"Racism is as healthy today as it was during the Enlightenment,"¹ argues Nobel laureate Toni Morrison. Legal scholar Richard Delgado advocates his law of racial thermodynamics: "There is change from one era to another, but the net quantum of racism remains exactly the same. Racism is neither created nor destroyed."² Deep-rooted and pervasive, racial xenophobia still persists despite the cosmetics of countless political solutions and gentleman’s agreement. To Cleanth Brooks, racial problem is one of the maladies that seems:

endemic to the twentieth-century societies of the West, particularly those societies that have been industrialized for a considerable time. [...] race has been much in the headlines of late. The problems of race are certainly urgent, and it is
these problems that have attracted the special attention of some of our finest literary minds.\footnote{3}

The sensitive soul of Maxwell Anderson responded to the obnoxious practice of racism manifesting in myriad forms and his convictions found expression in his plays, \textit{The Wingless Victory} (1936) and \textit{Lost in the Stars} (1949). An avowed believer that he was in the lofty role of the theatre, Anderson exploited the medium for his purpose. This positive affirmation for the stage articulated in one of his letters is recorded by Avery: "It is the function of the theatre, above and beyond entertainment, to help men think well of themselves and their activities – to point out and celebrate whatever is good and worth saving in our confused and often desperate generations."\footnote{4}

Anderson’s strong faith to evoke in people a genuine desire to transcend selfish interests and to respond to a larger vision that gives a sense of purpose, direction, and meaning to life is ostensible in his treatment of the plays, \textit{The Wingless Victory} and \textit{Lost in the Stars}. Exploring racial problems, these plays validate in all their dimensions the dramatist’s most significant contribution to race theme in American drama. His choice of prejudice as a theme was neither esoteric nor academic but contemporaneous of the racial repercussions present in the society. Justice and fair play were his primary concerns. Serious
writers help to organize man’s thinking on the pertinent social issues. Anderson was acutely aware of this exalted burden.

According to Shivers, Anderson believed that man’s life was ephemeral lacking certainty about its meaning. He pinned his hope in the occasional insight offered by science or religious instruction or the idealism of the young. He valued both the victory and the defeat of great souls like Plato, Christ, Shakespeare, Back, and Beethoven and considered their examples as performing the dual function of prophecy as well as motivation for man to pursue a goal for the human race. “The net result is a racial dream that mankind can ultimately improve itself in wisdom and goodness.”

It is no surprise that such a hard-core believer in the brotherhood of man had devoted two of his major plays to racial problems. The Wingless Victory and Lost in the Stars exemplify Anderson’s concern for social problems of caste, race, social rank, and cultural ancestry. It is imperative to raise the question what is racism to comprehend the racial matrix in general and to understand the relevance of its contemporaneousness.

Racism which has a wide currency in the modern age, originates in domination and provides social rationale and philosophical justification for debasing, degrading, and doing violence to people on the basis of
colour. Zanden observes: “Prejudice refers to attitudes of aversion and hostility toward the members of a group simply because they belong to it and so are presumed to have the objectionable qualities that are ascribed to it.” The world is convulsed by inter-group hatred and racial stratification. A great many are ready to kill each other over differences of colour, height, facial configuration, religion, language, and dietary practices. The ideology that one group is to be treated differently from another because of melanin, the skin content is rooted firmly. Racism is manifested brutally overt or invisibly institutional or both. Its gamut extends to every level and area of human psychology, society, and culture.

Racism in America, with its roots in the British slave trade, was venal for it defined the slave not merely as an unfortunate victim of bad circumstances, war or social dislocation but rather as less than human, as a thing, an animal, a piece of property to be bought and sold, used and abused. Ancient and tribal cultures often had slaves but they were usually prisoners of war who were made servants. Racial prejudice in America provides a fertile soil for the practise of blatant inequalities on the coloured race. However, it would be a gross error to view racism native to America alone. History abounds with examples of genocide, the deliberate and systematic extermination of a racial or an ethnic group. It is a universal cancer afflicting diverse societies in all ages. The Jew had his Gentile, the Greek his Barbarian, the Crusader his Infidel,
the English their Irish, the Irish their English, and the Nazis their non-Aryans.

The tragedy of racial intolerance is deftly handled by Anderson in *The Wingless Victory*, a story of miscegenation placed in the year 1800, amidst New England setting. The story recapitulates the ancient tragic tale of Medea and Jason. Commenting on the Medea story, Gassner observes: “Euripides treating of a foreign wife as an allegedly inferior race with an impassioned sympathy has been echoed down the ages by such modern writers as Grillparzer, Lenormand and Maxwell Anderson, all of whom returned to the Medea story.” What made these dramatists exhibit a propensity for myth? Was it just its unique existence outside the flux of time that enticed them? Questions of this nature arise in this context.

Speaking of the use of myth to draw parallels between contemporary and ancient experience, T.S. Eliot avers: “it is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.” The aesthetic images present in myths are not imprisoned by space, time, society, and culture. Citing Sartre, Angela Belli maintains it is, “precisely this universality of situation which attracts young playwrights. He reacts against the trend to psychologize in the theater and insists that the role of the dramatist is to integrate life, to present man in his
entirety." In resorting to mythology, the dramatists of the twentieth-century were propelled by the yearning to present a broader view of man, without being hampered by the constraints of topicality.

The kernel of the Medea story which passes the test of universality runs thus: After a courtship marked by passion, Medea and Jason belonging to different race and culture soon discover that they hold divergent concepts of life. Such contradiction transforms their passion into hate and destroys their marriage and family, ultimately ending in their death. Anderson develops a social theme out of the fabric of the myth, stressing the origin of conflict to the fact that the principal characters represent two alien cultures. To conceptualize and appreciate the playwright's treatment of the myth, one must comprehend the backdrop he has chosen for *The Wingless Victory*. Flexner argues that Anderson shifts the play to the New England of 1800 when the problem of slavery and post slavery oppression and discrimination ran high in the Southern States, and slavery was already a violent issue: "North and South were in continual collision over the principle of human bondage, the Northern states having abolished it by statute, the South upholding it." Anderson employs an incident in the past to illuminate the present.

The play explores the effects of racial conflict and alienation in the lives of Nathaniel McQueston, a New England sea captain and Oparre
his Malay wife, a Christian convert from the Celebes. Racial barriers in Salem town do not accept the alien princess and her children on equal terms with the puritan Christians. His mother, Mrs. McQueston receives her son and his family not for love but for material consideration. Although Oparre is high born and a woman of myriad perspectives, the white world resents her for her black skin and ruthlessly conspires to separate her from her husband. She becomes a victim of racial and religious intolerance and reverts to the laws of her tribal gods, killing herself and her two children on the ship that is waiting to carry her home. Nathaniel suffers a change of heart and goes to her repentant towards the end, but it is too late.

**New York Times** records the mixed critical response of the period: “To some it is a prolix drama, indifferently planned and written.” Others regarded it as, “the finest drama of the season.”11 Isaacs states there is one thing Anderson establishes immediately: “the mood and tone of the story, and carves out, often in no more than a few short passages, the form of his dramatic situation, its background of people and events, the elements of strife and the character conflicts involved in it.”12 In **The Wingless Victory** which reflects the American weaknesses, foibles, and hypocrisies, Anderson delves into the question of racial discrimination and religious intolerance with burgeoning intensity. There exudes from his work a tremendous passion and concern for the marginalized. He lashes
out at the hypocrisy and smugness of false Christianity when he excoriates the puritan persecution of the Malay Princess.

The conflict generated by racial prejudice in *The Wingless Victory* can be analysed in three layers: the McQueston family versus the protagonists; the puritan society versus the protagonists; betwixt the protagonists. The protagonists are first exposed to the conflict with the family. The society exercises a latent but potent control over the family, which is the next rung in the social ladder. Before the social forces and the fearsome authority of the society, the individuals are mere pawns. Combined together, the family and the society present a formidable force that levels any opposition to its sacrosanct traditions. Anyone stepping out of the trodden path takes a perilous adventure and comes to inevitable grief. The relentless domination of the society and the family causes conflict between the protagonists and tears them asunder. The play mirrors how the individuals respond to the conflict with these two formidable forces and how they come to tragedy in defying its values.

The racial conflict gains momentum even before the arrival of Nathaniel and his alien wife; except Ruel, the youngest brother, the family members are emotionally charged. The news of his arrival comes as a shock and plunges them into despair and degradation. Their reaction to the challenge thrown by Nathaniel creates tensions of varying
magnitude. Anderson portrays the intra-family tension as a microcosm of the battle between the old and the new social forces.

The speculation of Mrs. McQueston brings out the deep rooted aversion for the dark skin: “Black? Slaves? [...] Black Children!” (WV 10-11). The dubious reason adduced by Mrs. McQueston to prejudge Oparre is a classic instance of prejudice: “she’s a black, and worships some pagan fetish” (WV 32). The puzzle whether she is a Heathen or Christian, black or brown, and the resultant dilemma whether to accept her or not create surface tension and conflict within the family. The devious mother is far-sighted and is alert to anticipate the coldness of the orthodox community and the fate of her son’s flagrant love. She is prophetic in her warning:

There was a man of Salem once who married an Indian squaw – and brought her here to live– wait till I finish – but they had no neighbors; no one spoke to him in the street. He lost what work he had. He drank himself to death, and the children died. The squaw went back to her tribe, and it’s said they stoned her. Think well what you do before you fetch in this bride. (WV 33)

Mrs. McQueston’s proud declaration supplies the source material of the world in which the blacks are shabbily treated: “she’ll sink to be a
slave, and be used for flesh / and hate her own flesh for it!” (WV 22).
The microcosm of the slave society, the sexual abuse and the plight of
the blacks, the vendetta, rancour and the hostility of the whites are
vividly highlighted. The image of cleavage runs so deep that the physical
destruction of the person of the other race becomes the overriding goal:
“what scalding medicine, I’d drench her with / if I had the nursing of
her?” (WV 23).

The prejudice shifts from racial to religious, and Oparre is subjected
to double jeopardy. The introduction of Oparre resonates her battle
with the white contemporaries. Nathaniel’s encomium for Oparre as a
Christian, for her knowledge of the Bible and the fluency in English
does not lessen the prejudice in any degree:

She knows her Bible forward and back as well

as any divine in Salem. Taught herself

her English out of it, runs with Bible talk

like an Old Testament prophet. (WV 32)

Anderson has portrayed Mrs. McQueston as a suppressed individual
who has no assertive spirit or is too helpless to face or fight the diktats
of the society. Her fears are centred around the ostracism the family
might have to face. Her character stands in sharp contrast to that of
Rev. Phineas, the brother of Nathaniel who is ideologically convinced
about the beliefs and prejudices of the Salem society and acts as its
spokesman. On the whole, the protagonists come out totally battered in the interpersonal relationship which they seek to establish. Their advances for reconciliation and acceptance are spurned and they are abandoned to face the wrath of the society.

The external conflict that the protagonists face is presented in the form of a tradition bound society clinging to its orthodox views on race and religion, the two fundamental contributors to the tension or conflict in the play. *Theatre Arts Monthly* asserts that the racial and religious prejudices which confront Oparre are given an extensive examination by Anderson: "He uses anecdotes, parallel situations and a number of minor characters to drive home this point. The outcome is the panoramic vista of the community, which excludes Oparre."^{13}

It was to worship God in the way they wanted that the puritans took the hazardous journey across the Atlantic. Their self-assertion would accommodate no other view of religion or race. Into this fortress of religious orthodoxy and racial superiority, Nathaniel fires the first salvo by landing with a wife of exotic origin. The response of the New England society to the conflict set in motion by him is in the expected lines. Being a black means a lost soul for which there is no redemption. Oparre not being a Christian by birth, they see no merit in her embracing the faith of New England. This closed set of mind that shuts out anything
alien to its cherished belief contributes to the core of external conflict in the play.

Institutional discrimination runs high in the puritan society and the irony highlights the zeal exhibited in their institutional benevolence and kindness for unknown faces in the Far East: “You know they sew / for foreign missions [...] for little heathen girls across the seas / that run stark naked (WV 77). There is zeal to convert the heathen. Yet the same society shuts the door to the one who comes with convinced belief in Christ and his teaching. Spirituality devoid of the spirit of Christ and an ossified religion blind to love are the root causes of external conflict faced by the protagonists. Though the rabid race consciousness of New England induces her to repudiate Christian faith and seek refuge in the bosom of pagan deities, Oparre is not left untouched by the power of Christ. Her lament is an apt indictment of the nominal Christianity practised by the white race:

He came too soon,

this Christ of peace. Men are not ready yet.

Another hundred thousand years they must drink

your potion of tears and blood. (WV 125)

The self-contradiction between the cherished values of Christianity and what is practiced by the society can be explained in psychological terms. A patient who believes herself to be a queen, but cheerfully and
contently carries out her chore of scrubbing the floor, is not perturbed by the incongruity between her beliefs and conduct. The conflict between the two is avoided by the process of not allowing them to confront one another in the field of consciousness. The delusion is preserved in a logic-tight compartment secure from the disturbing influence of hard facts. By the surrender of normal thought process and the basic principles of love and brotherhood, the Salem society in a similar manner transforms itself into a heartless monster. While purporting to uphold Christian beliefs, it slaughters an innocent soul without any qualms.

The puritan society awaits its moment to extract the pound of flesh and the most vulnerable time for Nathaniel comes when he is discovered to be a murderer and pirate. The original name of the 'Queen of Celebes' is discovered as 'Nik Apteros' translated "The Wingless Victory." The coup de grace is delivered when the society presents Nathaniel with the choice between his money and his Malay wife. He oscillates awhile in the conflict between love and money and follows the footsteps of his ambitious mythological predecessor Jason in repudiating Oparre. A faint but well discernable thread of materialism is interwoven throughout the play. The characters are enslaved and remain oblivious to their materialistic state and make no effort to break loose. Anderson reveals that the presiding deity of New England is Mammon and not Christ.
The devastating effect of prejudice manifested by the society and the family on the protagonists causing interpersonal conflict is captured in exquisite and moving snapshots. Slowly but effectively, Nathaniel is corroded by the hostile forces which create a chasm between him and his wife. It culminates in his alienation from his race and in the death of Oparre and his children.

Nathaniel is portrayed as the prodigal son of a blue blooded puritan family of Salem. Unlike the prodigal son of the parable who leaves with riches and returns a pauper, Nathaniel who left as a penniless sailor returns as the "captain and owner of a five-master [...] loaded to the gunnels with spices from the Celebes" (WV 8). In his sailor's pride, he trusts that his family would accord a warm welcome to his Malay wife, a princess in her own country and his two children. Little does he realize that the family's fortune had faded but not the puritan pride. Nathaniel is soon made to understand that the money he had tossed about generously to buy the goodwill of the town is in vain:

When I walk to the wharf
three or four men may pass a word with me,
the rest look the other way – the woman sweeping,
drag in their rugs and shut the doors behind them
lest I should catch an eye and speak. You'd think
I carried leprosy. (WV 68-69)
The society's reactions are sought to be neutralized to a lesser extent by the necessities of the family. Nathaniel's fortune is the lubricant that oils the relationship between the family on one side and the society on the other. The friction is reduced albeit for a short while but the conflict soon asserts itself in all fury when the money is gone. In the end, the family interests yield place to the diktats of the society.

The flagellation of the self-righteous community does not initially affect Nathaniel's love for Oparre. He affirms his love is stronger than ever. But the conflict with the society exerts pressure within and his lingering inner prejudice comes to the surface:

No. But I can be driven
mad! — And sometimes I think I am mad — Say
you'd married as I have — for love — and loved him still —
and had two dark-skinned children — and you lived
in a few rooms with this same black love of yours —
and black children, and a black servant — while the town
stepped round you carefully — pointing, whispering,
ever to you — always among themselves. (WV 71)

The McQueston family and the puritan society ultimately bring forth the alienation of the protagonist. The alienation and ignominy resulting from the society's hostile stand drives him to confess: "I love you still — but they've made / our love a torment — it's the world that does it — / it
won't have us together" (WV 106). The cords of love are not strong enough to withstand the gales of hostility generated in Salem. The awareness that he would have to yield in to the society's demand creates conflict between guilt and love. Nathaniel's voices aloud this conflict within and tries to mitigate the guilt by an alibi:

I saw them pointing at us – there goes a white man
with a black woman–they think us obscene – somehow
they make it obscene – They make me ashamed of my love
as you were ashamed of me before your father. (WV 106)

Nathaniel comes out as a victim of the society's irrational and morbid obsession with racial superiority. He possesses no strong character and in the words of Bailey, "he is merely pathetic, not tragic." Weak willed, he succumbs to the formidable onslaught of the society. Though the inner conflict he undergoes is not of a tragic magnitude witnessed in classical tragedies, Anderson's forte in graphically conveying the cruel effect of society's inhumanity on an individual lifts the protagonist from being a melodramatic character. In contrast, Oparre emerges as a person of greater tragic intensity.

Bailey praises Oparre as a magnificent character: "She is one of Mr. Anderson's greatest creations. Her courtesy is like the incense of her perfume in the bleak New England house. Her passion is a bright flame. The poetry she speaks is beautiful with the strange beauty of her
own exotic nature.”¹⁶ As a prime target of the society she undergoes a series of degradation. The agony and social alienation is highlighted in her yearning: “I’m so starved for a word with my woman-kind” (WV 77).

Debilitating forces of racial and religious fanaticism lash on Oparre daily. Her agonising words, “If I should lose him, / If one word were unsaid, the earth’s gone. Then / where it rode, there’s only a little ailing wind” (WV 86), register the consciousness of an embittered soul whose anchorage is Nathaniel’s love. Her fears have reason— the internal conflict stems from her apprehension of Nathaniel’s estrangement from her, which foretells what is to come. Oparre’s conflict is sociological in nature but psychological in effect.

Edith Isaacs opines: “Oparre has lived in the sun; […] her gestures follows her thinking rather than lead it – as they would in more active races.”¹⁷ But when she comprehends that Nathaniel chooses to abandon her, pride and hurt love turn to wild fire revealing the hot flame burning beneath the calm eastern exterior: “There’s such a thing as a love / that holds the world well lost–I thought it was ours – / perhaps it was only mine” (WV 106). Oparre’s alienation is complete and her search for a fix in the last moments is a failure. Her unbridled emotions find an outlet, “Then I’ve never known you, nor you me. I’ve never known you, and I’m alone” (WV 108), and she repudiates him totally.
Oparre's willingness at the outset to deny her racial identity in seeking absorption with the white culture is but one of the instances showing the crippling effect of racism on her individuality: "Yes, I have cast my Malay chrysalis / and emerge with little wings! May it be a sign / that I am now New England!" (WV 73). Her tragedy is synonymous with that of the black race. Severed from the pagan culture of her ancestors, she yearns for the acceptance of the white society by conforming to its ways and goes even to the extent of acknowledging herself inferior to them:

I, even I, Oparre, lower in blood,
of pagan nurture, [...] I have made my prayer
that I may be found worthy of your god
and your cities and your ways, to walk among you
almost as you – not quite despised. (WV 47)

The negation of one's own personality and identity is the result of a crisis brought out by conflict within; Oparre is too fragile to withstand its fury. She comes out initially as a weakling, an exotic and beautiful flower crushed and trodden upon by the New England Philistines. Yet, towards the end she asserts herself. The society's ostracism makes her look back to her own culture and wear the garb of native pride, withdrawing from the attempts of assimilation and self-effacement. With the verdict of banishment comes her rejection of Christianity and the
white race. She repudiates her inferiority and asserts her pagan qualities that are now her strength and strong forte:

fire at the heart,

the word that goes with the hand, a dignity

savage, imperial, choosing rather to die

than live unwanted. (WV 129-130)

In *The Wingless Victory*, the internal conflict is shallow, effeminate and the characters fail to leave great impact. This invites criticism that Anderson has indifferently handled the theme and the characters. But on deeper reflection it is apparent that the motive of the dramatist is to highlight the intensity of the external conflicts. This has necessitated assigning a subordinate role to the internal conflict. The characters had to be necessarily sketchy; perhaps strong characterization would have shifted the focus away from the external conflicts. Nevertheless, it is to the credit of Maxwell Anderson that the play does not descend to a sentimental tragedy and the characters single dimensional. There is enough internal conflict to clothe them with individuality.

The conflict with the society ends in the death of the protagonists. The overwhelming feeling is that the innocent lives are lost because of the obduracy of a xenophbic society. Yet there are dissenting voices. Anita Block is more sympathetic to the puritan society than to the
protagonists. She argues that the outrage of the society is logical and one has no right to question the correctness of the collective wisdom of their time and milieu. The will of the individual has to surrender to the collective will of the society:

Why, therefore, should a Malay princess seem other than a black woman from a jungle, with whom a marital alliance would be nothing but a disgrace and scandal? And what has all this to do with the race-superiority myth manifesting itself today in America, in Great Britain, in Germany, in Austria and elsewhere?\(^{18}\)

The answer would be that Anderson’s purport is to illuminate the current issues. Edmond Gagey says: “the play is obviously not so much a colonial story as an attack on intolerance and racial hatred with an eye on Nazi doctrine, as indicated in the line that ‘in sheer asininity the Aryan tops the world.’”\(^{19}\) The contemporaneousness of Medea myth only suggests the accumulative experience of racial theme and its relevance, for the glass of intolerance is far from empty; it drains at different rates for different people.

Anderson’s philosophy is that the individual has to contribute to redress the racial inequality and social ill. It is reassuring to note that Anderson who has portrayed the bigoted racial and religious society has also presented the minor but meaningful characters like Faith and Ruel.
Faith stands for tolerance and Ruel, despite being called a “recalcitrant, worthless brother” by Stark Young, stands for acceptance. Anderson has skinned the monster of racial problem that exists today and has exposed the sinews that power the beast. His positive message is that if the muscles are bared, the dead skeleton of humanity will be revealed, and when fresh spirit of love and brotherhood of man blows, it will arise like the dry bones seen by Ezekiel, the Prophet.

If *The Wingless Victory* interprets racial discrimination as a social evil, *Lost in the Stars* projects such prejudice as a threat to all humanity, indeed to the moral universe itself. *Lost in the Stars*, charged with all the elements of a beautiful parable, is about racial discord and harmony. The play which had a long run in 1949 emerged out of the memorable novel of Alan Paton’s *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Paton’s novel is remarkable for its commitment to exploring the racial conflict for the social, political and moral disequilibrium of the modern world. Wolcott Gibbs reviews: “Anderson succeeded in transferring its feeling and quality intact to the stage.” Several questions arise concerning Anderson’s adaptation of the novel. How important is it actually? What made Anderson return to the racial theme again? Has it struck out in really new direction? And what can one hope to find at the end of the road taken?
It is imperative to note in the years since the World War II, blatant discrimination shifted to more subtle forms and attitudes, with the alienation of the blacks still rampant in America. Anderson resolved to give a dynamic expression to the racial problem on the stage and this time with a positive stroke in contrast to *The Wingless Victory* where the protagonists are portrayed as ineffectual against the society. His long cherished desire to speak of the racial injustice that exists in America and elsewhere found a suitable vehicle. The consciously produced play breathes the tenacity of purpose shared with Alan Paton. Anderson’s letter to Paton illuminates his intense social sensitivity:

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

William Field, Anderson’s friend affirms that he prized the 1950 Brotherhood Award of the National Conference of Christians and Jews given for *Lost in the Stars* more than any other award he had received, including the Pulitzer Prize for *Both Your Houses* and Drama Critics Circle Award for *Winterset* and *High Tor*.  

To adapt this play, “Maxwell Anderson has drawn on his talent for poetic drama and Kurt Weill’s musical gifts that have raised the musical
play to the foothills of opera and both the playwright and composer have been inspired by the feeling that the story says something that they have been groping to express for several years."  

*Time* records: "To the fierce sufferings of humanity the musical, like the novel, brings a real humaneness and makes a frontal emotional assault." In the hands of Anderson and Weill, the musical play has become a work not only of surpassing compassion and humanity, and a promise of man's brotherhood but also a work of such impressive artistic dimension that there are a few American critics who prefer to identify it not as a 'musical play' but an opera.

Anderson and Weill found one distinctly valuable product left from their earlier effort on the racial theme - the song "Lost in the Stars" which supplies the title for the present play. It says that we are all here in the same little planet floating along the universe and we are all lost in the stars. The perspective it gives on the relation between races, between majority and minority groups, between one man and another is significant.

Anderson’s acceptance speech for the Brotherhood Award given to *Lost in the Stars* avers that the play was the outcome of intense concern of a large number of theatre personalities over the "recurrent and expanding disasters" that plague mankind. Arnold Toynbee, the historian shared his views that, "There is nothing that can save us except
Brotherhood, amity, tolerance, understanding - understanding that crosses all the boundaries." Anderson's moving rendition of the tragic story of Stephen Kumalo underscores his concern and contribution to "a cure for the most terrifying disease of our time - the disease of racial hate."  

The play speaks for the progress of Anderson's textural forms and moral ideas. It discusses the multitudinous problems of the people both at the individual and societal level, the intricate struggle between the faces of modernity and the forces of tradition. The epicentre of the conflict rests on the tension between the corrosion caused by racial prejudice and the regeneration of the individual through the redemptive force of love.

In the manner of classical tragedies, **Lost in the Stars** interprets human conflict as an expression of moral disequilibrium that is, as a sign of disorder in the universe. This lyrical tragedy spins its crisis around two protagonists, the black preacher Stephen Kumalo and the white planter James Jarvis. In this work, racial hatred is the tragic cause - a condition which not only afflicts individuals but also sickens the body politics. The play, though an adaptation, is a new work with meaning of its own, permeating the message of hope that through personal approach people can solve racial problems. The changes Anderson made in reclaiming the story, though a few, are subtle and of utmost
importance. In the dramatic version, the characters become more appealing and convincing; the story is more moving and the meaning more credible. The play convincingly depicts the possibilities of goodwill in a society troubled by racial conflict. Through *Lost in the Stars* Anderson renders the right kind of justice to the world. There is no trace of prejudice or fanaticism, hate or hurt but only love, hope, and courage springing from the immortal spirit of man.

Anderson’s penchant for dramatization of novels like *Bad Seed* by William March and *Cry, the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton is often assailed. Quoting Russell Lowell’s vindication of such writers like Chaucer and Shakespeare, Bailey justifies Anderson’s adaptation of novels: “If the works of great poets teach anything, it is to hold mere invention somewhat cheap. It is not the finding of a thing but the making something out of it.”\(^{29}\) *The Saturday Review of Literature* records the creative achievement, “the play’s sad tale seem elevating as well as touching.”\(^{30}\) *The Book Review Digest* registers: “Maxwell Anderson has made a beautiful dramatization of Alan Paton’s novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*. The poetry written for the songs has a simple beauty which seems to retain the idiom of the Zulu.”\(^{31}\)

Reverend Stephen Kumalo, a village Zulu minister goes to Johannesburg in search of his sister Gertrude and Absalom his son, who after going there for better pastures have disappeared in the vast
city. In the course of his quest, Stephen meets his brother John Kumalo and is shocked to see that the latter's moral standards have declined and that he has changed into a cynical merchant and a small time politician. He learns that his sister has become a prostitute and his son Absalom having associated with bad company, has taken to stealing, drinking and other vices. He is shocked to hear that Absalom was arrested once and that he had made a girl pregnant.

To add to these sordid tales, the Reverend is greeted by even more shocking news. Absalom who is on parole accidentally shoots and kills Arthur Jarvis, a young white man who is a crusader and champion of the black race. The incident occurs when Absalom and his two companions attempt robbing his house. The culprits are captured and one of them is Mathew, John Kumalo's son. Absalom confesses the crime and is sentenced to be hanged while his companions having denied the crime go free. Stephen Kumalo in his shame feels obliged to give up the parish he has long presided over. At the time of Absalom's execution, James Jarvis, the murdered man's father, in spite of his prejudice against blacks is drawn to the minister because of their common grief in losing their sons. The play ends with Jarvis urging Stephen not to leave his people and promising to help the poor black people.

Why did Anderson have to turn to South Africa for materials on a problem that was just as much an American one? Perhaps an answer
to that question lies in the fact that history has made South Africa a multi-racial land where discrimination or Apartheid and inter racial tension carry heavy voltage. Kurt Weill remarks in *The Days Grow Short* also satisfy the query: "this story had a rare quality of lack of violent hate, which makes it not particularly suitable for a drama but ideal for a musical play." Through this play, Anderson has expressed his conviction that although the characters may be racially black or white, they are morally complex and fundamentally human, yearning for love, amity, and brotherhood. The conflict between the races, though an undeniable reality, is an aberration in the long march of civilisation. He voices a fundamental optimism in humanity and its ability to effect change.

The tale of Stephen Kumalo is illustrative of the great dissension among the South Africans and by proposing a resolution to Stephen's problems, Anderson offers a constructive remedy to racial and caste conflicts. Stephen Kumalo's sufferings are not something unique; they are a part of the South African tragedy. The other characters who suffer include Gertrude, Absalom, Irina, and Mathew. Their sufferings originate from the moral degeneration related to a social system that is indifferent to human values. This moral degeneration in all its grim aspects assumes diametrically conflicting double face--one apathetic to the blacks and the other alarming to the whites. The principal emotion brewed by this decay is fear which leads to dehumanization. Racial
barriers interlard man's alienation by intimidating qualms rather than providing a solution through understanding.

The fear of one community for the other is communicated effectively through the chorus:

**Negro Quartet.** Who can be content

When he dares not raise his voice? [...] 

**White Chorus.** Yes we fear them,

For they are many and we are few!

**Negro Chorus.** Yes we fear them,

Though we are many and they are few! (LS 331)

Another aspect of the moral degeneration is the alienation of blacks from their homeland. John Kumalo deserts Ixopo and settles down in the anonymous big city of Johannesburg. Gertrude is alienated from her family and village; Absalom feels alienated from his native culture and even basic human values. The absence of love and charity in the lives of blacks is demonstrated through the incident when Stephen meets his brother. In this relationship there is also a conflict between the power of love and the love of power. John is an archetype of the forces of greed and lust for power, while Stephen stands for love.

The social injustice and the racial exploitation found in the South African society are given expression in the tragedy that overtakes
Absalom and Arthur. By contrasting Stephen and James who undergo the common misfortune of losing their sons, Anderson suggests a sense of social destiny. They lose their loved ones because of a social pattern; this destruction is not merely personal. In a larger perspective, the prevailing social situation destroys the basis of tribal life itself, as reflected in the disintegration of the Kumalo clan. The colour discrimination contributes to the inter-societal conflict and all the attendant evils that wreck the lives of the innocents who belong to both the races.

The chorus pictures Johannesburg as a city of no return, a breeding place for vices and a nightmarish world for the ignorant and innocent black. When people go to Johannesburg they do not come back. Gertrude and Absalom are just two of its victims who lose their identity and finally their lives, too. They are completely lost and no one hears of them. Johannesburg is symbolic of the modern industrial city with its exploitation, crimes, ghettos, its inhumanity and its total indifference to human values.

Even as Anderson shows the two races in conflict, he carefully avoids taking sides with any particular group. If the youth among the blacks are misled and filled with hatred, elders like Stephen are kind and honest outright. If the elders among the whites are still ruled by blind prejudice, young Arthur is open-hearted and sympathetic. Faults and
virtues are to be found in both races; they are not the monopoly of a particular community.

Multiplicity of conflicts is seen in the play though the focus is on the issue of race. While The Wingless Victory and Lost in the Stars align themselves on this issue, racial hatred is relegated in Lost in the Stars. The nature of the conflicts also varies; if there are three-dimensional external conflicts in The Wingless Victory, the conflict is internalized in the Lost in the Stars.

Anderson's theory of tragedy emphasizes the conflict of good and evil within an individual, and the traditional concept of transcending ennoblement of the character. In everyone there exists diametrically opposed qualities constantly warring with one another, causing difficulties in one's behaviour, in one's relation with other human beings and in reaching decisions that may change one's lives. Ambition wages war with inertia, courage with cowardice, agnosticism with religion, radicalism with conservatism, altruism with selfishness. There may be a respite for the individual in his conflict with the external world but for the conflict within him there is none. The potentiality of the internal conflict is that since the individual becomes the battleground for suppressive forces and keeps them going, he also has in him the power to get over them. The individual is beset with forces battling within himself and he fights
them to attain inner harmony. The internal conflicts help in rediscovering oneself, though there is no assurance that the struggle will result in victory.

The strength of Lost in the Stars lies in its vivid depiction of internal conflict. The internal conflict takes place at three levels in three different characters. Anderson’s primary principle of the combat between good and the evil takes place in Absalom. The war of traditional prejudice and beliefs with the modern values and concept occurs in James Jarvis. Stephen on the other hand oscillates between his preaching and life in reality. He is torn asunder by the potent forces: the guilt of Absalom’s murder of Arthur Jarvis, and the love for his only son.

Absalom, the only son of Rev. Stephen Kumalo, recalls Absalom the favourite son of King David. Though he rebelled against his father, David loved him very much. David’s cry over the death of his son, “Oh my son Absalom, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” \(^{33}\) has become a classic expression of paternal grief. Rev. Kumalo’s grief is no less moving; Anderson has captured the parental sorrow in all its intensity.

Absalom is the prodigal son of Rev. Kumalo’s family. But unlike the prodigal son of the Bible, he does not leave home in search of pleasures of the world. He departs from his native village with the purpose of earning twelve pounds of his own for his education. But
destiny frowns and the lad is caught in the bog of the glittering ugliness of Johannesburg and sinks into the evil life of the metropolis. But Absalom's life "is only a drop in the great river of blacks that pours into the earth and is seen no more!" (LS 295). His life necessitates the query why so many natives take to bad life. Though Anderson holds the racial problems in the background, the interracial discrimination calls for examination to comprehend the underlying conflict.

The material and social chasm between the blacks and the whites is the leaven ground for the labyrinth of evil. The spread of white man's technological civilization made the country rich and blooming but it also plunged the black race into deeper ravines of misery. Enticed by higher wages, the natives were drawn into mines, factories or into houses as servants. The growth of slums was the result of this factor. Though the blacks were employed by the whites for unskilled labour, they were repulsed socially. Apartheid originated in this manner. Decent accommodation was denied in the urban areas resulting in the growth of slums affording a conducive milieu for the brewing of all vices and crimes. The old ties, tribes and families were broken; the blacks could not take roots in the white society nor could return to their native land. The native grew not only ignorant but also brutal and degraded. Vices and violent quarrels multiplied and immoral life became common. John articulates the plight of the unfortunate majority: "We won't get equal
Stephen Kumalo understands that Absalom is caught in the swift current of vices at Johannesburg when Mrs. Mkize reports: "In the middle of the night they brought things here, umfundisi. Clothes and watches, and money. They left in haste" (LS 308). Tragedy befalls Absalom because he is trapped by evil company. Absalom and his two accomplices enter Arthur’s residence only with the idea of committing burglary. When they find the servant an obstacle in the way of getting the treasure, Johannes has no compunction in striking him down with an iron bar. A frightened Absalom fatally shoots Arthur and runs away. When captured, Absalom confesses the crime. But constant practice of crime makes the other two young men callous and the line separating right and wrong vanishes as they deny any involvement in the crime.

Absalom’s conflict begins even before the disaster occurs — to join or not to join the criminal endeavour of his friends to rob a white man’s house. The conflict he faces comes in the form of his friends who force him to join the burglary, and his girl Irina who dissuades him. Absolam wavers between the good and the bad like Dr. Faustus. The modern Faustus falls an easy victim to the temptation like Marlowe’s hero and
resolves to join the venture with his cheap revolver, doubting very much its use.

Absalom is not innately evil; despite the association with evil company, he does not become a hardened criminal. The testimony of Eland, the parole officer, that his good behaviour was a deciding factor in letting him on parole attests this fact. Further, he is loyal to Irina, the girl he loves and has no idea to betray her. Absalom is the victim of debased environment that provokes crimes. He is caught in the maelstrom of compulsive action which draws him to ultimate disaster. He agrees to loot Arthur’s house in order to get beyond the degradation and filth of the Shanty Town and the forced labour gangs.

Absolam is unprincipled and irresponsible up to the time of his arrest. The murder of Arthur closely followed by his arrest does not make him bitter and bruised. But in prison he gains self-realization. It is here he decides to reconstruct his life: “I shall do no more evil, tell no more untruth; I shall keep my father’s ways and remember them” (LS 343). It is in the confrontation of the external and internal forces that Absolam discovers his strength. He forms a personal idealism based on honesty. He marries Irina - a marriage solemnized by his father. Though there is no strong evidence to convict him, he affirms his new found idealism and confesses the murder: “There is no lie in it, for I said to myself, I shall not lie any more, all the rest of my days, nor do anything
more that is evil” (LS 354). Absolam has to pay a high price for the visceral conviction.

The dark night of his soul is transformed into dawn of resurrection. In his case, the jail is redemptive and regenerative. Paucity of evidence exonerates his accomplices who plead innocence. Absalom refuses to compromise his ideals of integrity and stands firm in his conviction and confession, on the basis of which he is condemned and executed. In the conflict between truth and tyranny which means death to him, he emerges a victor. At no other moment does a purer autonomous hero arise.

Arthur Jarvis is the advocate of the black rights. An exceptional and extraordinary person of goodwill and strong convictions, he understands the problems of the sons of the soil and the white men. He is resolute in bridging the chasm between the Zulus and the whites in his own way despite the admonition of his father:

Jarvis. But in our village one does not go out of his way to speak to a black. [...] 

Arthur. I have friends among the Zulus. And my friends are my friends. (LS 300)
Arthur displays no inhibition in mixing with the coloured folk and does whatever is in his power to ameliorate their condition and gives them hope and encouragement. James Jarvis is averse to the illumined understanding of his son towards the blacks and opposes his social and political views. Arthur is an idealist who tries to bring down the walls of racial prejudice. He can be likened to Abraham Lincoln who died for the cause he believed in. Eland bears testimony to the compassionate and understanding heart of Arthur when Jarvis asks him, “What would he have said about a crime like this?” (LS 329). Eland feels that Arthur would have attributed the crime to the Negro environment that provokes it. “They live in such poverty and fear. They see no way out of their poverty or their fear and they grow desperate” (LS 329). It is ironical that this votary of the blacks should be extinguished by one of them.

Arthur’s death highlights the social questions with which he was much concerned. It provides an answer in part to these questions. While alive, he fails to achieve harmony between Stephen Kumalo and James Jarvis. His death is an eye-opener to his father who goes all out to befriend and help the black parson. Although the idealists Absalom and Arthur die, the principles for which they stood take root in the world of reality.

Stephen Kumalo, the Zulu Christian pastor of St. Mark’s Church, Ndotsheni, is a rare and remarkable example of a simple soul that is
buffeted by ugly realities and yet emerges a better Christian at the end of the odyssey. Stephen makes his journey from Ixopo to Johannesburg, which in a broader sense is a spiritual expedition. It symbolises his passage from ignorance to illumination, from innocence to awareness. The journey is similar to the one made by Bunyan’s hero in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. The likeness is reinforced by the chorus describing the hills and valleys in the first scene indicating biblical connections. The road to the Ixopo symbolizes the spiritual way of life, while the road to Johannesburg portrays the material way of life. Stephen is jolted from the quiet happiness of the parish to the maelstrom of Johannesburg. The city provides a touchstone to his character. He leaves Ndotsheni as a respectable minister and though returns in ignominy, he is spiritually fortified.

Stephen’s shame and sorrow is twofold: one is personal and the other is for his race. He tries to redeem his son Absalom and his sister Gertrude from the clutches of vices and ruins of Johannesburg. This is done against the background of the deplorable condition of multitudes of men, women, and children in the grip of the same forces that have ruined the members of his family:

> A terrible thing has befallen my people. We are lost. Not many have found their way to the Christ, and those who have not are lost. My son was lost. This would not have happened
Stephen is torn between the love for his son and the religious beliefs and principles. The conflict within is intense and he is filled with remorse which is effectively expressed in his musing:

"Tell no truth in this court, lest it go ill with you here;
Keep to the rules, beware"?
And yet if I say again,
"It shall not profit a man
If he gain the whole world and lose his own soul!"
I shall lose Absalom then. (LS 343)

Stephen wrestles with this problem. The conflict within is between a loving father and the minister of Christ – to tell a lie and escape or uphold truth and die. The basic dignity of the man and the sincerity of his religious convictions are revealed when he does not succumb to questionable methods to save his son. Instead, he goes to Jarvis to plead for his intercession. In the encounter, he realizes that the predicament is the same for the father of the murdered man and his measure of sorrow synonymous with his own: "this thing that is the heaviest thing of all my years – it is also the heaviest thing of all your years” (LS 345). The pain and intensity of their grief become more pronounced, when each tries to highlight the good nature of his son:
Stephen. Is there not a core of good in him who tells truth?

Jarvis. My son left his doors always open. He trusted his fellow men. (LS 345)

The intensity of the racial conflict is well brought out by Anderson. Stephen is the archetype of the depressing and bleak aspect of man in low position exposed to the vagaries of life. Yet his words from the pulpit are genuine, testifying his simplicity and love both for his black race and the white people acquainted with him. As a Christian, as a parson and as a man, he believes in the redemptive power of love, whatever be the conflict and however be his sufferings. There is no hatred in his heart either for the whites or the blacks:

The man he killed was known to you, too. He was Arthur Jarvis. He was born in the hills above our little town. There was brightness upon him even as a child. As a man he was a friend of our race, a friend of all men, a man all men could be proud of. And my son - killed him. And the mother of Arthur Jarvis is dead of grief for her son. My people, if I stay here now I become a hindrance to you, and not a help. I must go. (LS 363)

The people protest. There is logic in the words of the religious man; he reminds them that their village is poor. In the past, Arthur Jarvis has helped them. None will help them again while Stephen
remains. This apprehension springs from the reality of racial divide and the conflict is aggravated by the regressive views of white conservatives like Jarvis.

James Jarvis comes out initially as a die-hard racist. He believes that the blacks are an inferior race and the only responsible policy is peremptory separation from them. He airs his prejudiced views to England. There is only one course with them – a strong hand and a firm policy. They understand nothing but discipline, and nothing else. Jarvis reiterates these prejudiced and harsh views in his confrontation with Stephen:

Umfundisi, there are two races in South Africa. One is capable of mastery and self-control – the other is not. One is born to govern, the other to be governed. One is capable of culture and the arts of civilisation – the other is not. […]

Those who will not keep order must be kept in order! (LS 346-347)

Jarvis is a prisoner of his narrow views and finds his son’s socializing with Stephen repulsive and a personal embarrassment. That Arthur “an advocate of Negro equality should have been killed by a Negro” (LS 329), is a big blow which accentuates the hatred for the blacks. Stephen’s plea for mercy fails to move him for he says, “Those who lift their hands to kill must know that the penalty for death is death!” (LS 347). His
inner turmoil is so intense that it brooks no innocent contact with even black children as evident in his admonition of his grandson for fraternising with Gertrude’s son Alex. His tormented soul cries out:

I have lost so much that I don’t know why I go on living, or what’s worth saving. I don’t know any more why any man should do his tasks or work for gain or love his child. I don’t know why any child should obey – or whether good will come of it or evil. But I do know this; there are some things that I cannot bear to look on. (LS 362)

Jarvis’ grief compounded by the loss of his wife and son weighs him down heavily. In this desolate and forlorn world, he anchors his faith in the supremacy of the whites, groaning about the irresponsibility of the blacks. However, this faith is shaken and the prejudice loosened when he overhears Stephen’s genuine paean for Arthur even in the midst of his affliction. The preacher’s words have a regenerative effect on Jarvis. He goes to Stephen at the hour of Absalom’s execution saying: “when I heard you yesterday I knew that your grief and mine were the same. I know now that of all the men who live near this great valley you are the one I would want for a friend” (LS 367).

This scene is Anderson’s own creation and does not exist in the novel. The conflict experienced by Jarvis between his traditional beliefs and human values becomes resolved at this moment. Ronald Sanders
quotes Kurt Weill’s observations in *The Days Grow Short*: “Alan Paton knew perfectly well that a white South African of Jarvis’s generation, character, and status would never, under any circumstances, have visited a Black man’s home.” Anderson bridges this gulf in the play with apt words and sentiments.

Stephen remains sceptical, and believes that he could only tell his parish people: “That we are all lost here, black and white, rich and poor, the fools and the wise! Lost and hopeless and condemned on this rock that goes ’round the sun without meaning!” (LS 368). The racial message of Anderson lies in the change of attitude which Jarvis exhibits in the play to extend his arm to the grief stricken Stephen in sympathy:

Not hopeless, Stephen, and not without meaning. For even out of the horror of this crime some things have come that are gain and not loss. My son’s words to me and my understanding of my son. And your words in the chapel, and my understanding of those words – and your son’s face in the courtroom when he said he would not lie any more or do any evil. I shall never forget that. (LS 369)

Jarvis establishes the meaning which Anderson conceived to diffuse in *Lost in the Stars*. Jarvis alters his negative attitude towards the blacks while reflecting on the courage of Absalom, who even under the shadow of death refuses to lie about the murder of Arthur. He forgives
Absalom and acknowledges the fortitude of his spirit: "But you and I never had to face what Absalom faced there. A man can hardly do better than he did when he stood before the judge" (LS 369). Jarvis' regeneration lies in his ability to sympathize with Absalom and Stephen. The example of one man's manifestation of his idealism in doing the right thing coupled with the recognition of Stephen's tragedy as synonymous with the loss of his own son transforms Jarvis.

Lost in the Stars is the prism through which Anderson aims to diffuse the bright rays of message and meaning in life. Absalom displays magnificent courage of total honesty at the hour of his death. Arthur is the idealist who contributes to the bridging of the gulf between the races. In Stephen one sees the unadulterated love and the genuine humility of a great soul. Jarvis towards the end strikes a very vibrant note of harmony, the brotherhood of man. Through these characters, Anderson emphasises that racial conflict resulting in loneliness and alienation can be overcome only through understanding, empathy and love. His solution to the raging question of racial antagonism comes as a message. Bailey calls this voice of Anderson "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, crying the beloved country, the promised land, the new Jerusalem, the hope of mankind." 35

Through The Wingless Victory and Lost in the Stars, Anderson propounds a solution to the racial discrimination and injustice. He
recommends no mass movements or legislation but his moral compass points to the integrity of the individual. A basic change of heart on the part of the individual towards another and the realization of the worth of another go a long way beyond the colour of the skin. Anderson’s plays bear felicitous testimony to man’s potentiality which remains to be realized. Man is constantly seeking an answer to many things on earth and must find the answer within himself to the problems of the universe. “Let us be neighbors, Let us be friends” (LS 369). From the ashes of despair rises a hope for mankind. Anderson’s prophetic voice is heard in the closing chorus:

Each lives alone in a world of dark,
Crossing the skies in a lonely arc,
Save when love leaps out like a leaping spark
Over thousands, thousands of miles! (LS 369)

Brotherhood is more than an inspiring ideal of Anderson. It is related either directly or indirectly to every realm of thought and action and demands moral obligation. Whether the circle be as large as the solar system or as small as a marble, every circle has a centre and every centre a point. The regenerating agency which claims the world as its sphere commences at one point as its centre and this centre is the human soul. It is obvious that if the society is to be regenerated, the regeneration must begin with the individual.
Hobday in *The Sparrow in the Sanctuary* speaks of ‘Cains and Abels’. All underlying problems ultimately resolve into one problem, to eliminate ‘Cain’ in the heart of man and to make ‘Abel’ the absolute.\(^\text{36}\)

All the inequalities and the injustices under which the world groans find their fountainhead in the heart of man. If every individual spells unification of races and stands for the breaking of racial barriers, if every individual acknowledges no colour bar and claims the allegiance of every race, every tribe and every tongue, it gives a vision of Future such as the prophets never dreamt of and such as great poets never sang about. It is the vision beautiful of the brotherhood of Man, the vision splendid of the Federation of the World.