisal with comments such as: "strong inspirational appeal";[115] a "penetrating and timely study of a pressing social problem"[116] and "unique, beautiful and moving writing".[117]

Cry, the Beloved Country became available to the public on the 1st of February 1948 and each copy was sold for three US Dollars.[118] A day later, on the 2nd of February 1948, the first official review appeared in *The New York Times* with Orville Prescott, a well-respected American book reviewer, having described Paton's novel as the first book that he had ever read that realistically illustrated the plight that black South Africans were experiencing.[119]

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114 R. Sullivan, *The New York Times,* 1948-02-01.
115 *The New York Times,* 1948-02-09.
116 *The New York Times,* 1948-02-09.
117 *The New York Times,* 1948-02-09.
118 R. Sullivan, *The New York Times,* 1948-02-01.
119 O. Prescott, *The New York Times,* 1948-02-01.

Prescott claimed:

> *Cry, the Beloved Country,* consists of an amazingly deft fusion of realistic detail and a symbolical synthesis of various points of view and emotional reactions. As a picture of the fear and suspicion and hatred which haunt all South Africans, black or white, it is brilliant. [120]

Within a few weeks *Cry, the Beloved Country* had become a bestseller in America. It is quite an unusual phenomenon that a novel written by an author from another country set in another country and based on that country's social issues would become so admired on the other side of the world!

America post-World War II was a country characterised by transition and tension. In order to fully gauge the reception of *Cry, the Beloved Country* we need to unravel the historical context of America in order to piece together a world in which Paton's novel was so readily accepted in the hands of both American readers and critics alike. To fully grasp the 1940s we need to step back a little further into the American past. Between the two great wars American society and culture took on an entirely different appearance. A once apparently homogenous society was beginning to unravel. Socialism was sweeping through the streets, unions such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) appeared to be everywhere. Class and racial issues were becoming more prominent and increasingly more contested and continued to escalate into the mid-twentieth century.[121]

William E.B. du Bois, an American academic, called "the problem of the colour line" the most pivotal question of the twentieth century.[122] And it was exactly this question that began to dominate twentieth century conversation and thought in almost all political, economic and social circles. The long and complex history of America, not unlike South Africa, as with most histories involving colonisation, is made up of conquest, domination and exploitation. By the time America reached the mid-twentieth century and the post-World War II era, it was a society beginning to grapple with its violent past and the continuing influence that this still had on its society. Therefore, this "alien" novel written entirely detached from the American context essentially mirrored the racial tensions that were prevalent in America, with South Africa being a

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120 O. Prescott, *The New York Times,* 1948-02-01.
121 H. Zinn, *A People's History of the United States,* pp. 359-360.
122 W.E.B. du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks,* p.1; A. W. Marx, *Making Race and Nation,* p.1.

land that was also characterised by a history of conquest, domination and exploitation. Paton's novel illustrates clear parallels between South Africa and America, in particular the American South. A simple example of this is that in almost all of the reviews, James Jarvis' farm in the Paton novel was described as being a "great plantation" which is a southern American term used to describe the equivalent of a South African farm.[123]

Essentially *Cry, the Beloved Country* provided a more acceptable, digestible and effective expression of racial tensions.[124] In the 1990s Jeanne Colleran, an American academic, suggested that white South African authors are:

> like long-lost cousins who have reappeared just in time to remind us that despite our tepid political response to both apartheid and to domestic racism, our capacity for moral outrage is still intact.[125]

This in a sense can apply retrospectively apply to the appearance of Paton's novel in an America at the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement.

In 1915, William E.B. du Bois wrote a discerning article on the disposition of the Great War (1914-1918). In his typically frank manner he wrote that World War I was a war for the empire, with Germany and the Allies battling over Africa. This was not only a reality but a symbol of imperialist power.[126] He asserted that "… in a very real sense Africa is a prime cause of this terrible overturning of civilisation which we have lived to see… [Africa] is the Land of the Twentieth Century".[127] This is obviously an allusion to the gold and diamonds in the deep rock of South Africa, the bittersweet cocoa of Angola and Nigeria, the rubber and ivory of the Congo and the palm oil of the West Coast.[128] Du Bois went further in his observation, keeping in mind that he was writing this several years before Lenin's *Imperialism,* and keenly noted the ingenuity of capitalism in "uniting exploiter and exploited – creating a safety valve for explosive class conflict."[129] He proclaimed that "it is no longer simply the merchant prince, or the aristocratic monopoly, or even the employing class that is exploiting the world: it is the

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123 A. van der Vlies, *South African Textual Cultures*, p. 75.
124 A. Burns, Mirror to the South, *Southwest Review,* pp. 408-410.
125 J. Colleran, South African Theatre in the United States: The Allure of the Familiar and of the Exotic, *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid and Democracy, 1970-1995,* 1998, pp. 221-236.
126 W.E.B. du Bois, The African Roots of War, *Atlantic Monthly,* May 1915.
127 W.E.B. du Bois, The African Roots of War, *Atlantic Monthly,* May 1915.
128 H. Zinn, *A People's History of the United States,* pp. 362-363.
129 H. Zinn, *A People's History of the United States,* p. 363.

nation, a new democratic nation composed of united capital and labour".[130] These themes are prominent throughout *Cry, the Beloved Country.*[131] In a twist of fate, World War I became the catalyst that would entwine the fates of the world's nations together.

Towards the end of the War, the same criticisms and questions that were asked at the beginning of the War reared their heads once more. Essentially what was the aim of the War? Neither the Allies nor the Central Powers, despite Woodrow Wilson's nudging, had openly stated what they hoped to gain through the "bloodletting."[132]

It was in this mix of hypocrisy that America found itself in and in which it would continue to find itself in long after the War had ended. Ten months before the Armistice (November 1918), Wilson had outlined a plan calling for peace. This plan had a profound impact on not only the world, but America too as evidenced by the implications of the final eight points which called for "territorial transfers within Europe to implement the principle of 'self-determination', which would permit all people possessing a distinct history, language, and ethnic identity to live under governments of their own choosing".[133] It is important to note that this emphasis on nationalism would infiltrate into the world order and would become a dangerous ideology that would have an impact across the globe. These ethnic and nationalist strains would inevitably contribute to the crisis that would unravel long into the future.[134]

Even though the Great War had ended, the internal "war" in America was far from over. The period after the War and into the 1920s was complex and newly-energised. It was also a divided decade described as an era of paradoxes and contrasts.[135] The majority of Americans relished in unparalleled wealth and material abundance.[136] However, poverty continued to plague millions of Americans, including minorities, small farmers and industrial workers. The boom in the economy and the subsequent wealth did very little to eradicate poverty and racial tensions. There was a drastic change among the vast majority of Americans which inevitably seeped into the way they lived, worked and

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130 W.E.B. du Bois, The African Roots of War, *Atlantic Monthly,* May 1915.
131 W.E.B. du Bois, The African Roots of War, *Atlantic Monthly,* May 1915.
132 G.B. Tindall & D.E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History,* p. 665.
133 G.D. Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century,* p. 102.
134 G.B. Tindall & D.E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History,* p. 665.
135 G.B. Tindall & D.E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History,* p. 665.
136 H. Zinn, *A People's History of the United States,* p. 377; G.D. Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century,* p. 117.

cared for one another.[137] However, beneath the surface of America was a society that was deeply fragmented along many fault lines, described by historian G.D. Moss as:

> urbanites versus rural folks, White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) versus ethnics, white against black, and perhaps the most profound divide: between those who embraced a modernist culture and those who retained traditional values.[138]

The oftentimes cynical American novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald observed American society after World War I as a "new generation… grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken".[139] This period known as the "Roaring Twenties" was a culmination of prosperity, frivolity and "loosening" morals. This was the reality for some Americans, but not for all. At the other extreme, the ramifications of the carnage experienced during the World War I permeated into the fibre of American society resulting in an air of hopelessness and doubt.[140] Two tangents were thus forming during these early years of the 1920s, one being the challenge of modern thought regarding old traditional ideas of progress, values and faith; and on the opposite end of the spectrum was a rise in the defensive and firm ties to the old values of the church, home and family.[141] This growing atmosphere resulted in the emergence of "American nationalism with nativism, Anglo-Saxon racism, and militant Protestantism".[142]

Almost thirty years later while this "class war" was still bubbling in the underbelly of American society, the publication of *Cry, the Beloved Country* arrived on the shelves of American bookstores. This was a milieu that at many levels paralleled South Africa, which was also experiencing extreme racial and class tensions. In a number of ways, *Cry, the Beloved Country* mirrored American society even during the early twentieth century.

The 1920s, famed for its immense prosperity, had a slow start. With the disorder that came after the Great War and the Red Scare, the latter brought on by the fear of the ever-spreading communism across Eastern Europe, many Americans experienced

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137 G.D. Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century,* p. 117.
138 G.D. Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century,* p. 117.
139 F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise,* p. 304.
140 G.B. Tindall & D.E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History,* p. 678.
141 G.B. Tindall & D.E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History,* p. 678.
142 G.B. Tindall & D.E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History,* p. 678.

severe economic and social difficulties.[143] "Year One"[144] of the growing affluence in America appeared to be a world of ever-growing wealth, although very unevenly distributed.[145] The 1920s were heralded as one of the "longest epochs of good times in American economic history".[146] This was a time of opulence, social change and "personal liberation".[147] It was also celebrated as a brilliant decade of scientific and technological breakthroughs.[148]

A 1919 article from the publication, *The Nation,* commented on post-War rebellion strikes in the industrial sector, but in many ways this particular excerpt almost foreshadows what was to come in the following decade:

> The common man… losing faith in the old leadership, has experienced a new access of self-confidence, or at least a new recklessness, a readiness to take a chance on his own account… authority cannot any longer be imposed from above; it comes automatically from below.[149]

One of the most distinguishing features of this era was the new consumer economy. Consumerism, literally, consumed the nation. The tools for advertising now lay in the hands of those that believed that people were impressionable and infinitely easy to manipulate.[150] This modern mass production process deeply influenced society in that "Americans began to look, act, and sound more and more alike. Consumerism fostered conformity in manners and morals".[151] Millions of families across the country were doing well for themselves and were patching their lives together in a way that reflected the new "American Dream", a dream that essentially perpetuated whiteness. This new way of life allowed folk to "shut out the picture"[152] the "other" – the tenant farmers, sharecroppers, immigrant families, increasing poverty, and most importantly, class tensions and race relations.

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143 G.D. Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century,* p. 119.
144 G.D. Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century,* p. 119.
145 H. Zinn, *A People's History of the United States,* p. 382.
146 G.D. Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century,* p. 119.
147 G.D. Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century,* p. 117.
148 G.D. Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century,* p. 117.
149 Anon, *The Nation,* 1919 in H. Zinn, *A People's History of the United States,* p. 380.
150 G.D. Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century,* p. 117.
151 G.D. Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century,* p. 125.
152 H. Zinn, *A People's History of the United States,* p. 382.

It was an era that was also characterised by the mass migration of people into urban areas, a trend that continued steadily post-World War I. Black American sharecroppers of the deteriorating South moved to the industrialised North. Those that arrived in metropolises like New York City, Chicago and Detroit quickly learned that the "better" neighbourhoods were closed off to them therefore forcing them to crowd into "ghettos".[153] Marcus Garvey, an ex-slave from the West Indies came to America in 1916 and quickly became a militant black nationalist who believed in black separateness.[154] Du Bois criticised Garvey and described him as "without doubt, the most dangerous enemy of the Negro race in America and the world".[155] What is important to note is that this initial movement opened up a cascade of black grievances and aspirations. With the black migration to the North, there was a slow and steady increase in black political influence that was nudged on by a spirit of protest. This erupted through avenues such as literature and the artistic movement known as the "Harlem Renaissance".[156] However, this movement, as inspiring as it was, battled to make headway against the powerful white supremacy force of the post-War decade.[157]

In addition to the early rise of Black Nationalism came the revival of the right-wing white supremacist group, the Ku Klux Klan.[158] This movement was obsessed with protecting its distorted idea of the white American way of life. It was obsessed to protect the white race against black Americans and other people of colour, but also from those of the Catholic and Jewish faiths, and a range of other immigrants.[159]

One of the most impressive things to come out of America during the 1920s was the upsurge of serious literature. Urbanised areas of America produced a generation of literary intellectuals that deeply criticised the urban phenomena of consumer culture and the values that came with it. Writers during this period were equally disillusioned, especially those that came back shattered from World War I. They were "bewildered by the rapid social change and appalled by the shallow materialism of the New Era".[160]

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153 G.D. Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century,* p. 125.
154 D. Tallack, *Twentieth-Century America, The Intellectual and Cultural and Context,* p. 259.
155 T. Draper, *The Rediscovery of Black Nationalism,* p. 51.
156 G.B. Tindall & D.E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History,* p. 689.
157 H. Zinn, *A People's History of the United States,* p. 382.
158 H. Zinn, *A People's History of the United States,* p. 382.
159 G.B. Tindall & D.E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History,* p. 678.
160 G.D. Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century,* p. 125.

Interestingly, many writers during this period equated America with agrarianism and used the South as an image of the ideal, an Americanisation of the biblical Eden.[161] The association between the farm and paradise was a tradition that would continue well into the coming years which could potentially explain how and why *Cry, the Beloved Country* slipped so seamlessly into the American readership.

The prosperity of the 1920s was not sustainable and essentially gave way to economic crisis and a collapse of the stock markets. The year 1929 saw the American economy buckle, in an episode known as the "Great Depression".[162] Within a year, America had gone from a recession to a downright depression and a nation of over-confident "boosters" became a nation of anxious "pessimists".[163] John Steinbeck, one of America's greatest novelists, wrote in his heartrending novel *The Grapes of Wrath* about the pitiful sale of farms under the auctioneer's hammer and how the once prosperous land turned to dust:[164]

> …And the dispossessed, the migrants, flowed into California, two hundred and fifty thousand, and three hundred thousand. Behind them new tractors were going on the land and the tenants were being forced off. And new waves were on the way, new waves of the dispossessed and the homeless, hard, intent and dangerous…
>
> And a homeless hungry man, driving the road with his wife beside him and his thin children in the back seat, could look at the fallow fields which might produce food but not profit, and that man could know how a fallow fiend is a sin and the unused land a crime against the thin children…
>
> And in the south he saw the golden oranges hanging on the trees, the little golden oranges on the dark green trees; and guards with shotguns patrolling the lines so a man might not pick an orange for a thin child, oranges to be dumped if the price was low…[165]

Black Americans were hit the hardest at both an economic and social level. Moss described it as "hard times meant a continuing struggle for survival for most African-Americans within the confines of second-class citizenship".[166] Even under the leadership of the optimistic president Franklin D. Roosevelt and the implementation

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161 D. Tallack, *Twentieth-Century America, The Intellectual and Cultural and Context,* p. 172.
162 G.D. Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century,* p. 155.
163 G.D. Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century,* p. 162.
164 H. Zinn, *A People's History of the United States,* p. 389.
165 J. Steinbeck. *The Grapes of Wrath,* pp. 166-67.
166 G.D. Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century,* p. 167.

of the New Deal to “revive” the economy, it was not possible to bring the American economy out of its economic stagnation. Paradoxically it was in fact the outbreak of World War II that essentially restored prosperity back to America. Through the same means as World War I, the monopolisation of wartime trade had a huge economic impact.[167]

Even though *Cry, the Beloved Country* would only find itself among American readers in the mid-twentieth century however, we can see that the historical backdrop of America in the early twentieth century in many ways resembled the themes in *Cry, the Beloved Country.* Stark socio-economic paradoxes continually dominated American society. The disastrous impact of the Great Depression in the 1930s plagued American society for almost a decade. It had a long-lasting impact on the economy of America. More importantly it created further divisions between white and black Americans as the country was desperately trying to restore its economy.[168] This manifested in many ways, white Americans received more government help as seen through the soup kitchens which tended to favour white Americans over black Americans.[169] Additionally, with F.D. Roosevelt’s optimistic New Deal which hoped to revive the American economy generally tended to favour white labour over black labour.[170] Therefore, we can see that the long history of race and class divisions continued to escalate further into the 1930s.

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, America, just like World War I, would only join the War effort a few years in. In 1941, with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, America officially joined the War.[171] African Americans were drafted into the War and fought alongside their white counterparts. Yet, even during the War, there was a clear divide between black and white Americans. The Navy only allowed African Americans to work in the kitchens, the Red Cross refused blood donations from African Americans and lynchings continued.[172] The unease among African Americans is apparent in a January 1943 African American newspaper in which a prayer appeared for African American draftees:

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[167] G.B. Tindall & D.E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History,* p. 658.
[168] H. Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States,* p. 317.
[169] H. Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States,* p. 319.
[170] H. Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States,* p. 319.
[171] H. Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States,* p. 419.
[172] H. Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States,* p. 420.

Dear Lord, today
I go to war:
To fight, to die,
Tell me what for?
Dear Lord, I'll fight,
I do not fear,
Germans or Japs;
My fears are here.
America.[173]

Thus we can see that World War II only continued to create a greater divide between black and white Americans. We can see this in both the novel and American society in which there was a divide between the wealthy and those that were not wealthy, those that had access to prosperity and those that did not. Additionally, and perhaps, most importantly the divide between African Americans and white Americans. The historical backdrop of the early twentieth century America in many way mirrors the themes in *Cry, the Beloved Country* such as poverty, urbanisation, and the increasing growth in racism and the evils that came with it. However, continuing into the latter part of the century, these themes would become increasingly more apparent.

The world after World War II was completely altered even more. Twentieth century thought and culture was influenced by World War II even more profoundly than after the previous Great War. Among the world's concerns were the introduction of nuclear warfare which in turn inaugurated the Cold War and the arms race; the legacy of Nazi and Stalinist terrors; an ever-increasing violation of human rights across the world; the concomitant immense growth of state bureaucracies and multinational capitalism; as well as ever growing tension regarding race and class relations.[174]

This is the American world and milieu that Alan Paton's most famous novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country* found itself in. Here we find an America grappling with the overpowering impact of a capitalist world order, which created a society deeply divided by class. This was an America dominated by white supremacy as seen through the persistent popularity of the racist group, the Ku Klux Klan. This is also an America with a very long history of violent colonisation and conquest now only beginning to deal with civil rights. Therefore, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* with two

[173] H. Zinn, *A People's History of the United States,*p. 419.
[174] D. Tallack, *Twentieth-Century America, The Intellectual and Cultural and Context,* p. 312.

distinct themes of capitalism and civil rights resonated well in a post-war American conscious. This was the America that Paton's novel found itself, in bookstores, in libraries, on coffee tables and in the hands of a society deeply affected by race and class.

PATON IN AMERICA

According to Cowling, who wrote an article in 2005 on Alan Paton in America, any attempt to "track Paton's presence in the American media is by no means straightforward".[175] What is even more challenging is defining the reasons for an almost immediate popularity and acceptance by the American reading population. We do however know that he succeeded in remaining one of the foremost commentators on South African politics and race relations in the United States for almost three decades. Paton would continue to tour the United States giving talks regarding racial conflict.[176]

Paton's first visit to the United States was during the early 1940s. He had volunteered for service during World War II but was refused due to health-related issues. After the War, he went on an international trip at his own expense, to tour penal reformatories. During this time he toured a number of correctional service institutions in Britain, continental Europe, Canada and finally the United States. An early review of *Cry, the Beloved Country* actually comments on the fact that Paton was internationally based when he wrote his novel:

> Here is a remarkable story of how a fine, deeply felt novel grew out of an author's thinking about the problems of his homeland 10 000 miles away. Alan Paton, as a South African, came to the United States to study penal institutions. [177]

The article continues to describe the way in which *Cry, the Beloved Country* came into existence. It was in California that Paton met an American couple, Mr. and Mrs Aubrey Burns. Paton began to describe the tense situation in South Africa, it was "fear and misunderstanding that divide[d] a handful of white rulers and millions of black men".[178]

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[175] L. Cowling, The beloved South African: Alan Paton in America, *Scrutiny* 2(10), 2005, p. 82.
[176] L. Cowling, The beloved South African: Alan Paton in America, *Scrutiny* 2(10), 2005, p. 82
[177] H. Hansen, *New Hampshire Citizen,* 1948.02.06.
[178] H. Hansen, *New Hampshire Citizen,* 1948.02.06.

And almost suddenly Paton realised that he could turn this into a novel. Such was the origin of *Cry, the Beloved Country.*

As previously mentioned, Paton was the headmaster of Diepkloof Reformatory in South Africa, therefore, he visited a number of penal reformatories to gauge different insights on how things were run which could potentially be adopted into South African reformatories. [179] In 1934 Paton was given the responsibility to transform Diepkloof Reformatory into a school. Paton's approach to the task, like "many other education reformers in the twenties and thirties"[180] was motivated by the goals and methods of progressive child-centred pedagogy.[181] Consequently during the years 1942 to 1948 the majority of Paton's writing was solely based on this "progressive" approach to penal reform. In a letter written to Doris, Alan Paton's wife, he describes one of his visits to a prison:

> … we fell to talking about South Africa and the disturbed state of the world. He turned out to be Admiral Sir B. Hagart, a very distinguished man, and Chairman of the prison committee. The Governor then took me round, and I saw my first few signs of a little prison experimentation.[182]

Cowling writes that during this time Paton wrote "15 articles for scholarly journals and/or South African periodicals"[183] on matters related to correctional services and reform.

After the publication of *Cry, the Beloved Country* Paton would tour the United States giving talks regarding racial conflict. In 1948 he would also go on to receive the *Ebony Award* "for the best book improving racial understanding".[184] The *Ebony Award* was awarded by *Ebony,* a magazine mainly aimed at an African-American audience. *Ebony* celebrated African-American life by showcasing the achievements of black Americans. It honoured the lived experience of African-Americans by refuting prejudiced

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179 A. van der Vlies, *South African Textual Cultures*, p. 75.
180 L. Chisholm, 'Education, Punishment and the Contradictions of Penal Reform: Alan Paton and Diepkloof Reformatory, 1934-1948' at University of Witwatersrand History Workshop, *Africana,* 6-10 February 1990, pp. 1-2.
181 L. Chisholm, 'Education, Punishment and the Contradictions of Penal Reform: Alan Paton and Diepkloof Reformatory, 1934-1948' at University of Witwatersrand History Workshop, *Africana,* 6-10 February 1990, pp. 1-2.
182 P.F. Alexander, *Alan Paton: Selected Letters,* p. 114.
183 L. Cowling, The beloved South African: Alan Paton in America, *Scrutiny* 2(10), 2005, p. 82.
184 A. van der Vlies, *South African Textual Cultures*, p. 75.

stereotypes, and inspiring readers to overcome racial and other barriers to success. This publication became a vanguard for civil rights as it aimed to provide reliable coverage of the civil rights movement as it unfolded across the United States.[185] Later in 1949, Paton was also awarded the *Anisfield-Wolf Awards for Books on Racial Relations*.[186] The *Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards* is an organisation that recognised, and still continues to recognise, books that have made important contributions to the understanding of racism and appreciation of the rich diversity of human cultures:

> Cleveland poet and philanthropist Edith Anisfield Wolf established the book prizes in 1935 . . . to reflect her family's passion for issues of social justice. Today it remains the only American book prize focusing on works that address racism and diversity. Past winners have presented the extraordinary art and culture of peoples around the world, explored human-rights violations, exposed the effects on growing up biracial, and illuminated the dignity of people as they search for justice.[187]

Paton made his first debut in American media magazines in 1951 and for the next decade he was the chief commentator on all things related to South Africa.[188] His popularity began to wane in the mid-60s as other more accomplished commentators with a background in politics and economics gained more prominence in the US media. During the 1970s and up to his death in 1988 his visibility as a commentator on South African racial and socio-economic tensions began to tail off.[189] Other South African authors during the 1980s and 1990s, some more overtly radical in their political ideologies, gained prominence. This includes authors such as Nadine Gordimer and J.M Coetzee. As white authors gained prominence during this period, black voices were increasingly finding their space in a tense South African political climate. This movement peaked especially during the black consciousness movement led by Steve Biko and his1978 publication *I write what I like.*[190]

When Alan Paton passed away in April 1988, only four obituaries appeared in American mainstream magazines.[191] However, even though Paton's influence in

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185 B.A. Glasrud & L. Champion, 'Ebony' in *Encyclopaedia USA,* pp. 139-143 & W.C. Daniel, 'Ebony' in *Black Journals of the United States,* 1982.
186 A. van der Vlies, *South African Textual Cultures*, p. 75.
187 The Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards, <www.anisfield-wolf.org>, 2017.
188 L. Cowling, The beloved South African: Alan Paton in America, *Scrutiny* 2(10), 2005, p. 82.
189 L. Cowling, The beloved South African: Alan Paton in America, *Scrutiny* 2(10), 2005, p. 82.
190 S. Biko, *I Write What I Like,* 1978.
191 L. Cowling, The beloved South African: Alan Paton in America, *Scrutiny* 2(10), 2005, p. 82.

American newspapers and magazines decreased as the years passed, it is important to note that in the academic sphere, *Cry, the Beloved Country* remained a prescribed book in both high schools and universities alike across the United States until at least the end of the twentieth century.[192] In addition to this, a number of historical, literary and sociological studies[193] were done on the novel, a novel that came from an unassuming South African man, in which its universal humanistic morals deeply affected American readers.

1948 DEBUT OF *CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY*

W.G. Rogers, a member of the Associated Press Arts, wrote about Alan Paton in *Fort Worth Star Telegram* towards the end of 1948. This article aptly encapsulates the incredible speed at which Paton and his greatest novel quickly shot to fame: "three months to write a novel, and a year to get over it . . . that's part of the dramatic story of Alan Paton".[194] The article continues:

> Once a schoolmaster, and then for 13 years principal of the Diepkloof Reformatory, he was on leave from his South African post to study reform methods abroad when in Norway in September 1946 he started his novel. He finished it in this country [United States] in December, and handed the manuscript to Scribner's just before he left for home.[195]

On the 30th of January 1948 Charles Scribner, the head of the American publishing house that originally published Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country,* wrote a letter to Paton informing him not to concern himself too much with the reception of his first full novel. What Scribner wrote again reflects on the overwhelmingly positive response the book was to receive:

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192 A. van der Vlies, *South African Textual Cultures*, p. 75.

193 Historical, literary and sociological studies on *Cry, the Beloved Country,* examples (not exhaustive):
Colleran, J. 'South African Theatre in the United States: The Allure of the Familiar and of the Exotic' in *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid and Democracy, 1970-1995.* 1998.
Cowling, L. 'The beloved South African: Alan Paton in America' in *Scrutiny* 2(10), 2005.
A. Nash, The Way to the Beloved Country: History and the Individual in Alan Paton's *Towards the Mountain, English in Africa* (10)2, 10-1983, p. 10-15.

194 W.G. Rogers, *Fort Worth Star Telegram,* 1948.11.10.

195 W.G. Rogers, *Fort Worth Star Telegram,* 1948.11.10.

> If you have any concern about the critical reception of *Cry, the Beloved Country,* these enclosures should dispel it. The reviews from the newspapers and the letters from the booksellers are all that one could desire, especially that appearing in the *New York Times.* That we are receiving reviews so early before publication is due to the special effort that our sales department has made. . . It is obvious from these comments on the story that the readers have been profoundly moved and have been able to translate their feelings into adequate words which is not always the case however much the reviewer may have liked the book.[196]

Scribner ends the letter before signing off with:

> So it would seem that we have at least surmounted the first hazard and can feel that we are off to an unusually fine start.[197]

It was almost as if Scribner's letter, two days before publication, foretold the way in which American readers would continue to view Paton's novel. The moment it was advertised in American newspapers it became an instant bestseller. And so it quickly became a household name throughout the year of 1948.

In the same letter Scribner informed Paton that the *New York Times* and the *Herald Times* were "proudly the most important media in this country".[198] Scribner went further and wrote, "the 'Times Book Review', which is printed with their Sunday edition has a large circulation outside New York City"[199] which meant that the *New York Times* would be the perfect platform to get Paton's novel out into the American world. Scribner mentioned in his letter that he had seen figures of newspaper sales ranging between seven and eight hundred thousand copies. More importantly the 'Times Book Review' had a large influence over those in positions of authority who advised libraries, schools and book clubs on which fiction novels to purchase.[200]

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196 Alan Paton Centre, Pietermaritzburg: PC 1/1/1/5/8, C. Scribner – A. Paton, 1948.01.30.
197 Alan Paton Centre, Pietermaritzburg: PC 1/1/1/5/8, C. Scribner – A. Paton, 1948.01.30.
198 Alan Paton Centre, Pietermaritzburg: PC 1/1/1/5/8, C. Scribner – A. Paton, 1948.01.30.
199 Alan Paton Centre, Pietermaritzburg: PC 1/1/1/5/8, C. Scribner – A. Paton, 1948.01.30.
200 Alan Paton Centre, Pietermaritzburg: PC 1/1/1/5/8, C. Scribner – A. Paton, 1948.01.30.

The *New York Times* on the 1st of February printed the first advertisement for *Cry, the Beloved Country* as shown below. It was already heralded as one of the "ten best books of 1948".

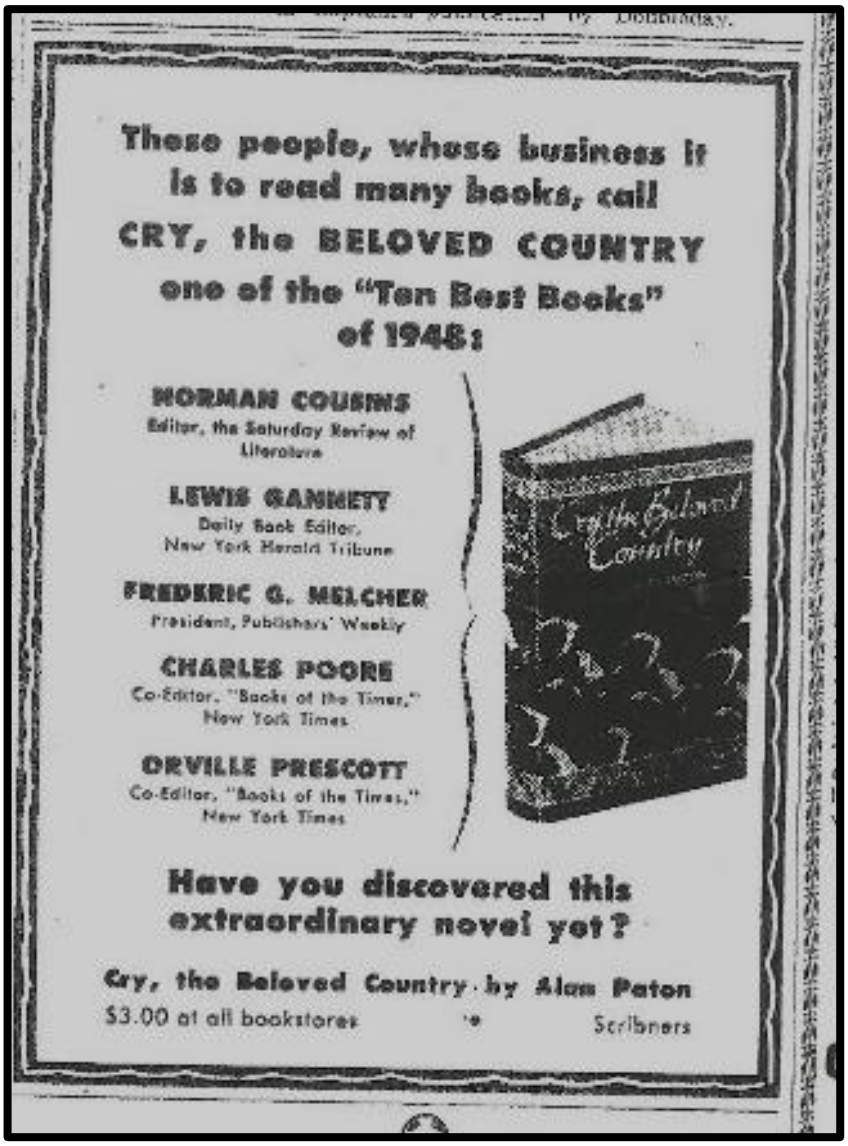

Figure 1: One of the first advertisement clippings for *Cry, the Beloved Country* in which the novel is named by renowned reviewers as 'one of the "Ten Best Books" of 1948'.

From: *The New York Times,* 1 February 1948.

On the 2 February 1948 Prescott, wrote the first full review for the "Books of the Times" published in the *New York Times*:

> The finest novel I have ever read about the tragic plight of black-skinned people in a white man's world is *Cry, the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton. Without any of the blind rage which leads so many writers on similar themes into bitterness and dogmatism, without any of the customary over-simplification and exaggerated melodrama, Mr. Paton has written a beautiful and profoundly moving story, a story steeped in sadness and grief but radiant with hope and compassion.[201]

To the American readers, its moralistic Christian humanism, trusteeship and the ever-present idea of reconciliation appealed to white, middle-class citizens some of which were probably equally anxious about racial tensions in their own country.[202] Towards the end of 1951, the *Saturday Review of Literature* described the advent of *Cry, the Beloved Country* into the United States as follows:

> Early in 1948, *Cry, the beloved country*, a first novel by a South African penologist named Alan Paton, slipped almost unheralded into American bookshops. Before the year was out, literary critics and the general reading public alike were acclaiming it as a masterpiece for its poetically beautiful prose, deep spirituality, and universal compassion for human suffering.[203]

According to Cowling, the "praise of *Cry, the Beloved Country* subtitled in its first editions as 'A story of comfort in desolation'[204] was extravagant and extensive".[205] "A story of comfort in desolation" would quickly become the "go-to" description of this novel in early reviews. The emotive language in this concept would not only be re-written in varying ways, but the sentiments created by the use of emotive language would also be recycled into the synopsises of the novel in most reviews. The *Star-Ledger,* a newspaper situated in New Jersey, which was also the largest circulated newspaper in this region during the mid-twentieth century,[206] printed a review of the

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201 O. Prescott, *The New York Times,* 1948.02.01.
202 A. van der Vlies, *South African Textual Culture: White, Black, Read All Over,* p. 72.
203 Editors note, *Saturday Review of Literature,* 11-1951.
204 A common description of *Cry, the Beloved Country* as seen across many newspapers, magazines and book reviews.
205 L. Cowling, The beloved South African: Alan Paton in America, *Scrutiny* 2(10), 2005, p. 82.
206 Member Newspapers, NSPA.org, s.a. Access: 2016.07.18.

Cry, the Beloved Country with the title, “Saga of a Neglected People”.[207] Reviews in newspapers used a number of varying forms of emotive language in their titles which not only highlighted the themes in the story itself, but also focused on the impact that urbanisation had on South Africa. Central to this was the breakdown of traditions in the black South African community.

On the same day as the publication above, the *Los Angeles Times* actually picked up on the phenomenon that *Cry, the Beloved Country* so effortlessly found its way into the American readership. (See Figure 2). The reviewer, Milton S. Merlin, was an award-winning producer and writer for motion pictures during the first half of the twentieth century.[208] Merlin, known for his contempt towards Hollywood, nonetheless wrote highly and almost extraordinarily of *Cry, the Beloved Country.*

> Many volumes have been devoted to the conquest of South Africa, and Cecil Rhodes is almost as well known to an American schoolboy as his own country’s historical celebrities. However, few books have found their way into American readers’ hands which show the consequences of that conquest.
>
> *Cry, the Beloved Country* is a beautiful and tragic story of a lovely land plundered for its fabulous wealth and ridden with deep, devastating fears. It is a rich, profoundly moving story cast in a simple mould.[209]

[207] *Star-Ledger,* 1948.01.29.
[208] M. Oliver, *Los Angeles Times,* 1996.11.01.
[209] M. Merlin, *Los Angeles Times,* 1948.02.29.

The Best Sellers

An analysis based on reports from leading book sellers in 22 cities, showing the sales rating of 16 leading fiction and general titles, and their relative standing over the past 3 weeks.

Feb. 8	Feb. 15	Feb. 22	This Week	
				Fiction
2	2	1	1	House Divided. *Williams*
1	1	3	2	East Side, West Side. *Davenport*
3	3	2	3	Raintree County. *Lockridge*
	8	6	4	Eagle in the Sky. *Mason*
4	4	4	5	Came a Cavalier. *Keyes*
11	6	5	6	A Light in the Window. *Rinehart*
14			7	The City and the Pillar. *Vidal*
7	7	10	8	Unconquered. *Swanson*
5	5	8	9	The Bishop's Mantle. *Turnbull*
8	10	15	10	The Moneyman. *Costain*
	9	7	11	Other Voices, Other Rooms. *Capote*
9	13	13	12	The Garretson Chronicle. *Brace*
		12	13	Private Enterprise. *Thirkell*
6	12	14	14	Red Plush. *McCrone*
			15	Cry, the Beloved Country. *Paton*
10	16	9	16	Eagle at My Eyes. *Katkov*
				General
2	2	1	1	Peace of Mind. *Liebman*
1	1	2	2	Inside U. S. A. *Gunther*
5	6	3	3	Information Please Almanac 1948. *Ed. by Kieran*
3	3	4	4	Speaking Frankly. *Byrnes*
12	8	5	5	Sexual Behavior in the Human Male. *Kinsey et al.*
4	5	10	6	The Meaning of Treason. *West*
7	7	6	7	A Study of History. *Toynbee*
16	13	13	8	The Great Rehearsal. *Van Doren*
9	4	9	9	The Proper Bostonians. *Amory*
8	10	7	10	The American Past. *Butterfield*
6	12	11	11	I Remember Distinctly. *Rogers and Allen*
10	9	8	12	Human Destiny. *du Nouy*
13	11	16	13	War as I Knew It. *Patton*
			14	Your Income Tax. *Lasser*
	15	14	15	Back Home. *Mauldin*
11	16	15	16	Home Country. *Pyle*

Figure 2: *Cry, the Beloved Country* after 28 days since publication found itself ranked number 15 on "The Best Sellers" List in the *New York Times,* a leading publication in America.

From: *The New York Times,* 29 February 1948.

It was perhaps the simplicity of the novel that truly captured the American readership. The narrative emerges from the torment of the two protagonists, Stephen Kumalo and James Jarvis, one the father of a murderer and the other the father of the victim. Hope emerges out of their torment, with the historical backdrop of civil rights experienced, though differently, in both South Africa and America. It is the "same sombre hope experienced by liberal thinkers that one day there will be emancipation of the fear of bondage and the bondage of fear".[210] The *St. Louis Missouri Post-Dispatch* described it as follows:

> It is for most part a devastatingly sad tale – yet, in the middle of poignant passages there are phrases which inspire and even soothe one's spirit… *Cry, the Beloved Country* is a book for everybody.[211]

The *Dubuque Witness* declared: Paton in *Cry, the Beloved Country,* had woven the threads of a strong social document on the problem of race as it existed in South Africa. It continued: the might of "White Supremacy" and the exploitation of black labour, even to the extent of breaking down family life and consequently slipping into the abyss of poverty. It all gathers into the accumulation of this novel, even though naïve and lacking solution, it sanely exposed a real South African problem that mirrored American society.[212]

Alice Dixon Bond of the *Boston Herald* incorporated liberal thinking in her review of *Cry, the Beloved Country* by combining the collective American memory of Abraham Lincoln with Alan Paton's novel. In her review she makes a direct link between Paton's book and Lincoln's view of democracy. Commenting on this type of association Barry Schwartz, of the University of Georgia, illustrated how societies "preserve the past" through the idea of memory as a cultural system. One-third of all Americans that lived during the 1940s were born during the late nineteenth century, when Civil War resentments were beginning to fade into history books and remembrances of Abraham Lincoln were more positive and vivid than ever. Therefore, applying what Schwartz mentioned about cultural association, the appeals of the past are in fact an ideological assertion to formulate the mood of a people. Then to make it into a public possession,

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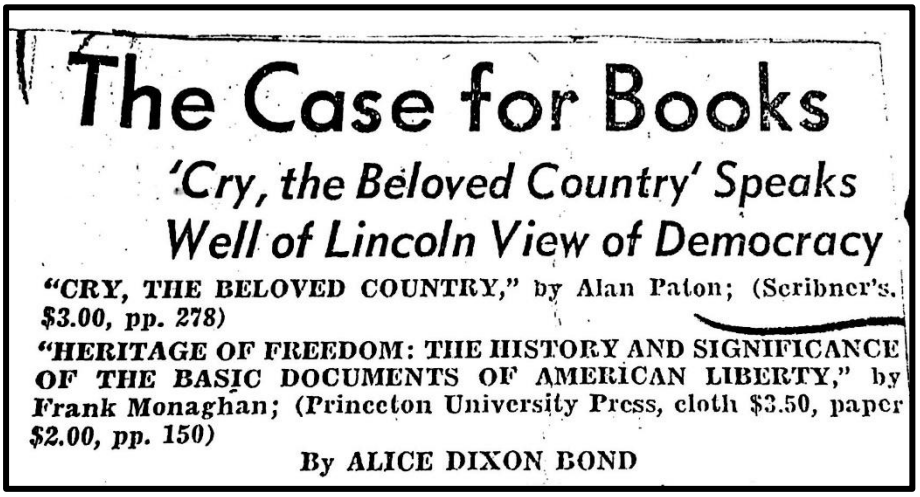
[210] M. Merlin, *Los Angeles Times,* 1948.02.29.
[211] *St. Louis Missouri Post-Dispatch,* 1948.08.17.
[212] *Dubuque Witness,* 1948.06.24.

rather than a set of disconnected unrealised private feelings.[213] This is what makes this particular review so interesting as indicated below:



The Case for Books

'Cry, the Beloved Country' Speaks Well of Lincoln View of Democracy

"CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY," by Alan Paton; (Scribner's, $3.00, pp. 278)

"HERITAGE OF FREEDOM: THE HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BASIC DOCUMENTS OF AMERICAN LIBERTY," by Frank Monaghan; (Princeton University Press, cloth $3.50, paper $2.00, pp. 150)

By ALICE DIXON BOND

Figure 3: *Cry, the Beloved Country Speaks Well of Lincoln View of Democracy.*

From: *Boston Herald,* 11 Febrary 1948.

Alice Dixon Bond's review of *Cry, the Beloved Country* encapsulated this idea of Schwartz's understanding of collective memory. Her review begins with:

> Tomorrow is the birthday of Abraham Lincoln, a birthday which is bright and indestructible milestone of the long road of freedom which leads to "liberty and justice for all."
>
> It is a time of remembrance, a time to take thought, for all the world has not moved too far along that road and there is still a "great task remaining before us." "Important principles may and must be inflexible" he [Lincoln] said in his last public address in Washington in 1865, a maxim we would do well to remember in our troubled present together with his idea of democracy, which he had defined seven years previously.[214]

In her review, Bond also punts the idea that the main theme upheld throughout *Cry, the Beloved Country* is never being defeated by blind rage. As Lincoln said in his last public address in 1865: "As I would not be a slave so I would not be a master. This

[213] B. Schwartz, Memory as a Cultural System: Abraham Lincoln in World War II in *American Sociological Review* 61(5), p. 917.

[214] A.D. Bond, *Boston Herald,* 1948.02.11.

expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of difference, is no democracy".[215] Bond continues to write that *Cry, the Beloved Country* mirrors the same ideas. Bond claims in his novel Paton is never defeated by blind rage nor gets lost in bitter reproaches and endless dogmatism, as was current in many novels published during the 1940s.[216]

> In poetic cadenced prose that is both emotional and austere, Mr. Paton builds his story to its stirring and moving climax, creating characters that are complete and alive, fusing action and thought, realistic detail and universal quality with exquisite artistry. It's a novel of compelling overtones yet what is said is always implicit in character or country, an outgrowth of logical action or of spirit.[217]

A headline from *Chicago ILL News,* which clearly encapsulated America's fixation with the "other", read: "Touching Novel Champions the Zulus, the Forgotten Men of South Africa. *Cry, the Beloved Country* tells an Explosive Story".[218] Others included "Fine Novel of a Present-Day Zulu"[219] and "Zulu Pastor Hero of a Fine Novel",[220] while some headlines made use of words that would pull on the subjective heartstrings of the readers, such as, "Africa's Woes",[221] "Broken Family Ties"[222] and "Tale of Sorrow".[223]

Cry, the Beloved Country even though a novel written by a South African man and about the South African context, became "Americanised" in that it was often compared to American works of literature in order to contextualise the story into an American understanding. The late Donald Woods, a renowned South African journalist and a great supporter and friend of Steve Biko,[224] thought that "no book since *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had a comparable impact on international opinion on the issue of race".[225] These

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215 A.D. Bond, *Boston Herald,* 1948.02.11.
216 A.D. Bond, *Boston Herald,* 1948.02.11.
217 A.D. Bond, *Boston Herald,* 1948.02.11.
218 J. Gray, *Chicago, ILL. News,* 1948.02.04.
219 R. Sullivan, *New York Times,* 1948.02.01.
220 H. Hansen, *Citizen,* 1948.02.06.
221 *New Haven Register*, 1948.02.08
222 D. Jenkins, *Philadelphia Bulletin*, 1948.02.08.
223 *Oklahoman*, 1948.02.08.
224 S. Uys, 'Obituary of Donald Woods' in *The Guardian,* 2001.08.20.
225 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* rear cover.

comments remain on the most recent Penguin edition of *Cry, the Beloved Country* which simply reiterates the impact that the novel had within America.

Other American reviewers also alluded to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in their appraisals of *Cry, the Beloved Country. Uncle Tom's Cabin,* was published in 1852 and written by Harriet Stowe Beech, a nineteenth century radical anti-slavery female "activist". It tells a tale of "Uncle" Tom, a pious slave living on a plantation in the American South. The story revolves around Tom's experiences as a slave, with themes touching on anti-slavery and more importantly, the positive role that Christianity plays in the life of not only Tom, but all of the other characters.[226] Similar to *Cry, the Beloved Country* the Beech novel also had a sub-title: *or life among the lowly,* which highlighted its main concern. Moreover, much like Stephen Kumalo, the protagonist and moral compass of *Cry, the Beloved Country,* Uncle Tom is encapsulated into a metaphor to illustrate the characteristics of the intrinsic "goodness" within man, which is also a theme that runs powerfully throughout *Cry, the Beloved Country.*

In Stephen J. DeCanio's article *Uncle Tom's Cabin: A Reappraisal,* he writes the following of Uncle Tom:

> Throughout the story, Tom displays kindness toward all, suffers as any human being would from privation, and refuses to inform on other slaves. Tom loves his wife and children, keenly misses them after he is sold. He maintains his human dignity under the most savage physical and mental pressure. He declares to agree that while he will be "a true and faithful servant," his soul will not "give up to mortal man."[227]

Most of the early reviews of *Cry, the Beloved Country* reflected the way in which Stephen J. DeCanio wrote of *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*

> It's the city of dazzling wealth and horrible want: whites, blacks live there in "the fear of bondage and the bondage of fear" And it is here that Kumalo suffers such excitement as no one should have to suffer. There is vast excitement in these pages: a pursuit, a murder, a trial. There is more kneeling in prayer than most contemporary fiction. But there is something else, immeasurably more important and rare: A

[226] S.J. DeCanio, Uncle Tom's Cabin: A Reappraisal, *The Centennial Review,* 34(4), p. 587.
[227] S.J. DeCanio, Uncle Tom's Cabin: A Reappraisal, *The Centennial Review,* 34(4), p. 593.

> feeling for the hurts of humble men, a longing to assuage them, a fierce yearning for justice.[228]

Just like Beech illustrated the reality of slavery for what it was, so did Paton "unearth … unpleasant realities".[229] More cogently DeCanio wrote of the importance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by saying: "Stowe deserves our attention because her great anti-slavery presages a dilemma of our own time".[230] Therefore, Paton's novel, much like Stowe's novel, not only put South Africa's racial policies on the global map, but highlighted the dilemma of race relations that America was beginning to grapple with in light of the early civil rights movement that was starting to gain momentum across the country post World War II.

Due to the popularity of the views expressed in it, DeCanio's review was reprinted word for word in the following newspapers, and approximately twenty others unnamed here, on the 2 February 1948:

Atlantic City Union
Bridgeport Telegram
Corsicana Sun
Fayetterville Observer
Geneva Times
Gloversville Herald
Ithaca Journal [231]
Marshalltown Times Republican
Niagra Falls Gazette
Ottumwa Courier
Perth Ambey News
Torrington Register
Union City Hudson Dispatch

In the New Hampshire *Citizen* in February 1948 Harry Hansen stressed the idea that *Cry, the Beloved Country* is a parable, a story that teaches you a lesson in which he compares the protagonist, Stephen Kumalo, to the God-fearing men of the Christian *Bible*:

> Why do the householders of Johannesburg fear their native servants? Why are the blacks resentful, the whites apprehensive and arrogant? What divides human beings, makes some of them domineering, others cringing and time-serving?

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[228] Alan Paton Centre, Pietermaritzburg: PC 1/1/1/4, Book Review, 1948.
[229] S.J. DeCanio, Uncle Tom's Cabin: A Reappraisal, *The Centennial Review,* 34(4), p. 587.
[230] S.J. DeCanio, Uncle Tom's Cabin: A Reappraisal, *The Centennial Review,* 34(4), p. 593.
[231] PC. 1/1/1/4

> Stephen Kumalo, the simple Zulu pastor, or *umfundisi,* of St. Mark's church in a Natal valley, pondered these matters as concrete sufferings came before him. You've met him before, the reflective, hesitant man of goodwill, asking nothing for himself. He is like Brother Noah, in *The Green Pastures,* and countless other men of God.[232]

Interestingly, a review in the Newark *Star-Ledger* began its commentary by comparing Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* with Pearl Buck's 1931 novel *The Good Life.* Buck was an American novelist known for her writings on peasantry life in continental Asia, and was also an advocate for women's rights and minority groups. *The Good Earth* was an epic tale set in China during the 1920s. This was a period when the revolution of political and social ideologies were just a farfetched thought. The story begins on Wang Lung's wedding day and follows the rise and fall of his wealth. His wife, O-Lan, was previously a slave for the wealthy Hwang family. Due to opium use, frivolous spending and uncontrolled borrowing, the Hwang fortune begins to decline so allowing Wang Lung to purchase a part of the Hwang land. However, due to the socio-economic situation in China during the early twentieth century, Wang Lung's family is forced to migrate to the city in hopes of finding prosperity.[233]

> Nobel Prize winner Pearl S. Buck traces the whole cycle of life: its terrors, its passions, its ambitions and rewards. Her brilliant novel—beloved by millions of readers—is a universal tale of an ordinary family caught in the tide of history.[234]

The review of Paton's novel begins with a comparison with this epic novel:

> Not since Pearl Buck stood up before the world to bespeak a proper consideration for the Chinese as neglected members of the human family has so ardent and unaffected a champion of forgotten men appeared as Alan Paton shows himself to be.[235]

Two interesting things to note of American reviews comparing *Cry, the Beloved Country* and *The Good Earth* is firstly that Buck's novel also told a tale of people migrating to the cities. It focuses on the period just following World War I when America experienced mass migrations of people moving into cities in hope of also finding

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232 H. Hansen, *New Hampshire Citizen,* 1948.02.06
233 P.S. Buck, *The Good Earth,* synopsis on back of book.
234 P.S. Buck, *The Good Earth,* synopsis on back of book.
235 *Star-Ledger,* 1948.01.29.

prosperity. It can be argued that it is essentially easier to understand historical and societal processes if they are written in a fictional format. Therefore, within the American context, this could be a reason to explain why *Cry, the Beloved Country* was so readily accepted by American readers.

In writing about the relationship between the audience and the text, Cowling highlights the importance of understanding that the relationship between the two is never predictable and it is almost always complex.[236] Even though one can never predict the reception of literature, it is still a pertinent factor to consider as it allows us to look for connections between the audience and text. Ien Ang refers to this as it, "a multiplicity of forces".[237]

The second interesting aspect to note is how the reader reacts and interprets the texts "from the outside" looking in. Pearl Buck was an American citizen, therefore one can understand why it was easier for her novel to gain prominence within American society as she was "one of their own". However, Alan Paton was totally alien to the a-typical 1950s American individual. Audiences reading texts from foreign places develop a particular way of decoding text because of the awareness of the "foreign".[238] However, as the audience continues to read and the initial reaction to the "foreign" element passes, the reader may approach the text differently, according to social, political and economic situations, and the global condition they may find themselves in. This would indeed appear to be the case with Paton in America.

However, Americans during the 1950s were not easily exposed to transnational texts[239] as texts coming from across the ocean had to compete with the already huge number of publications within the country. However, Arjun Appadurai argues that global texts allows for a sort of collective imagining:

[236] L. Cowling, The beloved South African: Alan Paton in America, *Scrutiny* 2(10), 2005, p. 87.
[237] I. Ang, *Living Room Wars: rethinking media audiences for a postmodern world,* p. 38.
[238] L. Cowling, The beloved South African: Alan Paton in America, *Scrutiny* 2(10), 2005, p. 88.
[239] L. Cowling, The beloved South African: Alan Paton in America, *Scrutiny* 2(10), 2005, p. 88.

> … Because of collective reading, criticism and pleasure, is what I have elsewhere called a 'community of sentiment', a group that begins to imagine and feel things together".[240]

Therefore, American readership during the 1950s and 1960s reading *Cry, the Beloved Country* allowed for them to create a collective imagining of a narrative about race, trauma, urbanisation, human migration in an imagined world, the beloved country, a world that was not theirs.[241] The title, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* appears in many passages throughout the novel and it is suggested that if the word "the" was omitted it would read, "Cry, Beloved Country for the unborn child that is the inheritor of our fear."[242] It is this that Hansen of the New Hampshire publication *Citizen* stressed in his early review of the novel:

> It is not a great book, but it is a moving one, and one of the few in which human compassion is expressed simply, directly, as a human need.[243]

This allowed for a decontextualised reading which allowed readers to feel sympathy for the "tragic plight of the black-skinned people in a white man's world",[244] while distancing themselves from the people oppressed in America during the mid-twentieth century. One review indirectly highlights this by stating:

> I suppose if Alan Paton had written about the American Negro or even about the American Indian in the idyllic vein in which he writes about the Zulus, I would be quick to dismiss him as a sentimentalist.[245]

More importantly, Paton's novel as Harry Hansen's review in New York's *Survey Graphic* in March 1948 indicated, was a "gentle protest" and commended it as an "outstanding example of a creative embodying social comment", expressly not "propaganda", "a word that novelists detest"[246] and significantly the solution for racial

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[240] A. Appadurai, *Modernity at large,* p. 8
[241] L. Cowling, The beloved South African: Alan Paton in America, *Scrutiny* 2(10), 2005, p. 89.
[242] H. Hansen, *New Hampshire Citizen,* 1948.02.06.
[243] H. Hansen, *New Hampshire Citizen,* 1948.02.06
[244] O. Prescott, *The New York Times,* 1948.02.01.
[245] D. Trilling, *Nation,* 1948.03.
[246] H. Hansen, A Gentle Protest, *The Graphic Survey, 5-1948.*

tensions was based on Christian values – reconciliation.[247] Thus, it is a possibility that the cathartic imagining taken from reading *Cry, the Beloved Country* could be one of the many complex factors that boosted Paton into America.

Gertrude Rivers wrote in the *Journal of Negro Education,* that the novel was seen to be a form of a "guidebook" illustrating injustice within South African society, which many African-American learners could relate to.[248] School and college sales in America continuously rose after the publication of the novel and by 1959, it was selling between 6000 and 8000 copies annually to colleges, and around 3000 a year in bookshops. Scribner, the original American publisher, published a paperback edition in order to increase sales. In 1959, just over a decade after the novel was published, Charles Scribner Jr., wrote a letter to Paton claiming that his novel had "acquired the status of a classic".[249]

> We are glad Alan Paton wrote this story out of his abundant experience and love for his countrymen. We need more such stories that give the spirit – books without bitterness, that combat evil with understanding not exhibitionism.[250]

It can be speculated that the positive reception of the novel can be attributed to the prevailing mentalities arising out of the quagmire that was the genesis of the civil rights movement. As indicated following the Great Depression of the 1930s African Americans were excluded from the New Deal programs that lifted white America out of poverty. They were essentially excluded from social programs meant to enrich society as a whole. They continually endured disenfranchisement in many regions of America.[251] The period between Reconstruction and World War II, comparable to the period between the first South African War and World War II, was characterised by the rise of black attempts at ideological resistance to oppression. In both cases these attempts did not manifest the substantial protest methods that could make gains in the realms of social and economic inclusion.[252] This congruency with South Africa's racial

[247] L. Cowling, The beloved South African: Alan Paton in America, *Scrutiny* 2(10), 2005, p. 89.
[248] G.B. Rivers, Cry the Beloved Country, *Journal of Negro Education,* 18(1), pp. 50-52.
[249] TS, C. Scribner, Letter to Paton. 13 August 1959.
[250] H. Hansen, *New Hampshire Citizen,* 1948.02.06
[251] A.W. Marx, *Making Race and Nation,* p. 222.
[252] A.W. Marx, *Making Race and Nation,* p. 222.

conditions might have sparked a familiarity in American readers' minds that lent itself to an appreciation of the themes in the novel.

As is evident, *Cry, the Beloved Country* had a popular and reverent reception in America. The similar racial and class historical contexts of South Africa and America meant that there was a foundation for the book's positive critical reception amongst American readers. Despite Paton's waning popularity, and the fact that he was under-memorialised at his death, did not detract from the impact that *Cry, the Beloved Country* clearly made. Its inclusion as a coursework at American schools, colleges and universities half a century after it was first published is evidence of this. Finally and most importantly, it put the segregationist and apartheid regime in the American consciousness, where it remained until its own death.

Chapter IV

Britain reads *Cry, the Beloved Country*

INTRODUCTION

After the publication and launch of Alan Paton's novel in the United States in February of 1948 it was soon to be introduced in other countries. Six months later Jonathan Cape, a publishing house in London, released the novel on the 27th of September 1948. *Cry, the Beloved Country* was perhaps one of the most successful and internationally recognisable "South African" novels[253] to reach foreign shores. This was evident in the fact that within a month of the original publication, the third impression of Jonathan Cape's edition appeared in Britain. The media announced that:

> … the third impression of *Cry, the Beloved Country,* by Alan Paton, [was] now available. [Jonathan Cape's] stock [was] almost exhausted, and a fourth impression [had] been ordered and [was] expected from the binders the next month. At this rate this book seems likely to beat the record of *From the City, From the Plough* by Alexander Baron.[254]

By 1951 there were eighteen Jonathan Cape impressions printed, which amounted to a total of forty-five thousand copies.[255] Not long after the American publisher Scribner accepted that British manuscript, British publisher Jonathan Cape was quick to uptake a British publication. Allegedly Paton always claimed that Jonathan Cape accepted *Cry, the Beloved Country* without any hesitation.[256] Paton also claimed that William Plomer, the chief reader, was "immediately enthusiastic".[257]

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253 A. Van Der Vlies, Local Writing, Global Reading, and the Demands of the Canon, The Case of Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country, South African Historical Journal* 55, 2006, p.20.

254 *The Bookseller,* 1948-10-23.

255 H. Bloom (ed), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 141.

256 H. Bloom (ed), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 139.

257 H. Bloom (ed), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 139.

However, it is interesting to note that Plomer's report of *Cry, the Beloved Country* was presumed lost.[258] Fascinatingly it survived among Paton's papers in Pietermaritzburg. In his report, Plomer was actually far from confident that the novel was worthy of Jonathan Cape's list of books to publish. Additionally we can see that Paton wrote a letter to his wife Dorrie telling her that he was indeed worried about the way the novel would be received. He writes about some of the reviews he had read shortly after the novel reached British shores:

> … "What's all the fuss about?" You remember I told you that I thought it [his novel] would be out of reach of non-South Africans. However you must not think that I am worried, nor must you think that I am just telling you that I am not worried.[259]

Additionally and interestingly Plomer thought of Alan Paton to be "English by birth and South Africa by adoption".[260] However, regardless of the apparent cold response by Plomer, it was due to the warm reception of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in America that Jonathan Cape went ahead and began the publication of the novel, even in the face of the concern of paper shortages post World War II.

It was also largely due to the positive reception of the novel in United States that the hype surrounding this novel was propagated amongst British readers. The first reviews of *Cry, the Beloved Country* came out instantaneously in British newspapers. Interestingly the vast majority of British publications made reference to the reception of the novel in the United States. Just like America, they saw it as both a social text written in the form of a novel, and by virtue of being a piece of literature, they perceived it as more than a mere social document or piece of propaganda.[261] *Current Literature* described Paton as being "too good an artisan to descend to partisanship".[262] While *British Express,* a London based newspaper, in September 1948 wrote:

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[258] A. Van Der Vlies, Local Writing, Global Reading, and the Demands of the Canon, The Case of Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country, South African Historical Journal* 55, 2006, p.20.
[259] P.F. Alexander, *Alan Paton: Selected Letters,* p. 225.
[260] H. Bloom (ed), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 139.
[261] H. Bloom (ed), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 140.
[262] *Current Literature,* 1948-10.

> ‘Evil City’ makes first time winner.
>
> This first novel by South African writer Alan Paton has already been published in America, where it was received with almost extravagant enthusiasm.[263]

This little snippet reflects on the obvious influence of America’s reception of the novel and how it was received in Britain. The headline, ‘”Evil City” refers to Johannesburg as a den of iniquity, but also plays on the horrors of the segregationist system with its degradation and discrimination. This is an unusual catchphrase to use because of the ominous implication. The *Manchester Guardian* remarked that the novel was “remarkable… for its facts as well as its truths”,[264] implying that through literature the truth about South Africa during the mid-twentieth century was exposed, but also highlighted the truths that British readership would see reflected in their own society.

In terms of context 1948 was a mere three years after the end of World War II and Britain was still in a state of chaos. Thousands of lives have been lost to the War effort, the economy was in dire straits, and the Kingdom’s infrastructure had been to a large extent decimated. The people of Britain were still War-weary. The fact that *Cry, the Beloved Country* contains so many themes related to industrialisation and urbanisation, in its core, the role of capitalism and the efforts to rebuild (not just the physical, but also the rebuilding of morale) appealed to the British population at this time.

We also need to consider that Britain was not dealing with the same issues of race as was the case in the United States and South Africa. Rather, it was dealing with class conflict, loss of lives and an economically broken country. It is to this landscape that this chapter now turns. It was the universal humanism within the novel with the backdrop of rebuilding, both the physical and the abstract, that appealed to the broader British readership. It was the universal themes that truly resonated with the British reading *Cry, the Beloved Country.*

Unlike the history of the United States, the histories of both Britain and South Africa were inexplicably entwined. This inevitably played a significant role in the way Britain

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[263] *British Express,* 1948.09.28.

[264] H. Bloom (ed), *Bloom’s Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton’s Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 140.

engaged with *Cry the Beloved Country.* To begin with, Paton saw himself as British. He was generally dismissive of Afrikaners, and additionally in his early childhood this then meant that the black population was outside his purview altogether. This was entrenched by the fact that he was brought up in an English-speaking home and further reinforced by the fact that both his parents spoke of Britain as "home." He was subliminally encouraged to do the same. In addition to this, at the time of his birth in 1902, Natal was a colony of Britain, which would not change until the formation of the Union in 1910.[265] Furthermore, segregationist policies were put on the political and social landscape.

The history of Britain is a complex narrative, however, in order to engage with the arrival of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in Britain, we need to look at Britain at the turn of the twentieth century. It is through this looking glass that we will be able to analyse the reception of this novel. As G.K. Cherston aptly quipped: "The only way to write history, is to write it backwards".[266]

By the end of the nineteenth century Britain had gained the status of an "Empire". The phrase, "The Empire on which the sun never sets" reflects on the vastness of the British Empire and that it was so huge that there was always at least one part of its territory that was in daylight.[267] The majority of the British population strongly believed in their right to an "Empire" and would go to great lengths to defend it. Imperial sentiment was part and parcel of British society.[268] This state of mind became known as "Jingoism", after a famous Music Hall song of 1878 which reflected on this sentiment:

> We don't fight, but, by jingo if we do,
> We've got ships, we've got the men, we've
> got the money too.[269]

Even at the beginning of the twentieth century Britain was still considered one of the greatest world powers. However, by the mid-twentieth century, even though still considered one of the "Big Three", Britain was clearly economically weaker than that of the other two, the United States and the Soviet Union. By the end of the 1970s,

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265 P.F. Alexander, 'The Examined Life': Alan Paton as Autobiographer, *Alan Paton Lecture 2009,* University of KwaZulu Natal, 16 July 2009.
266 G.K. Cherston, *A Short History of England,* p. 224.
267 D. McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain,* p. 148.
268 T.O. Lloyd, *The British Empire, 1558-1995,* p.145.
269 We Don't Want to Fight, < https://monologues.co.uk/musichall/Songs> Accessed: 2018.06.20.

Britain was no longer a world power at all, and not even among one of the richest European powers.[270] The proverbial sun had set on the British Empire, and its power had ended just as quickly as Spain's had done in the seventeenth century.[271] There are many reasons as to why the British Empire had declined so drastically. One reason was the cost of keeping up the Empire, followed by the economic problems involved in losing it. A second reason was the cost and effort of the two World Wars. However, one reason that eclipses these was the basic weakness of Britain's industrial power and her failure to spend as much as other industrial nations in developing her industry.[272]

There are many arguments explaining why Britain had lost its status as an Empire due to a weak industrial sector. Some claim that the workforce was lazy, while other ascribe the situation to the fact that that the trade unions became too strong.[273] Another view was that at the end of World War II class conflict quickly came to the forefront of societal tensions in Britain. This also occurred against the backdrop of a broken country which needed to rebuild and heal. This is the timeframe in which *Cry, the Beloved Country* would become a story of comfort in desolation[274] within the British readership.

According to the historian, Trevor May, "total war"[275] describes World War II more aptly than it does World War I and reflects on how inclusive and devastating it was. British civilians were involved just as much as the armed forces. As May describes:

> The bomber could not distinguish between the two groups, and the last frail distinctions between combatants and and non-combatants faded away. The factory worker making military equipment was in as much mortal danger as the infantaryman using it.[276]

By September 1941 the "enemy" had succeeded in killing more civilians than serviceman. About 74, 172 tonnes of bombs were dropped on Britain. At this point more than 60, 000 British civilians had been killed and a further 237, 000 injured.[277]

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[270] D. McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain,* p. 159.
[271] D. McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain,* p. 159.
[272] D. McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain,* p. 159.
[273] D. McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain,* p. 159.
[274] A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country.*
[275] T. May, *An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1760-1970,* p. 366.
[276] T. May, *An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1760-1970,* p. 366.
[277] T. May, *An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1760-1970,* p. 366.

Arthur Marwick quotes a diary entry written in October 1940 which accurately encapsulates the mood during World War II:

> We had got accustomed now to knowing we may be blown to bits at any moment. The casual scraps of news we get about results of raids bring this home better than statistics. Two girls go into a telephone box to send word they may be late home, as there is a raid on. Bombs fall close by. Both killed. A woman of ninety-four with six daughters in a large expensive house is hit. Two of the girls die. What a picture! A family creeps out of its garden dug-out to get some supper. They sit down at the table. Next minute they are all dead. We know this may happen to any of us. Yet we go about as usual. Life goes on.[278]

The overriding concern of British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, during World War II was to win the War rather than to think of a world beyond the War. Some historians believe that it had been the fault of many British politicians to offer more than they could fulfil.[279] This was evident after World War I. In many ways, even during World War II, the people of Britain were still reeling from the First. The men who had fought in such terrible conditions during World War I had been promised a land "fit for heroes"[280] which never came into fruition. Alongside the social effects of the War were the far-reaching economic ones. The cost of the War had led to an enormous four-fold increase in tax, from six percent of income in 1914 to 25 percent in 1918. Additionally, the demands of the War had also led to a doubling in the size of the armed forces, and greater government control of national life. Therefore it was inevitable there would be an increase in the tensions between the general public and government. This resulted in many serious strikes in the years 1919-1921, in which soldiers were forced to break these strikes, and force women and men back to work. This took place even though many of the soldiers actually sympathised with the ordinary British citizens.[281]

In 1926, discontentment and apathy among British workers led to a general strike by all workers. The reasons for the general strike were complicated, but essentially boiled down to the fact that mine owners had cut the miners' wages. This would inevitably result in a nationwide strike. The Labour government feared that this strike would damage the economy even further so it made plans to make sure that there would be

[278] A. Marwick, *The Explosion of British Society,* p. 99.
[279] T. May, *An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1760-1970,* p. 373.
[280] D. McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain,* p. 163.
[281] D. McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain,* p. 164.

a continual supply of coal. The Trade Union Congress (TUC), who represented the miners in this case, naturally found itself at loggerheads with the government which further added fuel to the strike action. Ultimately, the general strike proved damaging to everyone involved.[282] Many workers believed that the police, whose job it was to uphold the law, were actually fighting against them causing greater division and discontent.[283]

It is possible to argue that Britain missed a huge opportunity to introduce reforms to bolster economic structure after the War. However, instead of careful planning by the government, businessmen were allowed to swoop in and make quick profits, as seen in the cotton mills, mines, shipyards and engineering industries. [284] There was very little that the government could actually do to control the situation as it was not in control of the economic forces at play. The world was in the thralls of the "Great Depression" which deeply impacted Britain. During the period 1930-1933 there were over three million workers unemployed. These memories would continue to influence the British opinion of employers, government and the police for more than half a century.[285]

World War II, like the World War I, had had a profound impact on British society. D. McDowall points out that: "one new feature is worth considering, for some have argued that it acted as a great force for social change in the post-war world. This was evacuation".[286] During the 1930s plans were laid down for evacuating citizens from cities in the event of air raids. The interesting thing to note about this is that different classes would be forced to mix. May comments that the *Luftwaffe* was a powerful missionary for the "welfare state". There was a "mixing" of social classes during the War "though more in spirit than in substance".[287] It has been indicated that the effect of evacuation was that "more often middle-class families were confirmed in the prejudices about the dirty fecklessness of the working class".[288] These class tensions would continue even after the end of the World War II, which in many ways would

[282] D. McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain,* p. 164.
[283] D. McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain,* p. 164.
[284] D. McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain,* p. 164.
[285] D. McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain,* p. 164.
[286] T. May, *An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1760-1970,* p. 371.
[287] T. May, *An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1760-1970,* p. 371.
[288] T. May, *An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1760-1970,* p. 371.

allow the varying themes of class conflict prevalent in *Cry, the Beloved Country* to become relatable.

On the 7th of May 1945 the Germans surrendered unconditionally, and finally after five and half years of total war in Europe, it all came to an end.[289] However, the jubilee and celebrations at the end of War was short-lived. It was now time for Britain to pick itself up and rebuild.

In 1945 the Labour Party came into power with Clement Attlee as Prime Minister. As a result, the vast majority of Britain was in a state of euphoria. In his book *An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1760-1970,* May quotes Hugh Dalton's feelings about the victory of the Labour Party:

> There was an exhilaration among us, joy and hope, determination and confidence. We felt exalted, dedicated, walking on air, and walking with destiny.[290]

However, as previously mentioned, British politicians had again made promises that they could not keep. It was now the Labour Party's duty to deliver on what they had promised in their election campaign. One of these promises was the reintroduction of the welfare state, which was deeply entrenched in the capitalist ideology which interestingly is also played out, though differently, in the South African context and within *Cry, the Beloved Country.*

One such example are the images of the reformatory both within the South African context and in *Cry, the Beloved Country.* This might have struck a chord with the British reader during a time in which an increased expectation of government involvement in social aspects of life as seen through the role that the welfare state played in British society.

At the time the welfare state in Britain was a fairly recent development having had its beginnings during the Edwardian era. The idea of the welfare state was for active and positive government intervention in the affairs and well-being of its citizens. The social service state in theory was based on "individualism" during the nineteenth century, however at the turn of the twentieth century this idea turned to "collectivism": the

[289] T. May, *An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1760-1970,* p. 371.
[290] T. May, *An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1760-1970,* p. 383.

collective well-being of the nation. There is not one simple reason why this change in thought occurred. However, within the historical context of twentieth century Britain, one can ascertain that social change did occur, drastically. With the increasing development of trade unions, voting rights, freedom of expression, to mention but a few, it was almost inevitable that the welfare of the whole would be beneficial to the government.[291]

In 1945, the new Labour government promised free secondary education and even made promises to provide more funding for tertiary education. In 1946 it also introduced a new National Health Service which gave everyone the right to access free medical treatment. By 1948, the National Assistance Act provided financial help for the old, the unemployed and those unable to work due to illnesses and disabilities.[292] It is clear to see that by the mid-twentieth century British citizens had begun to demand government intervention to supply basic social rights, such as the right to work, the right to proper education, and the right to proper healthcare.

The aim of the welfare state was to help those that needed the help. However, as positive as the welfare state appeared, one cannot forget that the class struggle played an important role in the development of the welfare state. The degree of the class conflict and the strength of the working-class forced the ruling class to think more strategically and cohesively to restructure the state to avoid the threat of the strength of the ever-growing working class.[293] Therefore, for the British readership, with their overtly liberal ideas, the role of the welfare state with its backdrop of class struggles in many ways was mirrored in *Cry, the Beloved Country.*

It is important to keep in mind that Paton himself worked at Diepkloof Reformatory. In 1934, after suffering a serious bout of typhoid, Paton found himself looking for new work. So he applied for the position of principal at Diepkloof Reformatory. In the same year, the South Africa Parliament decided to transfer all reformatories from the Department of Prisons to the Union Department of Education.[294] The intention of this was to replace the word “penal” to that of “reformatory”. The fact that the word

[291] T. May, *An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1760-1970,* pp. 113-114.
[292] D. McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain,* p. 164p
[293] I. Gough, *The Political Economy of the Welfare State,* p. 65.
[294] A. Paton, *Diepkloof, Reflections of Diepkloof Reformatory,* p. 7.

"reformatory" was used showed that this institution had an educational as well as a custodial function, much like the role of government intervention in Britain.[295]

Those reading *Cry, the Beloved Country* in Britain, may have seen the South African reformatories as an equivalent to the welfare state in that those teetering on the edge of delinquency were helped through government intervention. In this way, reformatories mirrored how the welfare state helped the British citizens, especially those that were likely to turn to a world of crime.

In the novel we find that a young white servant of the reform bureaucracy visits a prison to help an ageing black priest, situated in a rural parish, facing the ruin of his life's work as a reformer himself. The young white man becomes bitter and angry at the stubborn problems of the old priest. The passage reads:

> It is my work to help reform, to help, to uplift. With his hands he makes an angry gesture of uplifting, and then draws back his head into the car and makes as if to start. But he changes his plan and leans out again and talks to Kumalo.
>
> It is a wonderful work, he says, a wonderful work, a noble work. He withdraws again, then leans out again and talks to Kumalo.
>
> You must not think a parson's work is nobler, he says. Perhaps he is speaking too loudly, for he lowers his and voice and speaks through tight and angry lips:
>
> You save souls, he says as though it is grim jest to save souls. But I save souls also. You see people into the world and you see them go out. And so do I saw this Absalom born into a new world and now I will see him go out.[296]

Later the young man returns to explain his conduct to Kumalo:

> I spoke like that because I was grieved and because I try to give myself to my work. And when my work goes wrong I hurt myself and I hurt others also. But then I grow ashamed, and that is why I am here.[297]

This is a very emotional passage. The differing meanings attached to saving souls and the way in which the word "world" is used is a conglomerate of different perspectives. It is evident that the emotion that is constantly being expressed throughout the novel is, in fact, fear. It is in many ways a unifying force in the novel, an almost connective

[295] A. Paton, *Diepkloof, Reflections of Diepkloof Reformatory,* p. 7.
[296] A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* pp. 102-103.
[297] A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 104.

tissue that binds the characters together regardless of race, class and age. T. Morphet explains that as much as fear is a unifier, it is also a tool for destruction, the cancer which eats away and breaks down the will to do good.[298] This is then another universal sentiment which much of the British population could resonate with given the political social and economic climate at the time.

It is thus perhaps one of the many ways in which this novel became so easily accessible to the British readership. In post-World War II Britain there was still fear imminent in the minds of many of the British, but it turned to state intervention for help. However, even with state intervention, and its many flaws, there was still a class burgeoning struggle bubbling within society. Even though the experiences of the characters in *Cry, the Beloved Country* might be very different, it is the universal themes that the British readership found in the novel that made it relatable to their own experiences within their historical context.

One last way in which British readers related to the novel was through the experiential similarities between the plight of black South Africans and the culmination of the Indian independence movement. 1947 saw the dramatic release of India from the bonds of imperialism, as well as the traumatic partition of the country into India and Pakistan.

India was forged as a modern-nation state by the two World Wars. During World War I, Indians developed an unprecedented national consciousness, a natural manifestation of the impact of imperialism, as millions of Indians fought side-by-side with their British counterparts not unlike the African American exposure reffered to in Chapter III.[299] However, only after World War II would India give birth to Indian Independence.[300] Novelists in Britain were tuned into the struggle in India. A telling example of this was in the popular novel, *A Passage to India* by E.M. Forster. The novel illustrated the temperamental fault lines evident in the nation as a result of centuries of colonial rule.[301] The imposition of whiteness in indigenous societies is a fundamental theme of the novel. Images of reform and assimilation dominate the narrative. In the personal proximity of Britain to this concept, British readers might have recognised aspects of their own colonial legacy in the narrative of *Cry, the Beloved*

[298] T. Morphet, *Alan Paton: The Honour of Meditation,* p. 4.
[299] M.J. Green, *A Global History of the Twentieth Century,* p. 6.
[300] M.J. Green, *A Global History of the Twentieth Century,* p. 6.
[301] D. McDowall, *An Illustrated History of Britain,* p. 172.

Country. In between the publishing of *Passage to India* and *Cry, the Beloved Country,* India underwent dramatic shifts that would have embedded themselves into the consciousness of the British public. As quoted in the appendix of *Passage to India:*

> Change had begun even at the time the book was published…There was a Second World War; there was the termination of the British Raj; there was the division of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan and the entry of both of them into world affairs; there was the abolition of the Native States; there was the weakening of purdah and of caste; there was an increase of industrialism. All these changes occurred in the 1940s.[302]

Essentially one can establish that *Cry, the Beloved Country* had a fourfold reception in Britain. Firstly it was almost seamless to be able to relate to the themes of class conflict as seen in the novel. Secondly, the ideas of capitalism as seen in the impact of industrialisation and urbanisation in the novel also appealed to the broader readership. However, in many ways it is chiefly the universal humanism of the novel that played a role in the British reception. Fourthly, after the end of World War II, the British readership really found comfort in the themes of "forgiveness" and "rebuilding the human spirit" prevalent in the novel.

1948 DEBUT OF *CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY*

On the 28th of September 1948, the first British review of *Cry, the Beloved Country* was published. Much like the first American newspaper publication, *The New York Times,* in Britain it was *The London Sunday Times* that debut the first review.

Francis Brett Young, an English novelist and poet, wrote the first review of the novel. The headline was "Out of Africa Something New", which reflects an almost surprise that such a publication could emanate from the racially conflicted South Africa of 1948.[303] It is interesting to note that Young did have a keen interest in literature that came out of the African continent.[304] He writes:

> More novels I suppose have been written about South Africa than about any of the other Dominions: for obvious reasons, since none

[302] E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India,* p 327.
[303] *London Sunday Times,* 1948-09-28.
[304] Francis Brett Young Society, <http://www.fbysociety.co.uk> Accessed: 5 July 2018.

> other excels than that vast country in beauty and strangeness, or in the romantic aspects of its short but turbulent history.[305]

It is interesting that Young uses the word "Dominions" in his review of *Cry, the Beloved Country.* As previously mentioned, the history of both South Africa and Britain were deeply entwined and he plays on this connection. Essentially, Britain's involvement in South Africa can be seen as an endeavour that reflected on the greed of the British Empire during the nineteenth century. It is clear in this review of a country vastly different but similar due the entwining histories that the reviewer would use the word "Dominions". Even though in 1948, with the National Party and its apartheid regime coming into power, South Africa would remain part of the Commonwealth and only gain independence from Britain in 1961.[306] Therefore it is quite apparent that even though this novel was written by a South African man, in an entirely different context, Britain saw *Cry, the Beloved Country* as one of its "own" novels, a novel that came from a man who was "English by birth and South African by adoption".[307]

Additionally Young writes:

> I have said that this is a novel with a purpose. Yet, Mr. Paton's harrowing account of the abominable conditions of native housing-which indeed are not without parallels with our own history.[308]

The "parallels" referred to relates to the pressing need for housing that engulfed Britain at the end of World War II. Aneurin Bevan, a British Minister, was given the responsibility to have more than 150, 000 prefabricated houses built. No comprehensive building plans were drawn up as there was a dire urgency to have the housing problem dealt with.[309] However, as a result of the fact that raw materials were incredibly scarce due to the end of the War, building was slow. This culminated in more than twenty thousand people squatting in disused buildings and army camps.[310]

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[305] *London Sunday Times,* 1948-09-28.
[306] C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* p. 392.
[307] H. Bloom (ed), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 139.
[308] *London Sunday Times,* 1948.09.28.
[309] T. May, *An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1760-1970,* p. 388.
[310] T. May, *An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1760-1970,* p. 388.

This ultimately led to a resurgence of slums, which is a historical aspect not uncommon to the British experience. The government was completely powerless to evict these people and so consequently the number of people living in these areas continued to increase. It is not an uncommon phenomenon that where poverty becomes the norm, things such as alcoholism, gambling and prostitution grow.[311] Even though the British government tried to curb the situation, it was unavoidable. British people felt that the rise of slums would result in an immoral lifestyle, which is what Paton touched on with *Cry, the Beloved Country.* In the novel, the British readership could find a common thread that ran through its society and the society of South Africa: class struggles and their implications of it. For example, Paton writes of this form of "moral" degradation in his novel:

> The old tribal system was, for all its violence and savagery, for all its superstition and witchcraft, a moral system. Our natives produce criminals and prostitutes and drunkards, not because it is their nature to do so, but because their simple system of order and tradition and convention has been destroyed. It was destroyed by the impact of our civilisation.[312]

During the twentieth century South Africa also had a housing problem. In 1930 Johannesburg was described as people "living in poverty, congestion and chaos".[313] They were blighted with "ill-health and starvation"[314] and they lived in "heavily over-populated and grossly neglected" areas.[315] The people living in Johannesburg slums were "heavily dependent on wage-earning outside to relieve a dead level of poverty on the inside".[316]

Another review published on the 15th of October by *John O'London's Weekly* also referred to the situation in South Africa and linked it to the British context: "a [man] who drifts into crime, of and degradation".[317] This is many ways can be linked to the growing slums in Britain and the societal impact that is had on those living in those dire conditions. Even though South Africa in this historical context was dealing with

311 T. May, *An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1760-1970,* p. 388.
312 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 146.
313 C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* pp. 354-355.
314 C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* pp. 354-355.
315 C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* pp. 354-355.
316 C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* pp. 354-355.
317 *John O'London's Weekly,* 1948.10.15.

racial conflict as well as class struggles, many British reviewers rather read these scenes as class struggles focusing on situations that related to their own historical experiences.

However, a review published on the 8th of October by the British newspaper *The Tribune* made reference to the racial problems prevalent in South Africa. The word "slums" was used to describe the housing crisis of black South Africans. This pointed to the impact of industrialisation was having on traditional rural society:

> It is a glimpse into the world of the victims of South Africa, the tenants of the industrial slums. The villages empty into the slums, and the villages die. The slums breed murderers, and thus greater hatred and more violence.[318]

In a similar vein in the British journal called *Current Literature* that reviewed *Cry, the Beloved Country* in October 1948 alluded to the "…the chilling aptness of the phrase 'displaced persons' having now been added to another convenient term of reference for another body of people who sit upon the 'world's conscience'".[319]

John O'London's Weekly not only focused on the way in which the novel was relatable to the British experience, but also touched on the critique of the way in which black people were being treated in South Africa. It referred to the term "deprived people [which] applied to those races whose own cultural traditions have been broken up".[320] Even post World War II Britain could not ignore the deep roots of segregation and the fact that the National Party and its apartheid regime had come into power in 1948. However, the reviewer, Allen Street, towards the end of his review returns to the social implication of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in the British context:

> No phrase has yet been coined for that other vast, yet isolated body of persons who, returned from the wars, has to adjust themselves to peace. Unless they come within the category of "rehabilitation," these remain namelessly, just a lot of young men with, in most cases, a grievance and a distinction to settle down. After a time people become tired of them and their preoccupation with something that no longer exists. So theirs becomes a private war.[321]

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318 *The Tribune,* 1948.10.08.
319 *Current Literature,* 1948-10.
320 *Current Literature,* 1948-10.
321 *Current Literature,* 1948-10.

Thus, even though Street touched on the racial issues occurring in South Africa, however he is still predominantly drawn back to the lived experience in Britain which he sees reflected in the novel. He believes that the people who are suffering the most will become old news and left to fend for themselves just as much as the world has in many ways ignored the segregation in South Africa and the new political rulers, the National Party.

A theme that is dominant in *Cry, the Beloved Country* is the way in which poverty within the black communities in the city of Johannesburg had led to a growth in "immorality" as seen through the practices of alcoholism, gambling and prostitution. The practice of these three illicit activities is synonymous with much of the social history of South Africa, particularly during the period of the mineral revolution in the nineteenth century. Charles van Onselen writes that by 1910 the police estimated that there were between two hundred and three hundred black women who were considered full time prostitutes. While these women found the majority of their customers in the mine compound system, there was a small number of women who had managed to establish themselves in the cities in which they attracted customers of all colours.[322]

Entwined in the underworld of prostitution was also the ever-growing demand for alcohol. Stemming from the mineral revolution there was no short supply of alcohol, even with strong opposition to the consumption of it. As Van Onselen writes:

> …there was no shortage of canteens in the industrialising republic. As early as 1888 there were 393 licensed liquor shops throughout the Transvaal and of these, no fewer than 147, were in the more concentrated Witwatersrand area'[323]

Therefore, with the backdrop of this seemingly illicit history it is understandable why Alan Paton would bring these themes into his novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country.*

Gertrude, the younger sister of Kumalo became the archetype of a woman who has lost her morals to the shame of Johannesburg in Paton's novel. In the novel Gertrude's husband leaves her to go and work on the mines in Johannesburg while

[322] C. Van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914. 1 New Babylon.* pp. 148-149.

[323] C. Van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914. 1 New Babylon.* pp. 56-57.

she stays behind to look after their small son. Very soon after his arrival in Johannesburg his letters home stopped coming in. Gertrude, desperate to find her husband went to Johannesburg and in turn also disappears. Not only is Gertrude the reason that Absolom, Kumalo's son, travels to Johannesburg to find her which results in a disastrous and tragic outcome.[324]

Kumalo receives a letter from Msimangu, a close friend, urgently asking Kumalo to come to the city and take care of his sick sister. It is only once Kumalo arrives in Johannesburg that Msimangu breaks the news that Gertrude's "sickness" is her loose morality. Msimangu tells Kumalo that, "These women [like Gertrude] sleep with any man for their price".[325] There is a definite implication that Gertrude, due to the forces that play out in urbanisation and poverty that Gertrude is a casual prostitute. However, Msimangu's real objection is that she is "one of the queens, the liquor sellers".[326] In other words, Gertrude makes money by selling illegal, homemade alcohol – moonshine, bathtub gin – which has consequently made her one of the richest black woman in Johannesburg. However, throughout the novel we learn that alcohol abuse has corrupted both her and the people in her neighbourhood. There is also a lot of gambling and prostitution that goes on in her house. We even learn in the novel that a man was killed there.[327] In the review published in *Reynold News* in 1948, the prostitute is highlighted and reference is made to Gertrude's immoral lifestyle that she is living in Johannesburg: "The sister is trafficking in raw spirits and her own body".[328]

As previously mentioned, even though the history of Britain and South Africa are vastly different, we cannot ignore the fact that there are themes with universal meaning and relevance. For example, the abuse of alcohol is not just synonymous with South Africa, but it is a relatable theme on a global scale. The years following World War II in Britain marked a period in which "a popular language of stress emerged, resonating with contemporary concerns about political instability and social change".[329] However, after the War ended, the focus on stress and mental health were largely ignored as the focus was rather on restoring productivity and rebuilding

[324] A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country.*
[325] A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 15.
[326] A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 19.
[327] A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country.*
[328] *Reynolds News,* 1948.10.06.
[329] M. Jackson, *Stress in Post-War Britain, 1945-85,* p. 46

the British country to its former glory. It is well known that at this time both British men and women turned to alcohol as a coping mechanism. Interestingly, even though a large proportion of the British population turned to alcohol as a form of escape, it was also to seek comfort. It was however still seen as a problem of individual deficiency and moral degradation. Even with the continual reliance on alcohol in Britain, it was largely ignored by the government and medical professionals alike.

From the above, we can establish that British readers perhaps found comfort in this theme in the novel. The fact that alcohol was used as an escape mechanism in the novel could appeal or resonate with some of the British readership on an abstract level. Additionally, the British readership perhaps could have related to the damaging effects of alcohol and its ability to destroy families.

On the 8th of October 1948, a couple of weeks after the original review of *Cry, the Beloved Country* was published, the British newspaper *The Tribune* wrote a very interesting review of Alan Paton's novel:

> *Cry, the Beloved Country* is the story of a people in slavery, by a slaver with a guilty conscience.[330]

The use of the word "slavery" by this reviewer has a significant historical connotation which is applicable to both the British and South African history. During the nineteenth century Britain began to grapple with both the economic and morale question of slavery. Slavery was one of the very few colonial issues that the British Parliament cared about. Due to the ever-growing slave revolts the British had very little choice but to begin reforming and eventually abolishing the institution of slavery.[331] The ending of slavery, instead of just being a worthy cause became an issue in the British government regarding the steps that needed to be taken to reform the policy and finally abolish slavery. In 1833, after much deliberation, slavery was abolished.[332]

It is important to note that Britain also played a role in the abolishment of slavery in South Africa. Evangelical humanitarians in Britain with connections to missionaries in South Africa and philanthropists were instrumental in the restructuring of legal relations in the British Colony. As a result, on the 1st of December 1834 all slaves in

[330] *The Tribune,* 1948.10.08.
[331] T.O. Lloyd, *The British Empire, 1558-1995,* p. 154.
[332] T.O. Lloyd, *The British Empire, 1558-1995,* p. 154.

the Cape Colony were essentially liberated. Although ex-slaves still had four years of bondage, disguised as so-called apprenticeships before they could enjoy their freedom.[333]

In 1833 Britain abolished slavery, and the average British citizen thus would read the experiences of the characters in *Cry, the Beloved Country* and liken it to the heritage of slavery, a history that many were aware of. Therefore, it is interesting to note that the reviewer chose these particular words to possibly link the role that Britain played in both its own context and the South African context with regards to the institution of slavery. The reviewer is perhaps also linking the plight black South Africans experienced to the impact of segregation and the ever rising deep-rooted racism that they lived in.[334]

In stark contrast, just as Alan Paton in his early years saw Britain as home[335] a reviewer for the *Church Times* on the 15th of October 1948 sees Paton and his novel as something akin to Britain:

> It is an English characteristic that important social reforms and advances have often been due to the work of novelists rather than politicians. The stories of Mrs. Trollope, Charles Reade, and pre-eminently Charles Dickens, not only lay bare defects in the English social framework of their day, but aroused the public conscience, to demand and achieve reform, where orators, preachers ad statisticians would have failed.[336]

The reviewer continues:

> Many of our readers possess some familiarity with the work of the Christian communities in general, and the Anglican Communion in particular, are doing for the native in South Africa; few can be unaware today of the difficulties, political, racial, and denominational which hamper and harass that work. But no sermon from a missionary priest furlough, no documented account of the Church's needs and achievements can bring home to the Churchman in England and battle which Christianity is fighting for the soul of Africa, as clearly as Mr. Paton has done in his work of fiction which bears on every page the stamp of factual truth.[337]

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333 R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa,* p. 37.
334 *The Tribune,* 1948.10.08.
335 P.F. Alexander, 'The Examined Life': Alan Paton as Autobiographer, *Alan Paton Lecture 2009, University* of KwaZulu Natal, 16 July 2009.
336 *Church Times,* 1948.10.15.
337 *Church Times,* 1948.10.15.

Britain, with the majority of its population being of the Christian faith, would perhaps connect with and find the universal themes of Christianity in the novel as a form of comfort and even forgiveness. Especially during the post-War years. The reviewer remarks that very few British would not be aware of the plight of black people occurring in South Africa. Therefore the simple fact that the church spoke out against the injustices would encourage fellow British Christians to do the same. Andrew Foley writes that the inescapable influence of Paton's liberal ideas with the Christian outlook in the novel creates a sub-text, a read-between-the-lines, that the British readership would grasp onto.[338]

Moreover, as *Cry, the Beloved Country* was written in a biblical prose it could in many ways appeal to the British people. The book is structured to show how through religious faith people may learn to forgive and forget, thus creating an opportunity to rebuild, both the physical world and the abstract, which was so desperately missing from post-War Britain. The last chapter in *Cry, the Beloved Country* has been labelled as the "book of restoration"[339] in which the focus of the narrative shifts from social distress to a vision of restorative possibilities.[340] Stephen Kumalo realises himself that "God and the church" will not fix the situation but understands that an active responsibility for the regrowth of his community will do that:

> Kumalo began to pray regularly in his church for the restoration of Ndotsheni. But he knew that was not enough. Somewhere down here upon the earth men must come together, think something, do something.[341]

Therefore, Paton a devout Christian himself, utilised the biblical message while also recognising the politic-religious role. This consequently influenced the language, tone and diction of the novel and broadened its appeal and almost immediately found itself being read by the Christian majority in Britain. This can even be seen in the last paragraph of the above quoted review:

> Read this book, and discover why Englishmen can rightly be asked to support the work of the Church in South Africa. Read this book, and be proud that the English Church is in communion with a province that can

[338] A. Foley, 'Christianity and Liberalism in *Cry, the Beloved Country'* in *Alternation* 6(2), p. 116.
[339] A. Foley, 'Christianity and Liberalism in *Cry, the Beloved Country'* in *Alternation* 6(2), p. 120.
[340] A. Foley, 'Christianity and Liberalism in *Cry, the Beloved Country'* in *Alternation* 6(2), p. 120.
[341] A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 195.

> produce the type of men which are here depicted as priests and laymen, as Europeans and Africans.[342]

We cannot ignore the fact that this appears as an oversimplification and is in essence incredibly paternalistic. However, within the zeitgeist of Britain post-War, this style of writing was probably very appealing. Especially due to the fact the novel never goes into graphic violence, which was common occurrence during World War II. However, Stephen Watson does write that *Cry, the Beloved Country* was not equipped to deal with the political, economic and social complexities that would come in the next decades in both Britain and South Africa as they were both serious ideological and political battles. Watson is referring to Britain and South Africa's future timeline in which each nation would have to fight to create a fair and just world. [343]

Even though this chapter has briefly touched on the fact that Britain was very much aware of the unfolding situation of the National Party and its apartheid regime's rise to power it is only inevitable that reviews of *Cry, the Beloved Country* would comment on South Africa's political scene. Paton's exposition of "man's inhumanity to man"[344] is evident throughout. Paton speaks through one of his characters in the novel, Msimangu:

> I see only one hope for our country, and that is when white men and black men desiring neither power nor money, but only desiring the good of their country, come together to work for it. Yet, I have a great fear that one day when they [the Europeans] are turned to loving, they will find that we are turned to hating.[345]

It is through these passages and the access to news that the British population is aware of the plight of black South Africans in South Africa. The reviewer in *Fight Talk* writes that even though *Cry, the Beloved Country* was a bestseller in the United States and Britain because of its literary greatness, the awareness of the grave situation in South Africa is reflected through the words of the pages running parallel with the news coming out of the country.

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342 *Church Times,* 1948.10.15.
343 S. Watson, '*Cry, the Beloved Country* and the Failure of Liberal Vision' in H. Bloom (ed), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 47.
344 *Fighting Talk,* 1948-10.
345 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country.*

> It is in this country [South Africa] that its true value must be most strongly felt, for the failure and one of the greatest dangers in all of our dealings between white and black, is that the South African is seldom truly aware of the native as an individual. He is conditioned to looking upon the African people as a mass, an alien group, untouchable, bounded by a kind of moral apartheid; and here the reader is made conscious – conscious until it hurts – that these people live, love, anguish, sorrow and hate, with the same passion and intensity as himself.[346]

Therefore, we see that *Cry, the Beloved Country* had a profound impact on the British readership. Firstly, the British were able to relate to the universal themes within the novel which were reflected in their own society which made it so incredibly popular. However, perhaps more importantly, this novel did more to bring the plight and horror of the segregationist and eventually the apartheid regimes to the consciousness of the British public than what politicians achieved. It is through the lived experiences that people are able to come to empathise, understand and, most importantly, embark on a path to achieve justice.

[346] *Fighting Talk,* 1948-10.

Chapter V

South Africa reads *Cry, the Beloved Country*

INTRODUCTION

> There is a lovely road that runs from Ixopo into the hills. These hills are grass-covered and rolling, and they are lovely beyond any singing of it. The road climbs seven miles into them, to Carisbrooke, and from there, if there is no mist, you look down on one of the fairest valleys of Africa.[347]

As indicated in the opening chapter, Paton begins the writing of novel with writing that is akin to that of a poem that describes a serene and idyllic view of South Africa, a view that many foreigners associate with the African continent. However, within the first few paragraphs as indicated earlier, the novel takes a dark turn that illustrates in many ways the true view of South Africa at the time it was written, in 1948:

> The great red hills stand desolate, and the earth has been torn away like flesh.[348]

On the 24 of March 1948 the South African newspaper, *Cape Times* noted that American critics, reviewers and general readers were praising a great novel,[349] and not any novel, but a novel that had come out of South Africa and written by a South African author. The American reviews of *Cry, the Beloved South Africa* that had come in advance into the country wrote that the novel '[was] likely to move up the ranks of the best sellers in that country [United States].[350] The success of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in the United States had sparked an excitement and apprehension in the "Union"[351] and Britain. However, it was reported that South Africans had to wait "impatiently for a British edition, available to booksellers in the Union, to be published".[352]

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347 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* p.1.
348 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* p.1.
349 G. Aschman in *Cape Times,* 1948.03.24.
350 G. Aschman in *Cape Times,* 1948.03.24.
351 G. Aschman in *Cape Times,* 1948.03.24.
352 H. Bloom (ed), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 139.

Just as in the case of Britain, the first reviews of the novel that were published in South African newspapers were replicas of American reviews. Reviews that were published in advance in South African newspapers drew most of their information from American publications, reviews and notices.[353] In many cases, oftentimes repeating them word for word. The Central News Agency's advert in the *Rand Daily Mail* on the 18th of September is one example of the way in which South African publications echoed American reviews. Even before the novel had arrived in South African bookstores.[354] These reviews often used the catchphrase synonymous with the early reviews of the novel, "A best-seller is born!".[355] The Central News Agency of South Africa quoted four American endorsements with three coming directly from the *New York Times.*[356] These advertisements quickly began encouraging South African readers to obtain a "timeless story of modern South Africa".[357] Interestingly, these advertisements that were essentially copied from American publications, drew on the way in which American readers saw the universal appeal in the novel.

Paton himself was anxious regarding the way the novel would be received by South African readers. However, in a letter to a friend describing some of the South African reviews that he had read you can see that he was obviously elated with the response:

> The reviews have been good, some very good. 'The Star' called it a 'great novel' & the 'Rand Daily Mail' 'one of the most significant documents to come out of Africa'. The 'South Coast Herald', our local paper, known as you no doubt guess, as 'the rag', says that 'a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit'. (Ahem!) 'Femina' calls it a 'wonderful book'. 'Milady' calls it a 'powerful story'. The 'Sunday Tribune' says it is 'a milestone in literature'.[358]

In October 1948 the *Daily Dispatch* wrote that it was "often not possible to rely too closely on foreign opinion in estimates of their worth of books upon South Africa. Works that might impress outside observers do not always stand up to the searchlight of local knowledge'.[359] It is with this observation in mind, written in 1948, that this

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353 A. van der Vlies, 'Whose Beloved Country? Alan Paton and they Hypercanonical' in H. Bloom (ed), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 142.

354 A. van der Vlies, 'Whose Beloved Country? Alan Paton and they Hypercanonical' in H. Bloom (ed), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 142.

355 *The New York Times,* 1948.02.09.

356 A. van der Vlies, 'Whose Beloved Country? Alan Paton and they Hypercanonical' in H. Bloom (ed), *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 142.

357 *The New York Times,* 1948.02.09.

358 P. Alexander (ed), *Alan Paton, Selected Letters,* p. 191.

359 *Daily Dispatch,* 1948-10.

chapter will turn. As much as *Cry, the Beloved Country* became so loved and praised internationally, the reception of this novel in South Africa was eventually to be very different.

For one, it was first and foremost a South African novel, written by a South African author about a South African context which in turn was read by a South African audience. Secondly, two voices emerged out of the South African experience of the novel. Firstly, a white liberal view that deeply engaged with the themes in the novel. White liberals saw the novel as a beacon to illustrate the experience of black South Africans. However, in contrast a more radical black voice also emerged that severely critiqued Alan Paton and his novel. These critical views saw the novel as being paternalistic and condescending as seen through the character exposition, the themes and even simply, the way the novel was written.

Once again, to fully engage with the reception of *Cry, the Beloved Country* we need to look at the historical landscape of the country to understand the response of the South African readers. Particularly the way in which the historical context of South Africa formed the two main voices that emerged in response to the novel.

South African history is a complex history in which many histories played out simultaneously. However, for the purpose of this chapter, the focus on the historical context of the novel will focus on the late nineteenth century with regards to the impact of the mineral revolution. This was a theme that Alan Paton essentially revolves his story around, especially regarding the impact that industrialisation and urbanisation had on the black communities. Additionally, and importantly, the role that segregation played in the history of twentieth century South Africa, another theme that Alan Paton centres his novel around. Lastly and briefly, a history of South African writing will be included to give brief background to South African literary writing which will contextualise the reception of *Cry, the Beloved Country.*

The discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 put South Africa on the economic map. When gold was discovered the mining industry was only producing 0.16 percent of the world's gold output, which was still dwarfed by the gold-mining giants of Australia and America.[360] By 1914, less than thirty years after the

[360] C. van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrands 1886-1914, 1 New Babylon,* p. 1.

discovery of gold, the Witwatersrand (Rand) was producing no less than 40 percent of the world's gold output.[361] South Africa had gone from an agricultural economy to an economic powerhouse, a capitalist's dream. The Witwatersrand was quickly industrialising which resulted in a mass migration of both black and white miners into the growing mining hub in South Africa. In the first half of the twentieth century, hundreds and thousands of people, both black and white alike, flocked to Johannesburg. White Afrikaners abandoned their dust-bowl farms to search for work and job opportunities. They were joined by affluence and wealthy immigrants from Britain and Eastern Europe. However, the majority of the people arriving in Johannesburg were black South Africans.[362]

As Charles van Onselen puts it, "in between these starker thickets of technology, the same revolution also spawned a series of urban sponges – the mining compounds and towns – that were called upon to absorb the ever increasing numbers of black and white miners".[363] He continues to explain that, "in the midst of all of these developments, almost half-way along the line of the reef outcrop, lay the social, political and economic nerve centre of the new order – Johannesburg".[364] Black South Africans called Johannesburg "Egoli" – the "City of Gold".[365] When Lewis Nkosi[366] first came to Johannesburg he saw a city filled with isolation and misery. Lewis Nkosi described it as:

> [The pace of Johannesburg] made it desperately important and frightfully necessary for its citizens to move fast, to live very intensely, to live harshly and vividly, for this was the sole reason for their being there: to make money, to spend it and make more.[367]

This would become the geographical epi-centre of Alan Paton's novel and the subsequent impact that industrialisation and urbanisation played on South African society. As Alan Paton writes in his novel:

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361 C. van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrands 1886-1914, 1 New Babylon,* p. 1.

362 G. Frankel, *Rivonia's Children, Three Famililes and the Price of Freedom in South Africa.* p. 32-33.

363 C. van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrands 1886-191-4, 1 New Babylon,* p. 2.

364 C. van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrands 1886-1914, 1 New Babylon,* p. 2.

365 G. Frankel, *Rivonia's Children, Three Famililes and the Price of Freedom in South Africa.* p. 32.

366 Nkosi Lewis, a South African writer and poet. Lewis would become one of Alan Paton's harshest critic.

367 G. Frankel, *Rivonia's Children, Three Famililes and the Price of Freedom in South Africa.* p. 32.

> All roads lead to Johannesburg. If you are white or if you are black they lead to Johannesburg. If the crops fail, there is work in Johannesburg. If there are taxes to be paid, there is work in Johannesburg. If the farm is too small to be divided further, some must go to Johannesburg. If there is a child to be born that must be delivered in secret, it can be delivered in Johannesburg.[368]

Johannesburg, the heart of the South Africa, is both a fact of geography and an act of imagination.[369] As much as Johannesburg grabbed the imagination of a myriad of different artists, the hard fact was that their conception of Johannesburg was not wrong. It was heartbreakingly real. By the 1940s, the Witwatersrand and the reef was buried under man-made development.[370] Nadine Gordimer, a South African author, in a similar strain of writers describing Johannesburg wrote, "its strange hills some like volcanoes, some like sand, some with rippling corrugation, like the tombs of ancient kings".[371] Gordimer was describing the final product of mining, endless piles of rocks and gravel, strewn and spewed from the mines deep beneath the earth's surface. [372] As previously mentioned, the discovery of gold in 1886 set off a frenzied gold rush, and by 1889, Johannesburg had become the largest, impetuous and "most vulgar settlement in Sub-Saharan South Africa".[373]

Van Onselen, paints a stark image of South Africa during urbanisation:

> Ancient Nineveh and Babylon have been revived. Johannesburg is their twentieth century prototype. It is a city of unbridled squander and unfathomable squalor. Life is more costly than one's wildest dreams. All the necessaries of life are impudently dear. Miners of England and Australia, however poor may be your lot, however dark your present aspects, let no man tempt you to South Africa with tales of the wages that are paid upon the Rand! The wages are high indeed, but the price the workers pay for them is paid in suffering and blood.[374]

Cry, the Beloved Country mirrors this view in that Paton paints an equally bleak image of all areas in Johannesburg and the eventual impact that urbanisation had on the people of South Africa:

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368 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country.*
369 G. Frankel, *Rivonia's Children, Three Famililes and the Price of Freedom in South Africa.* p. 32.
370 G. Frankel, *Rivonia's Children, Three Famililes and the Price of Freedom in South Africa.* p. 32.
371 G. Frankel, *Rivonia's Children, Three Famililes and the Price of Freedom in South Africa.* p. 32.
372 G. Frankel, *Rivonia's Children, Three Famililes and the Price of Freedom in South Africa.* p. 32.
373 G. Frankel, *Rivonia's Children, Three Famililes and the Price of Freedom in South Africa.* p. 32.
374 C. Van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witswaterstrand, 1886-1914, I: New Babylon* pp. 1-2.

> And perhaps a second city will grow up (around the new gold mine), a second Johannesburg, with a second Parktown and second Houghton, a second Parkwold and second Kensington, a second Jeppe and a second Vrededorp, a second Pimville and second Shanty Town, a great city that will be the pride of any Odendaalsrust.[375]
>
> For mines are for men, not for money. And money is not something to go mad about, and throw your hat into the air for. Money is for food and clothes and comfort, and a visit to the pictures. Money is to make happy the lives of children. Money is for security, and for dreams, for hopes, and for purposes. Money is for buying the fruits of the earth, of the land where you were born.[376]
>
> No second Johannesburg is needed upon the earth. One is enough.[377]

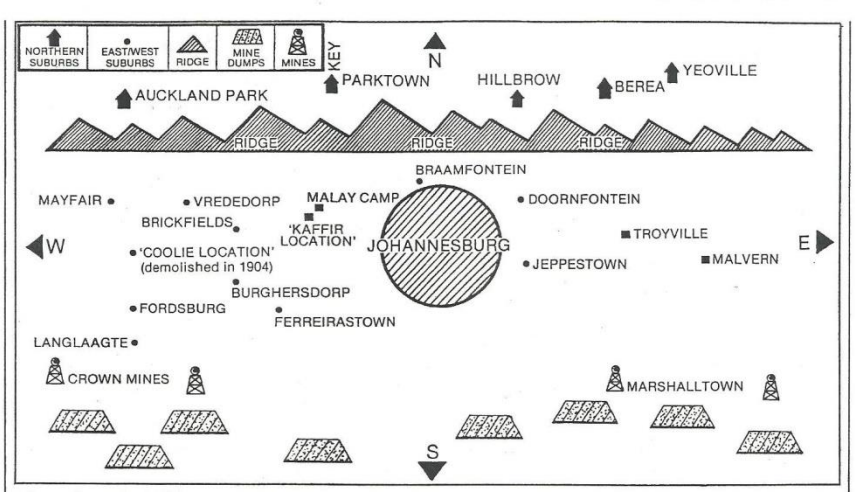

Figure 4 : Illustration of Johannesburg c. 1910.

From: L. Callinicos, *Working Life, 1886-1940,* p. 69.

As one can see from the above excerpts and illustration that even though the gold mining industry brought rapid urbanisation to South Africa, the sprawling metropolis of mines is seen by both Van Onselen and Paton as having a disastrous impact on society.

There were ever-growing tensions not only between black and white folk, but also between the Afrikaners and “immigrant” workers that came to work on the mines. Tensions grew mainly because of labour competition, the mines were being flooded

375 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, p. 148.
376 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, p. 149.
377 A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, p. 149.

by miners which resulted in a saturation of labour, labour that needed to be paid. Thus, in 1889 Cecil John Rhodes and other mining magnates realised that the mines could be worked more efficiently to their benefit.[32] Mining conglomerates realised that competition between the producers drove prices down and even threatened to flood the market. In the same year, De Beers Consolidated Mines and Rhodes's company acquired the monopoly over the four diamond mines. Running parallel to this process and perhaps a direct link to the consolidation of the mining companies, was the restructuring and reorganisation of labour.[378]

Mine owners believed that their profits were dropping because of the theft of diamonds by their workers which resulted in the illicit sale of diamonds in the surrounding towns.[379] The solution for this was the compound system. Due to the growing tension between the black and white population, whites feared that they would be "swamped"[380] by African workers and began demanding that black miners be placed in their own "localised"[381] area. The compound system created a purely racial division and effectively divided the unskilled labour (black) from the skilled labour (white).[382]

Life in the compounds was horrific and depressing. Compounds were enclosed by high walls that shut out the outside world. Additionally, the compounds were geographically situated right next to the mines meaning that the only world that the miners experienced was one of isolation.[383] "Indentured Africans passed through a guarded gate, along a fenced walkway to the pit-head, and returned the same way – with the difference being that they were searched on their return".[384] Men, herded into small "hostels" with little to no access to warmth, inadequate hygiene and non-nutritiousfood. Black miners were forced to sign contracts that kept them indentured for a time period ranging from twelve to twenty-four months.[385]

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[378] C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* p. 175; R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa,* pp. 55-56.
[379] R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa,* pp. 55-56.
[380] C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* p. 175.
[381] C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* p. 175.
[382] C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* p. 175.
[383] C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* p. 175.
[384] C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* p. 175.
[385] C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* p. 175.

This intensified, as previously mentioned, the distinction between skilled white labour and unskilled black labour. Logically it would have made sense to set up compounds for white miners who were just as involved in illicit diamond selling. However, this turned out to be politically impossible, due to the nature of twentieth century ideas of white supremacy.[386] The role of white supremacy played a significant role in South African history. As seen in the labour divisions on the mines, it was in the interest of the mine owners to use racial order as a tool. This would essentially placate the white mine workers and with such, provided a sense of stability to manage the mining society.

> Therefore capital, white labour, and fractions thereof all lent legitimacy to the racial order and race domination. Each calls on the state to take control of the subordinate worker, to draw racial lines… for the advancement of the capitalist business.[387]

Therefore, the doctrine of segregation, which wove together the racist ideologies of the majority of the white population with the interests of the administrators and employers was detrimental to the achievement of the Union, formed in 1910.[388] A common cancer between the English- and Afrikaans-speakers was the "native question".[389] The years just before the formation of the Union were incredibly tense and volatile due to the South African War (1899-1902). This was a War fought between the British Empire and the two Boer states for the control over South Africa, namely for the Boer states which was ironically where the mineral wealth lay deep beneath the soil.[390] However, the "native question"[391] provided a much needed common ground in the uneasy years that followed the end of the South African War.

The word "segregation" was in common use by 1910, particularly after the Labour Party used it in their campaign during the elections of that same year.[392] And so the building blocks of segregation were put into place. During the 1900s, South African lawmakers, motivated by fear and greed set out to create a defensive stronghold

386 R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa,* pp. 55-56.
387 A.W. Marx, *Making Race and Nation,* pp. 187-188.
388 C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* p. 315.
389 C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* p. 315.
390 R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa,* p. 72.
391 C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* p. 315.
392 C. van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914, 2 New Nineveh,* p. 157.

against the advancement of the black people. Additionally, it was important to keep labour as cheap and as easy to control as possible.

And so the building blocks of segregation were formed. Firstly in 1911 the Mines and Works Act was implemented. This Act formed the cornerstone of job reservation, a racial discrimination of the allocation of jobs. This meant that the range of skilled jobs was made unavailable to black people working on the mines and railways.[393] Two years later, the 1913 Natives' Land Act was implemented which provided a geographical and territorial separation between white and black people in the rural areas. Essentially this Act created reserves for black South Africans to live on but also prohibited black people from acquiring additional land beyond these areas.[394] In 1920 the Native Affairs Act was implemented in which white government officials appointed African tribal leaders as representatives for their communities. Effectively this separated white and black politics.[395] Then in 1923 the Natives Urban Act was implemented. This Act was formed to regulate the presence of black people in urban areas. Therefore, by looking at these various acts implemented in the early twentieth century we can see that it provided the foundation for labour control and total separation between both the black and white communities.[396]

It was in this historical context that government began to exercise more and more control. This would lay the foundation for the rise of the National Party and the implementation of the apartheid regime, where we find the characters of Alan Paton's novel living in the mid-twentieth century.

Segregation would become the lived experience of all South Africans living in twentieth century South Africa. By excluding the black population from politics it in turn helped to unify the bulk of the nation of whites, both English and Afrikaners. Segregation became essential as it basically bridged much of the rift between the two white groups at the expense of the black population.[397]

By 1933 the "Great Depression" that had triggered the collapse of the Wall Street market crash had found its way to South Africa. The Depression dominated the

[393] C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* p. 315.
[394] C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* p. 315.
[395] C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* p. 315.
[396] C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* p. 315.
[397] A.W. Marx, *Making Race and Nation,* p. 117.

economy, politics and the social aspects of South Africa. South Africa found itself in a conundrum as to whether to stay on the Gold Standard or to go off of it the way Britain had. As a result the solution was to develop a non-partisan government in which the National Party and the South African Party formed a coalition. JBM Hertzog remained Prime Minister and General Jan Smuts became his deputy. A year later the two parties fused and formed the United South African National Party. One must keep in mind that with this new United Party, as it was commonly known, Hertzog was able to keep the bulk of supporters in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, but not in the Cape.[398]

However, in 1934, the Parliament in the Cape came into opposition against Smuts as they felt that his role in South African politics created a bigger opening for British imperialism. Those that opposed General Jan Smuts formed the Purified National Party under D.F. Malan, who portrayed the essence of Afrikaner nationalism.[399] Robert Ross describes Malan as "a burly, short-sighted man who saw Afrikaner nationalism as ordained by God".[400] In these early years, Malan would unite Afrikaners under the umbrella of Afrikaner nationalism which would continue to play out through the late-twentieth century.

In 1939 General Jan Smuts, the newly appointed minister of the Union, brought South Africa into World War II. While some were swept up with patriotism of entering the War, many were deeply opposed to the War – again highlighting an English Afrikaner divide. One such individual who opposed the War effort was Hertzog and his anti-War faction which resulted in a growth of Afrikaner nationalism. Hardships emerged due to the War effort, a pinprick compared to that of Europe. Nonetheless people were suffering, rations were put into place which made life incredibly hard.[401]

Additionally, black soldiers were allowed to join the War effort. However, black soldiers were not given military arms, but were instead used as drivers, cooks and to carry the wounded off of the battlefields. This essentially implied that they were of a lower or inferior status.[402] But, in many ways this however resulted in both white and

[398] R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa,* pp. 108-109.
[399] R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa,* p. 109.
[400] R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa,* p. 109.
[401] C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* pp. 351-352.
[402] G. Frankel, *Rivonia's Children, Three Famililes and the Price of Freedom in South Africa.* p. 33.

black soldiers seeing themselves as equal, brothers in arms.[403] Even if this type of brotherhood did exist between both the black and white men during the War effort, the government still played a role in the keeping the two races separate, even in petty ways. For example, when a group of black South African stretcher bearers were buried in a mass grave alongside white soldiers after a severe battle in Sidi Rezegh in Egypt, the South African Army Headquarters issued an order demanding that the corpses be dug up and reburied in separate graves according to race.[404] However, as soon as the War ended in 1945 the experience of the War that unified these two races quickly withered away and the principle of segregation prevailed.[405] In addition as was seen with African Americans, black South Africans had been exposed to equality on the warfront. We cannot ignore the fact that by the late 1940s black politics was already becoming more and more militant. Black writers began criticizing South African society and it is this voice that deeply opposed the writings of Alan Paton's novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country.*

Afrikaner nationalists used the War as a means to push Afrikaner interests to the foreground which in many ways made General Jan Smuts incredibly unpopular for leading South Africa into a European War. Afrikaner nationalist used these opportunities to mobilize support which eventually resulted in D.F. Malan coming into power in 1948 and with him the apartheid regime, built on the foundations of segregation from the early twentieth century.[406] On the 26th of May, about two months after the publication of *Cry, the Beloved Country,* the National Party won the elections and would remain in power for just on fifty years.[407]

The South Africa that *Cry, the Beloved Country* would find itself in can be summarised as follows. It was a land of deep rooted segregation and racial schisms. The trauma of segregationist policies on black people was committed into the lived experience of all those who suffered under such tyranny.

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403 C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* pp. 351-352.
404 G. Frankel, *Rivonia's Children, Three Famililes and the Price of Freedom in South Africa.* p. 33.
405 C. Saunders (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa,* pp. 351-352.
406 A.W. Marx, *Making Race and Nation,* p. 117.
407 R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa,* p. 109.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

In order to fully grasp why Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* was a ground-breaking piece of literature, one needs to understand the transformation of literature in South Africa in order to comprehend the reception of the novel in South Africa.

British supremacy in South Africa would encourage a fierce but short-lived literature of imperial and even jingoistic arrogance. In addition to this, the fact that the Afrikaners suffered a massive defeat during the South African War opened up a new writing niche of an enduring tradition of reconciliation and Afrikaner nationalism which would be the forerunner to the implementation of apartheid in 1948.[408] However, even though South African literature would take the route of racial conflict, one cannot deny the impact of Olive Schreiner. Her individual human dignity and liberty in her novel *Story of an African Farm* would become the dominant inspiration for English writing which in many ways inevitably inspired Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country.*

At the turn of the twentieth century black writers also began to emerge. This is seen with the writings of Sol Plaatje, one of the original members of the African National Congress (ANC). Black writers at this point would generally adopt the modes and values of white liberal authors, especially those that were schooled in Christian missions. However, black writers would soon turn towards a more radical form of writing regarding underlying questions of racial conflict, possession of land, as well as the exploitation of natural resources and the means of production. Consequently this rhetoric would echo in Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country.*[409]

English liberal writing up until the eve of World War II remained largely unchanged in that it was still primarily an all-white affair. Even though racial discrimination had always existed in South African history, by the 1930s its legal manifestations were beginning to take on a more sinister approach. This was evident with Hertzog's Native Land Act of 1936. The full impact of discrimination had not yet surfaced, but it was during the period of World War II (1939-1945) that this changed dramatically.[410]

The participation of black people in the War effort ensured a sharp increase in their demands for greater economic participation and political rights when it was over. This

[408] M. Van Wyk Smith, *Grounds of Contest, A Survey of South African English Literature*, p. 33.
[409] M. Van Wyk Smith, *Grounds of Contest, A Survey of South African English Literature*, p. 33.
[410] M. Van Wyk Smith, *Grounds of Contest, A Survey of South African English Literature*, p. 66.

consequently hastened the victory of the National Party in 1948 and the subsequent launch of grand apartheid. With this came the birth of black resistance writers which encompassed black suffering and outrage at the injustices of white supremacy. Six years of war and disconnection from South Africa due to recruitments in North Africa cast light upon the negative influence of white imperialism on African heritage. Upon arrival back in South Africa after the War they found that English hegemony was no longer the political rhetoric, but instead Afrikaners who by 1948 were the figures of authority in South Africa. This scene allowed for a powerful new chapter in South African literary writing.[411]

This does not mean that all South African literature at this point was overtly political. Quite the contrary in that it was a commentary on South African society with a focus on the individual's response to a tense and transforming world. This was literature of quiet reflection of the exploration of the inner rather than the outer, "of a marginal metaphysical world on the edge of desert and scrub".[412]

Alan Paton remarked on South African writing in 1956 as follows:

> We in South Africa have an environment so incredibly rich and complex and strange that, even if a writer lacked the superlative gifts, he could still with reasonable ones write a story which would excite the interest of the outside world.[413]

Even though Alan Paton is now at times criticised as being naive and conservative, one must not forget that Paton was a victim of his time and place in history. Indeed, Paton relies heavily on the older themes of pastoral romanticism. However, his book was a farewell to the vision of pastoral South Africa and an introduction to segregation which would become apartheid. It is of particular importance to again note that the book was published in the very year that the National Party would come into power and *Cry, the Beloved Country* was almost a prophecy of further human tragedy that was about to engulf itself in South Africa.[414]

411 M. Van Wyk Smith, *Grounds of Contest, A Survey of South African English Literature*, pp. 66-67.
412 M. Van Wyk Smith, *Grounds of Contest, A Survey of South African English Literature*, p. 67.
413 M. Van Wyk Smith, *Grounds of Contest, A Survey of South African English Literature*, p. 67.
414 M. Van Wyk Smith, *Grounds of Contest, A Survey of South African English Literature*, p. 69.

CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The initial reception of *Cry, the Beloved Country* as previously mentioned, was influenced by the reviews of both the United States and Britain before it had even arrived in South African bookstores. One could say that preconceptions based on such reviews coloured perspectives on the book before a first reading. This can be seen in the *Transvaal* newspaper printed on the 27th of September 1948, on the day that the book was finally made available in South African bookstores:

> So much has been written about *Cry, the Beloved Country* that its arrival for sale in South Africa in Jonathan Cape edition has lagged a long way behind its reputation. It has already been hailed as the masterpiece it undoubtedly is, and all that remains to be done is to try to guess why this profoundly moving book has become a South African classic overnight.[415]

A few days later on the 2 October 1948 another newspaper, *The Herald,* from East London made a similar assertion at the start of its review:

> *Cry, the Beloved Country.* By Alan Paton. Jonathan Cape, 9s. 6d.
>
> A good time after this book had been hailed in America and elsewhere overseas, as a great and impressive novel about South Africa, the Jonathan Cape edition has arrived for South African to read.[416]

These excerpts illustrate the extent to which foreign book reviews had created preconceived notions about the novel to its South African audience. The novel was described as a South African classic perhaps putting the South African audience in an intrigued and receptive mood. Particularly from the English press which would have been tapped into foreign reviews to a far larger extent than that of the Afrikaans press.

Cry, the Beloved Country when it finally found itself in the hands of South African readers, was greatly praised by white South Africans. Particularly white liberal South Africans. Alan Paton, a white liberal himself, was in many ways committed to the socio-political situation of his country which is clearly visible in the many themes in his novel.[417] We can ascertain that the intention of his writing, and later his emergence

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415 *Transvaal,* 1948.09.27.
416 *The Herald,* 1948.10.02.
417 M.M. Lirola, 'Exploring the Relationship Between Paton's Ideology and His Context' in *LiCus* 3, p. 102.

into South African politics, was to create a social consciousness. A form of passive resistance towards the dominant ideology of white supremacy in South Africa during the mid-twentieth century.[418]

Through Paton's white liberal view, due to his lived experience in South Africa, he always had a strong desire to communicate the real situation in South Africa under the segregationist regime.[419] He also had a desire for a racial harmonious South Africa, the future that he always longed for. This deeply resonated with other white liberals themselves who were also opposed to apartheid regime. In an excerpt from the *Sunday Tribune* published in July 1948 makes reference to Paton's life in South Africa which influenced him to write his great novel:

> The problem for the writer who attempts this is not only that he needs intimate knowledge of the problems that are involved – Mr. Paton has this knowledge at his fingertips – but that he must be able to stand back from his theme and see South Africa in perspective.
>
> Mr. Paton gained his knowledge from his upbringing and from his experience as Principal of the Diepkloof Reformatory; but his power of organising that experience and of giving it full literary expression is a power that knowledge will not give alone.[420]

This small excerpt so aptly captures the importance of Paton's upbringing and the influence that it would have in the writing of *Cry, the Beloved Country.* As mentioned, Alan Paton was born in January 1903 shortly after the South African War ended (1899-1902), in the city of Pietermaritzburg, in Natal, which at the time was part of the British colony in South Africa.[421] Natal, at this point in history, was one of four territories which would be united as part of the Union of South Africa in 1910. This Union was an exclusive white affair which bolstered the place and position of the white population as opposed to the segregated black population.[422] It is clear to see that Paton's "beloved country" did not yet exist as a national or political entity during his early

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[418] M.M. Lirola, 'Exploring the Relationship Between Paton's Ideology and His Context' in *LiCus* 3, p. 102.
[419] M.M. Lirola, 'Exploring the Relationship Between Paton's Ideology and His Context' in *LiCus* 3, p. 110.
[420] *Sunday Tribune,* 1948-07-11.
[421] Callan, E, *Alan Paton,* p. 21.
[422] R. Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa,* pp. 80-81.

years.[423] It is only much later in his life that he would so wholeheartedly try to help create a country free from racism and prejudice.

In many of the early reviews of *Cry, the Beloved Country* we see that the reviewer sees what Alan Paton tried to convey in his novel, to expose the real South Africa. The *Sunday Tribune* in July 1948 writes:

> Mr. Paton attempted to do what must have seemed virtually impossible before he did it: to show in literary work the complexity of human and racial relations in South Africa, and out of that tangled skein to weave a pattern of human sympathy.[424]

This in many way is exactly what Paton attempted to do, to illustrate the plight of black South Africans through his writing. We can perhaps go further and find that many South African liberals found this appealing in his novel. His writing and use of language, especially in the fact that Paton translated many Zulu idioms into English in his novel, shows his direct connection to the situation in South Africa.[425] Paton's writing is marked with the social reality which was the supremacy of the white minority and the oppression of black South Africans. M.M. Lirola, an academic, encapsulates this idea as follows: "when we talk about Paton's literary production language and society cannot be separated. Language is realised through text; this implies that texts does not have intrinsic meaning since meaning emerges according to the way in which texts are used in social context".[426] Perhaps it is through this, the common lived experience that South African liberals resonated with this novel so enthusiastically. As written in the *Sunday Tribune,* "[the writer] needs intimate knowledge at his fingertips… but his power of organising [writing] that experience and giving it full literary expression is a power that knowledge will not alone give. It is the result of imagination, compassion and intellectual integrity".[427] Alan Paton put the horror of segregation in a literary form which so aptly in many ways described what South African liberals were trying to grapple within themselves.

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[423] P.F. Alexander, *Alan Paton, a Biograhy,* p. 1.
[424] *Sunday Tribune,* 1948.07.11.
[425] M.M. Lirola, 'Exploring the Relationship Between Paton's Ideology and His Context' in *LiCus* 3, p. 110.
[426] M.M. Lirola, 'Exploring the Relationship Between Paton's Ideology and His Context' in *LiCus* 3, p. 110.
[427] *Sunday Tribune,* 1948.07.11.

The *Sunday Tribune* continues:

> [The novel] attempts instead, and with much success, to open our eyes to the monstrous nature of our present social arrangements, to show the fear that eats away lives of men. It takes the South Africa that we know, the experience of our everyday lives, and illuminates those familiar events and places with a steady and searching light. Whatever the reader thinks about the "Native problem" when he takes up the book, it is safe to say that his attitude will be very different when he puts it down.[428]

Language is the tool that Paton uses to narrate a historical situation. Language in many ways creates and builds the social construct. It is through his writing that Paton transmits his experience and builds the story of *Cry, the Beloved Country.* Even though Paton wrote his novel in English, we can see from the form of the novel that there is an African resonance as he includes African values, and places the reader in an African context, even for those reading the novel in South Africa.[429]

In hindsight we can analyse *Cry, the Beloved Country* and see the different linguistic choices used by Alan Paton. We know that knowledge is influenced by the power of language which in turn impacts values, social relations and most importantly, ideology.[430] Paton's ideology can be seen as twofold: the negative - the distrust of institutionalised power; the positive - the belief in the power of love expressed through the "brotherhood between human beings".[431] Essentially, Paton's ideology is a Christian one. In Paton's context, Christianity was not just a religion but a philosophy and a way of living, which is seen throughout his novels. Through this, Paton's ideology condemned racial segregation and, consequently, to come to the defence of individual freedom and racial equality. It is through Paton's Christian philosophy that he aimed to defend human rights and to construct a better society.[432] This Christian emphasis was an element that would resonate with a good percentage of the South African readership.

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[428] *Sunday Tribune,* 1948.07.11.

[429] M.M. Lirola, 'Exploring the Relationship Between Paton's Ideology and His Context' in *LiCus* 3, p. 102.

[430] M.M. Lirola, 'Exploring the Relationship Between Paton's Ideology and His Context' in *LiCus* 3, p. 104.

[431] M.M. Lirola, 'Exploring the Relationship Between Paton's Ideology and His Context' in *LiCus* 3, p. 104.

[432] M.M. Lirola, 'Exploring the Relationship Between Paton's Ideology and His Context' in *LiCus* 3, pp. 104-105.

In contrast, it is perhaps due to Paton's deep belief that the solution for South Africa's problems was one of love and unity that led to the backlash of the black voice. In an early critique of "protest literature" Lewis Nkosi believed that the fault of African writers would be to act as critical consciousness of the nation.[433] In many ways Paton did see himself as the "consciousness" of South Africa which was perpetuated by his international fame in which the world saw him as the voice of South Africa. This idea was further continued by the fact that Alan Paton would later enter into the political arena with the establishment of his political party, so aptly named, the Liberal Party.

The backlash of the black voice focused on Paton's paternalist view of black South Africans. Therefore, left-wing critics were generally very dismissive of the novel.[434] It was also Paton's portrayal of his black characters in *Cry, the Beloved Country* which invited cutting criticism from black South African intellectuals. For Lewis Nkosi, Stephen Kumalo was a "cunning expression of white liberal sentiment".[435] Lewis Nkosi criticised Paton's novel as being "*crusadingly* Christian and unacceptably romantic".[436] In *Whose Beloved Country? Alan Paton the Hypercanonical* written by Andrew van der Vlies, he quotes Murray Carlin (who wrote for *Rhodes University Review)* and found that *Cry, the Beloved Country* was wanting as a social document. However, Carlin found that the idea of the Christian trusteeship of the novel was too sentimental, compliant and worst of all ignorant.[437] Additionally Carlin believed that the novel "glossed",[438] over the "real savagery of the situation in South Africa",[439] a failing which Carlin sharply notes was a reason for the novels overall success.[440] This is seen in many white liberal reviews of *Cry, the Beloved Country.* In a review published by the newspaper, *The Trek,* we can see why black South African

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433 J. Soske & Gunner, L. 'Introduction: Lewis Nkosi's Way with Words' in *English in Africa* 39(3), p. 11.

434 A. van der Vlies, 'Whose Beloved Country? Alan Paton the Hypercanonical' in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country.* p. 145.

435 L. Nkosi. *Home and Exile.* p. 5.

436 U.A. Barnett. *A Vision of Order, A Study of Black South African Literature in English (1914-1980).* p. 17.

437 A. van der Vlies, 'Whose Beloved Country? Alan Paton the Hypercanonical' in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country.* p. 145.

438 A. van der Vlies, 'Whose Beloved Country? Alan Paton the Hypercanonical' in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country.* p. 145.

439 A. van der Vlies, 'Whose Beloved Country? Alan Paton the Hypercanonical' in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country.* p. 145.

440 A. van der Vlies, 'Whose Beloved Country? Alan Paton the Hypercanonical' in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country.* p. 145.

intellectuals snubbed the novel due to the paternalist and condescending tone of the review:

> The reader of *Cry, the Beloved Country* witnessed the Natives whom we know as a people and a problem, shed their anonymity and emerge as human beings with feelings, passions and dimensions.[441]

Another review which mirrors this sentiment was published in the *Daily Despatch* in which the reviewer called the novel:

> … a message of sympathy and kindliness towards a childlike people groping in the darkness.[442]

In the same year that *Cry, the Beloved Country* was published, *The Torch,* a newspaper that catered for people of colour in South Africa, wrote a scathing review of the novel. The review begins with:

> It is of importance in this period of the Non-European struggle to assess the quality and message of the latest South African novel… depicting the experience of the Black man within the framework of South African society today. The fact that it is a bestseller in America and England is not itself a guarantee of its worth.[443]

This review implies that white liberalism is not the answer for the plight of black South Africans. As previously mentioned, Paton's ideology was one of a Christian philosophy in that the socio-economic problems facing South Africa at that time could be solved with love and unity. This is what made this novel "invalid" and seen as a failure of white liberalism. The review continues:

> No, Mr. Paton, these time-worn answers, clothed as they are in artistic beauty, are no longer acceptable to Non-Europeans. Too long have they been deceived by them… John Kumalo, a carpenter… "who has no use for the church any more", is a politician of sorts and demands trade union rights for Black workers, but for some reason you have made him a coward.[444]

The review ends by totally rejecting Paton's over-simplified solution for South Africa:

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441 J. Sachs. 'Book of the Month' in *The Trek.* 1948-11.
442 Anon. *Daily Despatch.* 1949.
443 S.C. *The Torch.* 1948.11.01.
444 S.C. *The Torch.* 1948.11.01.

> Though you have made it abundantly clear that a new society is struggling with to be born, it is not from the standpoint of Christian trusteeship that the problem of race relations in South Africa will be solved. The truth is that in the struggle for liberation the Non-Europeans have already turned their faces in a new direction, totally rejecting Christian trusteeship. This message, therefore, has no validity for them today.[445]

Given the hostility to the novel among black intellectuals it is important to include the reception of the novel in the *African Drum,* a magazine aimed at a black readership*.* In 1951 to early 1952 serialised versions of *Cry, the Beloved Country* were published. The relationship between the *African Drum* and the publication of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in the magazine is interesting as Alan Paton, a white privileged man was writing about the black experience in a publication aimed towards black readership:

> These tensions between the abridged text of Paton's novel and its context in the *Drum* suggest how amenable the work was to appropriation by liberal attitudes of trusteeship and how it was received sceptically by a sophisticated, politicised, urban, black readership.[446]

The dominant opinion among black intellectuals was the accusation that the novel embodied a paternalistic attitude towards Africans. In that "the novel has come to be regarded by many who would have praised it then as an old-fashioned paternalistic book, which portrays Africans in a sentimental and unrealistic light".[447] It is argued that the novel essentially is a nostalgic pastoral romance with little sense of historical reality. This is clearly seen in Paul Rich's claim that:

> The novel completely bypasses the emerging black culture of the townships and slums of the Witwatersrand, which are seen only through the deadening lens of Paton's paternalistic moralism that had been fortified by his experience as Warden of Diepkloof Reformatory for 'delinquent' African boys outside Johannesburg.[448]

Again, this opinion is reiterated in a cartoon published in *The African Drum* in 1951 with the caption, "He was not speaking to them, he was speaking to people who were

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445 S.C. *The Torch.* 1948.11.01.

446 A. van der Vlies, 'Whose Beloved Country? Alan Paton the Hypercanonical' in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretation: Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country.* p. 148.

447 A. Foley, Considered a Social Record: A Reassessment of Cry, the Beloved Country, *English in Africa* 2(25), October 2008, p. 74.

448 P. Rich, Liberal Realism in South African Fiction 1948-1966, *English in Africa* 12(1), 1985, p. 56.

not there".[449] The cartoon sarcastically criticises Paton's novel by claiming that the novel only "speaks" to those with paternalistic and sympathetic views of the oppression of black people in South Africa while doing "next to nothing" to change the regime within the country. Simply because the novel emphasised that the good of mankind would be the solution for South Africa. For Lewis Nkosi, Stephen Kumalo, the protagonist, was a "cunning expression of white liberal sentiment, his forbearance, humiliation and resignation suggesting that whites could evade responsibility for racial injustice".[450]

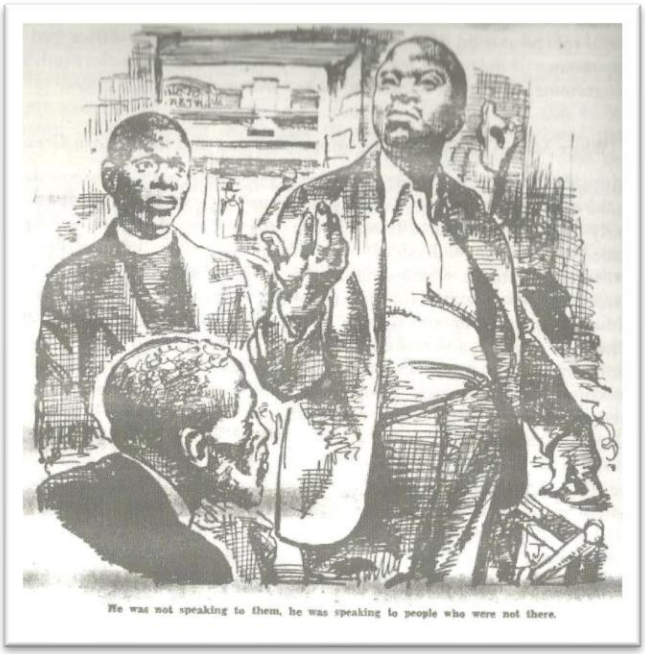

Figure 5: Cartoon

From: *The African Drum,* April 1951 in, A. van der Vlies, *South African Textual Cultures,* p. 80.

Paton, a white liberal himself, oftentimes felt threatened by any critique regarding himself. In 1969 he wrote a letter to Lewis Nkosi. In this letter we see a glimpse into Paton taking offense at those who were critical of white liberals. This is an interesting insight into how in many cases white liberalism was fragile:

[449] A. van der Vlies, South African Textual Cultures, p. 86.
[450] L. Nkosi, *Home and Exile,* p. 26.

Dear Mr. Nkosi,

I am sorry I do not feel able to subscribe to the 'South African Bulletin'. While it has achieved high standard in many respects, its article on the heart transplant was preposterous, (and I suspect, insincere), and your attack on Nadine Gordimer quite unjustifiable. Furthermore both you and Mr, Mphahlele[451] have always been very snide in your relations with liberals like myself. In these days I do not choose to support any paper which tries to sow confusion amongst those outside the laager [those opposed to apartheid].

Yours faithfully,

Alan Paton.[452]

Moving on, it is interesting to note that the title of the novel quickly became a catchphrase and has been perpetuated into the twenty first century. It is still seen in popular culture. For example, in April 2017, Mmusi Maimane of the South African political party, the Democratic Alliance, used the title of Paton's novel in a parliamentary speech which described the socio-economic issues that still plague South Africa to this day:

Figure 6: Title of a news article.

From: *Financial 24 News, April 2017.*

Another example in which the title of the novel has been used in twenty-first century popular culture is a political cartoon drawn by the renowned cartoonist, Zapiro. In his cartoon makes reference to the state capture by the Gupta family in recent years:

[451] Es'kia Mphahlele, a South African novelist and journalist who was also very critical of Alan Paton's writing.

[452] P. Alexander (ed), *Alan Paton, Selected Letters,* p. 359.

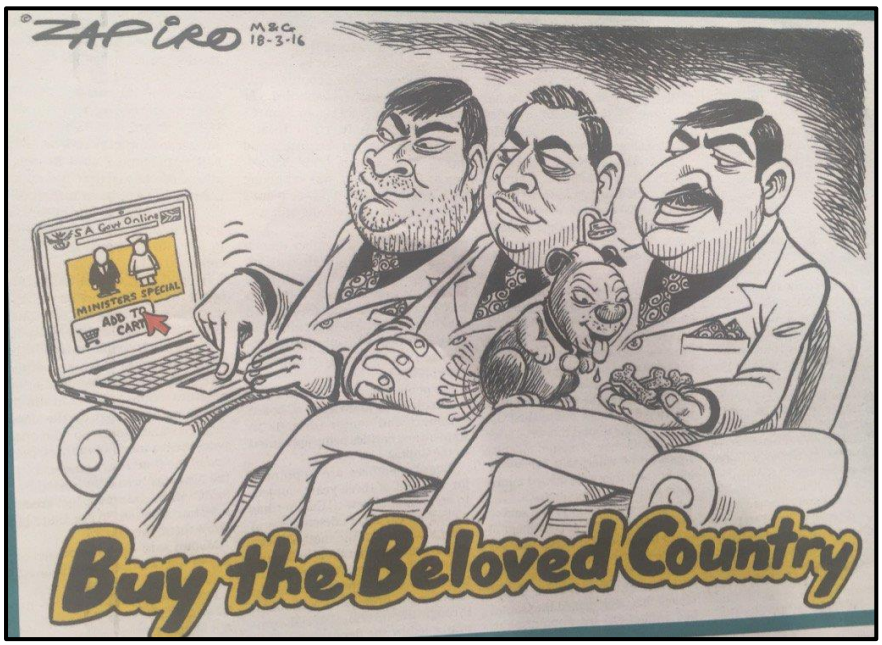

Figure 7: Political cartoon drawn by Zapiro, 'Buy the Beloved Country.

From: *Mail & Guardian,* March, 2016.

In conclusion, the reception of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in South Africa can be essentially divided into that of white and black voices. White English-speaking South Africans largely mirrored their American and British counterparts in their praise of the themes and style of the novel. Even before the novel arrived in South Africa, international reviews set the tone of its reception at home. The overarching view that South Africa's socio-political issues could be resolved in the model of the white liberal perspective. These perspectives were ones of Christian philosophy and white philanthropy. White Afrikaans speaking South Africans appear to have been generally silent.

The African voice dissented from this view. Black intellectuals saw the novel as an over simplified expression of the methods necessary to bring about substantial socio-political change. In particular, Lewis Nkosi brought to light the paternalistic approach demonstrated by the novel. He levelled a logical critique against Paton and his approach.

Chapter VI
Conclusion

To conclude this study focused on the renowned author, Alan Paton and his 1948 novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* in a historical context. As one of South Africa's most famous writers, Paton had the courage to write a novel about the plight of South Africans during a critical period of the country's history at the apex of segregation.

The reader is drawn into a mid-twentieth century South Africa in which Paton realistically illustrates the racial tensions, ethnic conflicts and socio-economic situations that impacted on both white and black people on the eve of apartheid due to the process of urbanisation. When *Cry, the Beloved Country* was originally published in 1948 there was an immediate hype surrounding the novel in both the United States of America and the United Kingdom, as seen in international and local newspapers. This novel, even though set in South Africa with a unique South African context, spoke to different situations within each of these countries. In addition to this, this novel in many ways still remains incredibly popular in the United States even as a prescribed text in the education system. *Cry, the Beloved Country* continues to have a significant afterlife.

Essentially this novel therefore deals with the duality of both white and black people in a country at the apex of segregation. This novel remains relevant today as it provides an understanding of how the mining business destroyed African families and the African tribal system, consequently resulting in urban migration, poverty, moral degradation and crime. It also reflects on discrimination and inequality. Despite many heart-breaking events throughout the novel, the story ends on a hopeful note, typical of the pastoral romance theme and genre of liberal writers which was alluded to in the study.

Firstly this study drew attention to the significance of "literature" as a viable historical source, through the notion that literature is essentially a creative form of social commentary. Next it pointed briefly to "literary criticism" which refers to the meaning and interpretation of texts. This has recently become a more common practice among academics and in particular historians. Literary criticism is concerned with the meaning

and interpretation of texts within a historical context. Therefore, book history explores how these meanings in text are influenced beyond the control of authors' themselves, and how they are connected, constructed and inevitably changed.[453]

"Liberal realism" has been the label for works of fiction post-1948 which has attempted to present South Africa in the most real way possible and as critical social commentary. Although preceding this period, Peter Abraham's *Mine Boy* published in 1946 and then Paton's 1948 *Cry, the Beloved Country* are regarded as the two single most iconic pieces of literature which represent this period of South African literature.[454] Even though Paton is often criticised as being naive and conservative, one must again not forget that Paton was a product of his time and place in history. Therefore in a historical context, *Cry, the Beloved Country* in the mid-twentieth century was a revolutionary piece of literature. Indeed, Paton relies heavily on the older themes of pastoral romanticism, but in many ways this novel bids farewell to this theme which predominantly dominated South African literature up until this point in history.[455]

It is of particular importance to note that the book was published in the very year that the National Party would come into power and *Cry, the Beloved Country* can almost be seen as a prophecy of further human tragedy that was about to unfold itself in South Africa. The haunting opening of *Cry, the Beloved Country* presents the idyllic scene of a land unspoilt by man, but is without a doubt a rerun of pastoral romance. However, this is only a glimpse of an idyllic and peaceful South Africa, because as explained, within the next few lines the reader confronted with a land of devastation in both environmental and ecological terms, wrought by the physical impoverishment of both soil and people due to the collapse of tribal traditions, loss of land and migratory labour.[456] Thereafter the reader encounters the sentence in Chapter 9 "All roads lead to Johannesburg"[457] and all too soon the road that was once idyllic takes a sorrowful journey to an urban hell.

Secondly, throughout this study Alan Paton's own lived experience is entwined with this writing. It draws links between Alan Paton's life and the historical developments

[453] A. van der Vlies, *South African Textual Cultures*, p. 10.
[454] M. Van Wyk Smith, Grounds of Contest, A Survey of South African English Literature, pp. 67-68.
[455] M. Van Wyk Smith, Grounds of Contest, A Survey of South African English Literature, p. 69.
[456] A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 7; M. Van Wyk Smith, Grounds of Contest, A Survey of South African English Literature, p. 69.
[457] A. Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 48.

that influenced the writing and the content of his novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country.*Paton's journey as a literary man only began forty-five years later with the publication in New York of his first novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country* in 1948.[458] However, at Alan Paton's birth his "beloved country: did not yet exist as a national or political entity. Peter F. Alexander, the author of *Alan Paton, A Biography,* is of the opinion that Paton's early allegiance was to a region, to be more specific to a city and definitely not to a country.[459] This displacement and dispossession is actually a recurring concept in Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country.*

During Paton's childhood, Pietermaritzburg had a strong British atmosphere at a time when the relationship between the English-speaking inhabitants and the Dutch-speaking Afrikaners at the turn of the twentieth century was strained. This animosity is actually reflected in *Cry, the Beloved Country* with the thoughts of James Jarvis when he recalls that "his own father had sworn that he would disinherit any child of his who married an Afrikaner".[460]

Despite this language barrier and parochial setting of his early years, Alan Paton was a man of a broader and inclusive world. In an interview conducted by Roy Holland in 1973, Paton was asked about his language capabilities. During his time at Diepkloof Reformatory Paton became fluent in Afrikaans and later on became at home with the Zulu language. It is evident that Paton not only saw beyond racial differences but also language barriers which, as previously mentioned, is constantly illustrated in *Cry, the Beloved Country.* [461]

Right from a young age Paton was a patriot to South Africa, a stance which was encouraged by growing up in the newly formed Union under Louis Botha. However, even though conciliation was deeply encouraged between the two different white races, Paton adamantly believed that the native Africans, the people of Indian origin and the Cape Coloured people should be included in the nation of South Africa.[462]

One of Paton's greatest experiences came from the moment in which he was assigned the job as a principal at a reformatory institution. When he received this post in 1935

[458] E. Callan, *Alan Paton*, p. 21.
[459] P.F. Alexander, *Alan Paton, a Biography.*
[460] A Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country.*
[461] R. Holland, *Alan Paton Speaking,* pp. 15-16.
[462] E. Callan, *Alan Paton*, pp. 25-26.

at Diepkloof Reformatory, Paton decided that the already crowded, prison-like institution needed a dramatic change.[463] Apart from his own qualities of humanism, there was little in Paton's background that would prepare him for this new experience. Fortunately, his already keen insight into society allowed him to realise that the young boys coming under his care were chiefly products of Johannesburg's African slums, habituated to poverty and convicted of crimes such as petty theft, rape and murder. Many sections in *Cry, the Beloved Country* are drawn from his experience at Diepkloof.[464] During Paton's short years working at Diepkloof, he essentially transformed it from a prison into a functioning school in which the boys were permitted much more freedom. It is interesting to note that Paton received harsh criticism from Hendrik Verwoerd, the future architect of apartheid, in his Afrikaans newspaper *Die Transvaler.* Yet because of his close friendship with Jan Hofmeyr, the Minister of Education, who allowed Paton to keep running the reformatory as he saw fit.[465]

Only when Paton turned forty-five would he turn his love of literature into one of South Africa's key pieces of writing. Part psalm, part prophecy, as mentioned, this novel appeared just three months before apartheid was fully institutionalised in South Africa. According to Armstrong, "fear, specifically fear of the South African race war to come, tormented Paton as he wrote *Cry, the Beloved Country,* so much so that he had to leave his country to write it".[466]

Almost 30 years after teaching at Diepkloof Reformatory, in the already mentioned interview conducted by Roy Holland in 1973, it is evident that Paton's teaching career deeply influenced his writing career, "a writer may have two purposes: he's got to have the *one* purpose, and that's to tell the *story.* He may have the *other* one, and that's to teach the *lesson* – but that must never obtrude."[467]

Cry, the Beloved Country was written during the rise of Afrikaner nationalists[468] who believed they were entitled to a superior or different place based on their colour or race.[469] As indicated, this novel is also historically contextualised during the Alexandra township bus boycotts and the resistance against the pass laws of 1944. However,

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463 E. Callan, *Alan Paton*, p. 37.
464 P.F. Alexander (ed.), *Alan Paton, Selected Letters,* pp. x-xi.
465 P.F. Alexander (ed.), *Alan Paton, Selected Letters,* p. x.
466 R. Armstrong, Arrested Development, *Biblio,* 1998.
467 R. Holland, *Alan Paton Speaking,* p. 75.
468 K. Smith, *The Changing Past: Trends in South African Historical Writing, pp. 64-65.*
469 N. Chiwengo, *Understanding Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 2.

Absalom's crime in the novel is committed two years after the Alexandra township bus boycotts. The fictional and historical clocks are striking at different times which Paton, as the artist, purposely uses so the reader becomes more involved in the story rather than getting caught up in the rigid chronology of historical facts.[470]

Right from the opening of the novel, Paton creates an idyllic world illustrating Christian values which deeply influenced his views. Paton, also falling under the liberalist paradigm, creates a novel in which liberalism and Christianity go hand-in-hand. This is seen in their common emphasis upon the worth of each and every human individual.[471] However, directly after this, Paton draws on a stark comparison which brings the reader immediately into the issues that urbanisation brought upon the people of South Africa leading to harsh survival in a hostile environment. These contrasting imageries metaphorically represent a racial hierarchy which was clearly present in South African society during this period of history. This setting establishes the economic and social conditions of the characters but also represents the real people of South Africa.[472]

One of the main themes that runs through *Cry, the Beloved Country* is the breaking down of the traditional African systems which was also a characteristic of the impact that urbanisation had on the black communities in South Africa. In the second half of the nineteenth century, African societies in both the rural areas and towns were undergoing rapid change.[473] As indicated the subtitle underscores this: "story of comfort in desolation".[474] The desolation consists not so much of the overcrowded homelands, or by erosion and the over-cropping of the land, or even in the absence of the young men being drawn into the cities, or the awful conditions in the slums but rather in the loss of the old African moral order that gave purpose and meaning to the lives of Africans.[475]

Through *Cry, the Beloved Country* Paton paints a bleak picture of the effects of urbanisation. The novel has been criticised for not offering a solution for South Africa's social issues. However, one must remember that Paton was an author first and

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[470] R. Holland, *Alan Paton Speaking,* p. 91.
[471] S. Watson, Cry, the Beloved Country and the Failure of Liberal Vision, *in,* H. Bloom (ed)., ***Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations, Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country.*** pp. 40-41.
[472] N. Chiwengo, *Understanding Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 3.
[473] D. Oakes (ed), *Illustrated History of South Africa, the Real Story,* p. 206.
[474] H.R. Collins, Cry, the Beloved Country and the Broken Tribe, *College English* (14)7, April 1953.
[475] H.R. Collins, Cry, the Beloved Country and the Broken Tribe, *College English* (14)7, April 1953.

foremost at the time of writing the novel. It was only four years after publishing *Cry, the Beloved Country* that Paton co-founded the Liberal Party in 1952 in which he actively tried to participate in the movement for change in the country. Regardless of this however, the novel has proven to be an artistic piece of work with universal themes that were relevant to the global community on a whole. Most importantly, *Cry, the Beloved Country* put South Africa's literary, social, economic and political situation on the world map.[476]

In Paton's second autobiography he concludes with a moving piece:

> I shall not write anything more of any weight. I am grateful that life made it possible for me to pursue my writing career. I am now ready to go when I am called.[477]

Even though Alan Paton is no longer alive his legacy has persisted and his novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* is in a league of its own. South Africa has had many famous individual novelists, statesmen, reformers and poets, however, in Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* the statesman, the reformer, the poet and the novelist converge into a significant one.[478]

Lastly, and most importantly, this study focused on the reception of the novel in the United States, Britain and South Africa. As the study discussed, the reception of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in America is what gave this novel the title of a "modern classic". America shone its light on this novel as it reflected the racial tensions within America itself. Although a different historical backdrop, *Cry, the Beloved Country* was able to put into words the overarching theme of the impact of racial and class tensions that were rife in the mid-twentieth century United States of America. To the American readers, its moralistic Christian humanism, trusteeship and the ever-present idea of reconciliation appealed to white, middle-class citizens who were equally anxious about racial tensions in their own country.

Interestingly, it was not just the theme of racial tension that appealed to the international reader. Its reception in Britain, though at first mirroring American reviews,

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476 N. Chiwengo, *Understanding Cry, the Beloved Country,* p. 22.

477 J. Paton, Paton Challenged Racism in His Writing and Politics, *in* D. Bryfonski (ed.), *Social Issues in Literature,* p. 61.

478 L. Gannet, Paton Drew on His Faith and Experience to Write Cry, the Beloved Country, *in* D. Bryfonski (ed.), *Social Issues in Literature,* p. 52.

quickly changed its lens to that of class tensions, industrialisation and urbanisation which in many ways was the backdrop to Britain's historical context of post-World War II. However, to a post-War Britain, Paton's novel seemed to offer something entirely different. The novel capitalised on an interest regarding social conditions across the Commonwealth, while touching on a sense of crisis in white British identities as the Empire ebbed away after World War II.[479]

Lastly, this study focused on the reception of *Cry, the Beloved Country* in South Africa. From the research, it is very clear that there were essentially two voices that emerged from the South African context. Firstly, the white liberal voice saw this novel as a beacon for addressing the socio-political tensions in South Africa. The second voice that emerged, a black radical voice, was vehemently opposed to the novel as it was seen as a paternalist view of the struggle for black liberation in South Africa. Another subdued voice was that of the National Party government of the day who basically ignored the book. Yet, *Cry, the Beloved Country* continues to have a remarkable afterlife as it has essentially satisfied a wide spectrum of ever-changing context and period-specific desires. In a letter written in May 1948, a mere three months after the novel was published, Paton mused about the possible reception the novel would have in his home country, South Africa. He feared that it would '"be very different from the American", that it would "arouse antagonism", his critics would "attack . . . its art."[480] However, even though the novel did receive immediate scorn from both right and left wingers, it did open up a new understanding of South African society among both local and international audiences. This is because it is essentially easier to understand historical and societal processes if they are written in a fictional format. This aligns with Amitav Ghosh's pertinent claim that "a lot of people come to history through reading novels".[481]

Cry, the Beloved Country became a popular set work book in schools across both the United States and the Commonwealth. In America, in particular, Gertrude Rivers wrote in the *Journal of Negro Education,* the novel was seen to be a form of a "guidebook" illustrating injustice within South African society, which many African-

[479] A. van der Vlies, *South African Textual Culture: White, Black, Read All Over,* p. 72.
[480] A. van der Vlies, *South African Textual Culture: White, Black, Read All Over,* p. 72.
[481] M. Kooria, Between the walls of Archives and Horizons of Imagination: an Interview with Amitav Ghosh, *Itenarario,* 36(3), p. 14.

American learners could relate to.[482] School and college sales in America continuously rose after the publication of the novel and by 1959, it was selling between 6000 and 8000 copies annually to educational institutions and around 3000 a year in bookshops. Scribner, the original American publisher, published a paperback edition in order to increase sales. As we know, the first publisher, Charles Scribner Jr., wrote a letter to Paton claiming that his novel had "acquired the status of a classic".[483]

Cry, the Beloved Country achieved reputed status across the globe, but more so in the international world than on home soil. At the time of Paton's death in 1988, his most famous novel had sold over fifteen million copies and translated into twenty languages. By 2007 the novel was still selling over one-hundred thousand copies a year.[484]

Cry, the Beloved Country achieved proverbial status, this novel has gone through a series of "repackaging" through book clubs, university and school editions, serialised and abridged, filmed, dramatised and also staged as a jazz opera on Broadway.[485] Rob Nixon salutes *Cry, the Beloved Country* as "the only blockbuster in the annals of anti-apartheid literature".[486]

Alan Paton, through *Cry, the Beloved Country* brought racially segregated pre-apartheid South Africa and the subsequent impact that this looming regime would have on the people of the country into the world's sitting room. It is often time believed that had he not written *Cry, the Beloved Country,* during a period when the political systems were increasingly coming under question, much of what he exposed would not have become known.[487] Essentially, Alan Paton can be seen as a vanguard of the ultimate opposition to apartheid.

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[482] G.B. Rivers, Cry the Beloved Country, *Journal of Negro Education,* 18(1), pp. 50-52.
[483] TS, C. Scribner, Letter to Paton. 13 August 1959.
[484] A. van der Vlies, *South African Textual Culture: White, Black, Read All Over,* p. 72.
[485] R. Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood: South African Culture and the World Beyond,* p. 26.
[486] R. Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood: South African Culture and the World Beyond,* p. 26.
[487] N. Chiwengo, Understanding Cry, the Beloved Country, p. ix.

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