Chapter-II

THE AERODROME AND CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY A Challenge to Totalitarianism
The Aerodrome (1941), like Cry, the Beloved Country (1948), is a novel that has definite political implications in the kind of observation that it makes of man’s capacity for ruthlessness and power. It was written against the unstable political background of the 1940’s, a novel, allegorically shaped by its insight into human psychology and by its uncommon instinct for the principle of unity residing in the right kind of love, which creates but which never destroys; hence, its sub-title "A Love Story". It is a "prophetic" parable of "Sinne and Love" the two contradictory features of human experience which forever remain as unknown as they are unpredictable:

Philosophers have measured mountains,
......
But there are two vast spacious things, 
The which to measure it doth more behove: 
Yet few there are that found them: Sinne 
and Love  

Within the novel, "Sinne" has not been theologically defined, but it may be understood in terms of the excesses that debilitate the life of the spirit in The Aerodrome. "Sinne", on the one hand, denotes the slothful and unregenerate humanity of the village, and on the other, the life denying principles of the aerodrome. The central paradox of the novel is the interconnectedness of both village and aerodrome. Though manifestly different, they are connected with one another through characters who have involuntary links with
both worlds. The village and the aerodrome are the two symbolic antitheses around which the story has been woven. The ideals of the village are as broken and disorganised as are the ideals of the aerodrome: rigid and fanatical. These are the two allegorically polarised realities that challenge Roy's status as a free-thinking individual.

At first the drama revolves around Roy, the main protagonist, who updates the reader on the recent occurrences that have thrown his life in complete disarray. He recounts everything that happens on the night of his 21st birthday celebration when he was told that the Rector and his wife were not his real parents. He is devastated by the shock of this revelation that he had actually been an abandoned waif, "found in a basket lying at the top of the village at the place where the main road now is". (pp.24-25) When the novel opens, we find him face down in the mud after having drunk himself senseless over the news. As he recovers, he recapitulates the sudden but fateful change of tide in his personal affairs which has brought him so low down. He is "sitting" devastated "in the mud" (p.27) thrown back upon the only certainty known to him, his own self. A series of memories flash back to him in a moment of reflective stock-taking. He recalls an idyllic past seemingly buried in a life where "polyanthus and honesty" are still in "full bloom". (p.15) These pleasant reveries transport him through the
well-trodden ways of a scenic village life until in his mind's eye, he traverses beyond the familiar pub onto the unknown precincts of the aerodrome, a totally new feature of village life altogether:

This was an institution which, so we were informed, was of great, even vital importance to the defences of our country; but it was so well concealed that many visitors to our village have gone away from the neighbourhood without ever having suspected its existence. ... (p.17)

Coincidentally, Roy's crisis of identity, "that I did not know who I was" (p.20) concurs with the changes that have accompanied the aerodrome and which seem to have eroded the social fabric of life in the village. Little does Roy foresee how closely intertwined his life with the Air Vice-Marshal's life will be; he who is the main executor of the aerodrome's political creed of selfish ambition, who also happens to be his biological father. Roy's musings also personalise the extent of the coming changes. They give the reader perspectives into the past, typified by the easy life of the village, into the present, as reflected by the outrageous credo of the aerodrome; and into the uncertainty of the future already visible to the reader in Roy's manifest uncertainty:

When I lay drunk in the mud I had been able to forget my sorrow, but now it returned upon me, in pangs of uncertainty and desperation, like the wounds of love. ... (p.20)
His personal sense of alienation is further deepened by another untoward incident. As he returns to the house later in the evening, "... I moved back again to the window through which I entered the house, and, though I disliked occupying the position of an eavesdropper, I shielded myself with the curtain, fancying that I should have only a few minutes to wait before the prayer was ended ...", (pp.28-29) he overhears the Rector’s confession of his attempted murder of his friend Anthony. This succeeds in driving him further away from himself. Even as the story unfolds itself at the level of the domestic and the personal, at the extra personal level one may observe the political forces of anarchy attempting to knock down human considerations. Thus the deliberate murder of the Rector by the Flight Lieutenant is airily dismissed by the Air Vice-Marshal whose concern for change far exceeds any concern for the human:

‘Whether any of you’, he said, ‘is yet aware of what is shortly to happen in this village, I do not know. Briefly it is to be taken over by the Air Force. The property of your leading landowner, who gives most of you work at very low rates of pay, will be bought up by the Government. We shall install an Air Force padre in the place of your deceased Rector ... Now I merely wish to point out to you that you would do well to prepare for a great change in your lives. We in the Air Force look upon things very differently .... Muddle, inefficiency, any kind of slackness are things which we simply do not tolerate ... That is enough
... Now we shall bury the dead body.'
(pp.97-98)

The issues that the novel concerns itself with are not immediately apparent until one has understood the encroachment upon human life of a set of values bizarre enough in their consolidated attempt to oust the existing ones. "Do not let pity or any other feeling drag you away from the certainty of your own integrity and the knowledge that in the last resort we love only ourselves". (p.187) The panoramic view is one of personal turmoil and political turbulence. The public and the private impinge upon one another at the cost of the human. At the centre of the stage stands Roy who is obviously ill at ease. He is in the unenviable position of being completely alone caught in the cataclysmic changes that are beyond his control. Ordinary events take on a morbid turn, effectively uprooting Roy's sense of sureness with the realities that have always governed him. What follows is an onslaught of radical ways upon a way of life which has always thrived upon general disorder and apathy. Roy finds himself literally alone confronting the metaphysics of being and selfhood in what may be observed to be Kafkaesque in tone. The similarity, however, ends there for the book essentially concerns itself with the ethics of freedom and love; questions which Roy must seek to answer for himself apart from village and aerodrome, but within the context of a social-bound existence. Roy must
be able to steer himself clear of the uncertainty and doubt that has completely assailed him and which has overturned the entire village. He registers the emotional predicament of one caught between the changelessness of the "village as it had been and as it still was" and the "rapidly accelerating change or threat" (p.14) represented by the aerodrome. He will remain the yardstick by which the aerodrome will be measured in terms of its genuine ability to bring about an acceptable change. The forces of change meanwhile masquerading as the forces of renewal have swept the village.

They stem from a point outside the closed matrix of village life. They are synonymous with the aerodrome, the counterpointing antagonist to the familiar scheme of values represented by the village, and first encountered in its human aspect in the figure of the Flight Lieutenant whom Roy has befriended and whom he had invited to his birthday party:

This young man was remarkably handsome, and dexterous in all his ways ... Often too, in the course of a general conversation he would shock me by some brutally expressed criticism of our way of life. His actions were sometimes entirely irresponsible. He would play the most absurd and often cruel practical jokes on perfect strangers. (pp.20-21)

Roy's relationship with the Flight Lieutenant, however, is an unstable one marked by the Flight Lieutenant's initial rebuffs at Roy's attempt to befriend him and of his stolen affair with Roy's girlfriend Bess. When he is betrayed a
second time, his induction into the aerodrome is complete. He is the son whom the Air Vice-Marshal fathered. His real mother is the Rector’s wife. She married the Rector believing her lover the Air Vice-Marshal, to be dead. Meanwhile, in Chapter Two we have already been privy to the Rector’s confession of his attempted murder of his friend Anthony. Unknown to him, Anthony survived the attempt and his identity was ironically changed to the Air Vice-Marshal. The Squire’s sister was another of the Air Vice-Marshal’s mistresses who also bore him a son, the Flight Lieutenant. An intimate knowledge of personal histories becomes an important factor in understanding the paradoxical realities of human success and human failure, in order to understand the "brilliant irony of the book" which "lies in the inescapability of family ties".³ This is how the two symbolic worlds of village and aerodrome are pathologically tied to one another.

Warner’s insight into the psychology of "sinne" brings the reader face to face with the realities that underlie the public face of an institution like the aerodrome with its unnatural roots in avaricious self-seeking. On the other hand, the village, represented by a paltry lot of "unskilled" labourers who have "no confidence" and "no initiative" whatsoever, (p.119) is another aspect of human weakness, of its total incapacity for self-discipline. Between the two, Roy must choose. We observe him confronting the two
alternatives that have metaphorically formulated themselves into village and aerodrome. He takes the reader to an allegorical confrontation with issues at stake within the novel, both personal and political, through an undaunted commitment to finding out the truth for himself. As a seeker of truth, he finds himself the unwitting victim of the conflict between village and aerodrome, of the pull between the familiar but decrepit rule of the village and the unfamiliar but efficiently calculated order of the aerodrome.

The book dramatises Roy’s sense of dislocation through a set of events that de-familiarises the familiar and estranges Roy from those whom he had always believed himself to be close to, the Rector and his wife, the Squire and his sister. The microcosmic entity of the individual represented by Roy, is shown to be easily prone to the debilitating influences of doubt and a general loss of faith:

... And I was suddenly shocked to find that my feelings towards my guardians were no longer frank and open as they had been; for now my first thought was to dissemble ... (p.45)

In another startling encounter that he has, this time with the Squire’s crude display of naked emotion Roy’s sense of alienation increases. On his deathbed, the Squire bites his sister’s hand. To Roy as he says;

They had been symbols to me of security and peace; but I had learnt that they could represent neither of these
qualities. What I had thought to be solid, rounded and entire, now seemed to melt into frightful shapes of mist, to dissolve into intricacies wherein I was lost as though I had never been. (pp.123-124)

There is a logical inversion of perspectives and a reshufflement of priorities to suit his own desperate need for stability. His involvement with Bess is at first darkened by passion and rebellion. In a world of shrinking values, she is the only physical certainty known to him. Hence the intrepidity of his feelings for her are largely self-endorsed:

I felt fully able to take on myself the responsibility for any step which we might take together, since the responsibility was presented to my mind in the form of extreme and confident delight, in the face of which, both the village and the aerodrome itself seemed hardly stable things, but malleable to my own desires. ... I saw a kind of liberation in avoiding the obligations, the conventions, the manners in which I had been brought up and which now for me, perhaps owing to my present lack of security, seemed buried in the ground with the body of the man whom I had thought to be my father. (p.109)

He marries her secretly just before his voluntary entry into the aerodrome, a transitory period of vulnerability and of high expectations. Her betrayal, however, crystallises all his efforts at remaking his own life, "now I had become unthinkingly, savagely and, with no conscious effort of the will determined to succeed and to excel in an Air Force of
which I still understood neither the purpose nor the organisation". (p.176) The ideal of the Flight Lieutenant is replaced by the larger "figure of the Air Vice-Marshal, a figure of greater strength, more solid purpose and more extensive power". (p.176)

The ironic convergence of the two, of Roy and the Air Vice-Marshals, of father and son as yet unknown to one another, in the powerful arena of the aerodrome, allegorically shifts the drama of individual pain and loss from the personal to the political, from village to aerodrome. Incidentally, Chapter Twelve, entitled "The Air Vice-Marshall", which more or less forms the middle section of the novel, is an exposition of the Air Vice-Marshal's philosophy of power, the totalitarian ideology of the aerodrome to which the deserted Roy seems more than fully committed. He enters a period of "unthinking" reorganisation in which he wilfully cuts himself off from all sources of human love and human sympathy. Allegorically, the complete takeover of the individual person by the aerodrome may be understood in the ominous political terms of the absolute regimentation of society under Fascist dictatorship. This has already been foreshadowed by the aerodrome's seizure of the Squire's personal property, which is only the beginning of an extensive takeover. "It isn't simply a question of my land and my house. the Air force want to occupy the whole
village ...’" (p.79) Shortly after, the Squire succumbs to illness metaphorically indicating his own weakness which lies in his inability to help himself, and which is symptomatic of the general spiritual apathy that reigns over the village.

In dramatising the endemic political situation of the 1940's Warner has also been able to carve out of history a slab of human experience whose allegorical overtones may be distinctively understood. Roy is a representative figure of moral creativity, of the individual's capacity for exercising his own rights; to freedom and to love. The antagonistic forces that threaten to overrun him especially embodied in the figure of the Air Vice-Marshal, represent the dark forces of the human psyche which seek consolidation through the exploitation of personal power. It re-enacts in political terms the uneasy political situation of the 1940's where the likelihood of an authoritarian takeover was very strong. Warner's concern as an artist for the impending doom of the individual is reflected through characters who embody the ideological temper of the times. They are shown to be grappling with ideas and concepts that control them and which influence their lives completely; the Air Vice-Marshal being the climatic embodiment of it. Allegorically, he is the military dictator who rejects his own humanity and denies himself the right to live as a sentient being. He has a past history of betrayed loves and emotional failures which he has
used as excuses for setting himself up against humanity in general. His life has been an aborted attempt to cut off his past altogether and to woo the material life of the ego with its insistence upon the "escape" that it must make from "time and its bondage", to wilfully construct "something of clarity, independence and beauty". (p.295) His ringing call to order attracts a number of young, able-bodied men who "were attracted to the new order of things by the higher rates of pay which were now offered for their work and by the opportunities which might come in time of wearing uniforms". (p.136) Roy is among them, optimistically involved in an organisation that seemed to lift them up and help them soar on its material wings of inhuman progress. The aerodrome defies traditional social norms in much the same way that it defies the villager's understanding of it, "he never seemed to ... have any clear idea of the purpose or the future of the organisation to which he belonged". (pp.135-136) It stands on the farthest pole away from the easy informality of village life. Its appeal lies in its ability to woo young, impressionable people to a profane envisioning of a world crudely founded upon selfish ambition:

... that you are still tied to the immense and dreary procession of past time is true; it is the business of a man, and particularly of an airman, to rid himself, so far as he can, of this bond. And the first step to take towards this end is to shut out entirely from your lives your parents, people who are
unimportant in themselves, but who have served in most cases as channels or conduits through which you have all in varying degrees been infected with the stupidity, the ugliness, and the servility of historical tradition.

Through its chief spokesman the Air Vice-Marshal, Warner has exploited the totalitarian ideas of freedom and success. They are shown to be alluring to young idealistic people from the village whose notion of life is considerably motivated by the propaganda used by the aerodrome. Hence their voluntary induction into an organization that lures them with specious lies and baffles their thinking with its inverted notions of morality and self-empowerment:

'Remember that we expect from you conduct of a quite different order from that of the mass of mankind. Your actions, when off duty, may appear and indeed should appear wholly irresponsible. Your purpose — to escape the bondage of time, to obtain mastery over yourselves, and thus over your environment — must never waver. You will discover, ... the necessity for what we in this Force are in process of becoming, a new and more adequate race of men. ...' (p.187)

In his novel, Warner uses the allegorical mode to portray the ominous threat of totalitarian rule. He builds up a figurative picture of reality consisting of village muddledom, inefficiency and warm camaraderie. These, however, prove inadequate to withstand "an organization" like the aerodrome, "manifestly entitled by its own discipline, efficiency, and will to assume supreme power". (p.226) The
conflict that follows has been allegorically personalised in Roy’s initial surrender to the self-negating principles of authoritarian philosophy and in the Flight Lieutenant’s assumption of the stereotyped personality of an airman. However, both suffer under the stringent terms of the aerodrome which plots to impede the growth of the inner self. As Warner allegorically traces out the subtracting effects of a life of complete regimentation he also brings in the earlier theme of love that allegorically lies in the subtitle “A Love Story”. Meanwhile, his perception of the paralyzing effects of totalitarianism may be further understood by quoting Darshan Singh Maini who has pointed out Warner’s ability to fight the greatest fight of all; his personal “crusade against fascism”, as an artist morally concerned with the restoration of the individual and society. His is “essentially an assertion of the humanist values which were threatened with total extinction by the fascists”. As artist, the method which he applied was not one of direct, frontal sledge-hammer blows, but that of oblique, poetic, and symbolic sleight of hand. Perhaps Warner realized that any crude, straight attack on fascism was likely to yield little results. By its very nature — its cynical pragmatism and violence — totalitarianism was bound to succeed where the adversary fought with weapons already perfected by it. Thus the best way out at that time was to deal with the menace on the ideological or spiritual plane. A recourse to fantasy and allegory, incidentally a common feature
of a great deal of contemporary political fiction was thus something of an intellectual necessity.

In the light of his observation and in the light of historical fact Warner's novel is a symbolic affirmation of faith in the humanist values of a democratic set up. This implies that his vision has not been dimmed by the negating realities of the aerodrome. If at all, it has been sharpened by its exposition of the totalitarian creed, to understand that the forces of love which are deeply expressive of human creativity, may never be suppressed. Even as the anarchical rule of the aerodrome wreaks havoc in the personal lives of some characters, there is another, less audible theme embodied in the lives of the other characters who commit themselves to the rigorous ideal of a virtuous love. The book is thought provoking enough to solicit the kind of response that it does, from someone who may be compared to Roy, who actually lived through the troublous times of the 1940's, and who discovers the "superior force of human love" as being the only alternative to a life of suppression:

To our disgust and scorn for the muddle and complacency of our elders the last sentences of the Air Vice-Marshals speech had the strongest siren appeal - "I urge you to escape from all this..." By 1941, some inkling of the death of the spirit that lay behind the siren song of a clean, aesthetic society, unencumbered by muddled human emotion, had reached all but the most blind of us... There was no inhuman short cut to bliss. On the other hand, the revelation of what totalitarian
utopianism (of all kinds) meant in terms of human deformity, of the cutting off of all sources of human deformity, of the cutting off of all sources of human warmth, did not reconcile us to the cruelties caused by the evasions, incompetences and callous hypocrisies of English society between the wars. And for most of them, as for Roy the escape from the nightmare illusions of totalitarianism came from the superior force of human love.

The book is a measure of Warner’s response to a deeply troubled era. He allegorically portrays the political situation of the times through characters who dramatise the tension of having to cope with the stressful changes that demand a total surrender of one’s humanity.

In his essay "The Allegorical Method" Warner speaks of the age-old technique of clothing the familiar with the unfamiliar for effective purposes of literary communication, of allowing for the inter-penetration in writing, of the "prose truth of observation and the poetic truth of suggestion and significance" to arrive at an "extension of the understanding" necessary to all great works of art. According to him, many allegorists of the past were able to clothe their ideas in a human and understandable way because their narratives were anchored to a "fantasy" that was intimately related to reality, and to "pure observation" which was meaningfully directed by an "imagination or moral impulse". It is an essay that posits a personal but valid point of view. It stems from the assumption that allegory or
"according to the dictionary ... 'other speaking'" is second nature to all. It reveals itself in the everyday speech that makes a number of oblique references to ordinary experiences and sensations. To a novelist like Warner, whose imaginative output stems directly from society and who has been observed to be "not merely a social commentator but a social critic who is an artist" the allegorical method has been deliberately chosen as an effective channel for his diagnosis of contemporary ills. He considers it a natural way of expressing oneself:

The allegorical method, then, appears in different forms and, as it were, in different strengths. Part of our normal means of expression, its use is extended for particular purposes. Perhaps it has been used with most remarkable effect by those writers who, like Plato, Bunyan and Dostoievsky, have been most acutely conscious both of the grandeur and of the insecurity of their environment.

That "grandeur" and "insecurity" has been symbolically portrayed, from an insider's point of view, in the events of the 1940's. History is seen to execute itself through a spectacular series of interconnecting relationships and incidents that mounts up to the tragic "conflagration" (p.297) at the end. Roy's ultimate moral discovery, denied to the Air Vice-Marshal because of his wanton quest for power, is an allegorical throwback to the failure of regimented political systems. Meanwhile Roy's capacity for regenerative
insight into his own life allows him to revive his love for Bess which had been kept in cold storage during his life as an airman. Despite her betrayal of him, Roy’s humanity has not been completely erased, his capacity for forgiveness not entirely doomed. In contrast to him, the Air Vice-Marshal is unable to forgive the past. Bonded as he is to the past, his life ironically becomes a concerted attempt to construct in his "brief existence" something "guided" by his "own will, not forced" upon him "by past accidents" but "something of clarity, independence, and beauty". (p.295) These are phrases that are resonant with feeling but in the context of the aerodrome they have no real human relevance because of their complete separation from human feeling and human emotion. The wilful efforts of the Air Vice-Marshal to remake humanity altogether is an allegorical reflection of the political attempt to reconstruct the world according to totalitarian ideology. Warner points out humanity’s capacity for self-deception through its unqualified acceptance of the aerodrome with all its follies. This is an allegorical reflection on the potential "insecurity" of the human heart which allows itself to be easily seduced by ideological claptrap. On the other hand, however, the "grandeur" of life may yet be paradoxically discovered within the human heart which proves itself to be a dynamic entity of change and growth. This is
the theme that may eventually be linked with the novel's subtitle "A Love Story".

Roy's life at the aerodrome has been one of complete identification with it until the gruesome death of the Squire's sister at the hands of the Air Vice-Marshal. The events unlock a spate of emotions that remind Roy of a past that may not be so easily wished away:

As it was, I was almost superstitious enough to imagine some fatality that seemed to bind me to these characters from my past, so that I had not been able to avoid being actually present at scene after scene of violence and stress in which they had been the chief actors. And these scenes, however much I might consider myself a mere spectator, still strangely moved me. (p.238)

When he learns a little later, about Bess's sickness, he is certainly moved and makes all efforts to help her through Dr. Faulkner. On his way to fetching him, he meets his mistress Eustasia who informs him that she is going to have his child. Roy's feelings are one of "horror and shame" at having broken the rules of the aerodrome, but "at the same time" experiences "a certain satisfaction". (p.248) The public world of the aerodrome and the private world of personal emotion and love are once again at deep conflict with one another. Eustasia is all set to run away with him. Roy too begins to question himself, "Could it be, I wondered, that all this time I had been engaged in pursuit for which my enthusiasm had been in a way forced and not natural?" (p.249)
but rediscovering his pledge to Bess painfully leaves a broken Eustasia behind. Never for a moment does Roy expect her to opt for life by running away with the Flight Lieutenant who is in love with her and whose dissatisfaction with the aerodrome has already made itself obvious. The Aerodrome remains faithful to its sub-title "A Love Story", which is an ironically cryptic understatement on the daunting challenges of love. It is a term much maligned and misunderstood by village and aerodrome and it demands a heavy price from both alike. As the novel works out the exacting price of love through its characters' ventures into its realities it also reveals the numbing casualties of excessive regimentation. The aborted end of Eustasia and of the Flight-Lieutenant, proves just this. Their fate holds up to judgement the values that concur with the "undeviating success" (p.284) of the Air Vice-Marshall. In Roy's own words:

So I continued to read and as I read I wished with all my heart that they might be safe and happy, though I dreaded any moment to hear news of their capture ... and I do not know whether anxiety or admiration for the fugitives was the feeling uppermost in my mind. They seemed to me to have done something noble and desperate in making this deliberate escape along the white and dusty road that would take them almost immediately into a world of towns and villages where our standards no longer applied or had a less certain application. (pp.285-286)
They are literally smashed to bits by the Air Vice-Marshal's recruits, for daring to challenge him. In their deaths the pattern of violence is repeated again as it has been frequently repeated throughout the book. Allegorically, they point to the anarchical process of subversion which accompanies all totalitarian regimes, and which Roy has had to reckon with in the quest for his real identity. The novel is an allegorical rendering of contemporary history with its challenge to the personal life of the individual, and with its own political innuendoes. Options are kept perpetually open for Roy. He must be able to distinguish between the alien values of the aerodrome as embodied in its young airmen who scorn love and serenade success and the simple ones of the village which he later finds out, however, that, "inspite of its drunkenness and its inefficiency, was wider and deeper than the activity with which" the young airmen "were constricted by the iron compulsion of the Air Vice-Marshal's ambition". (p.261) Meanwhile, he is still involved in the process of becoming.

Darshan Singh Maini has noted in his essay that Warner's technique reflects upon a "dialectical understanding of reality" which does not presuppose a synthesis of opposing "extremes". 9 In another essay, A.A. De Vitis says that in "defining the thesis and the antithesis explicitly", Warner "fails to make a satisfactory synthesis". 10 This, however,
proves to be an unsatisfactory observation because in *The Aerodrome*, Warner does not aim to weld the two opposing world views. He humanises the facts of history and allows for the respective values of the two world orders, of the village and the aerodrome, to reveal themselves in a drama that is full of life's ingredients. Roy is the common human denominator who is caught in the giant clash of ideals. He belongs to the village and also chooses to sample the efficacy of the new order. It is to his credit that the choices that he ultimately makes are uniquely his own. The world of the village and the world of the aerodrome are ironically set apart from each other by a respective code of ethics that forbids the imposition of one upon the other. The irony is that both village and aerodrome are linked to one another through characters who share a common humanity. The Air Vice-Marshal is Roy's father and the Flight-Lieutenant's father. Roy's mother is the Rector's wife and the Flight-Lieutenant’s mother, the Squire's sister, Florence. Both women are stalwarts of village life. A sequence of past events of attempted murder which involves the Rector, and of jilted love, which involves the Rector's wife and Florence, the Squire’s sister is uncovered. The present success of the Air Vice-Marshal as architect of that inestimable order of change is a direct result of a disillusioned past: "What a record of confusion, deception, rankling hatred, low aims,
indecision! One is stained by any contact with such people. Can you not see, and I am asking you for the last time, what I mean when I urge you to escape from all this, to escape from time and its bondage ...” (p.295) which bears him down with a crushing sense of hopelessness. As he locks himself up in emotional sterility, he seeks to compensate for his past by his simple minded commitment to the principles of self-seeking power. Needless to say he fails, in as much the same way as everyone else in the village fails through the common sin of being utterly fallen and irredeemably human, and through a shared heritage of lost values. Allegorically, both village and aerodrome represent the antithetical poles of human reality. There can be no synthesising possibilities between the two unless both altogether transform themselves. The only means of this transformation lies in the kind of self-introspection that a character like Roy is capable of. Both village and aerodrome have been found to be wanting in the ideals of integrity and love, qualities needed to reverse the process of disintegration that has threatened to overcome both village and aerodrome.

There is unanimity of opinion in viewing The Aerodrome as a "latter day Everyman" which “need not be accepted in the ordinary sense as a novel. It is really a moral dialogue thrown into narrative form. It is humanity versus power sprawling life versus death-dealing regimentation". Written
by "an accomplished allegorist who is speaking to us of great matters in terms of symbols and simplifications". Warner "aims at something that is not realism". "Like many modern novelists, [he] has been intent on giving us more of what is "real" than realism can give ... and to this end he has written his novel in a special vein of fantasy". He has been observed to have "found new forms in which to make political ideas at once artful and urgent". Above all, the mainstay of his talent has been his ability to record the human: "Warner was the only English novelist of that time who succeeded in turning the threat of Fascism into literature. He could do so because his theme was greater than the immediate political issue: he saw behind it to the deep human conflicts — the conflict of freedom with fear, of individualism with the state, of authority with human feeling". Considered to be his "finest novel". The Aerodrome moves in a realm of ideas and emotions both generative of each other. However melodramatic the action and, however involved the plot, the novel has been able to convey an allegorical sense of the truth through its ability to fashion the two symbolically opposing realities of village and aerodrome. The politics of change and the politics of power is shown to be constantly striving to take over life in the village. It confronts the apolitical ways of the village in a violent attempt to uproot tradition. This has been amply
demonstrated in the chapter entitled 'The Agricultural Show', where ordinary village folk converge together for a celebration of all things rural, reflecting upon the old world values of a homogeneous society. The actions of the young Flight-Lieutenant, new entrant to the aerodrome, strikes a discordant note of irresponsibility. In a rash display of exhibitionism so typical of the aerodrome, he releases the Squire's prize-bull which sends waves of fear and incredulity. "The Flight-Lieutenant's action was only one of many actions performed by him or other members of the aerodrome staff in direct contravention of the rules that governed the life of the villagers". (p.57) The next chapter follows the theme of village versus aerodrome through to its ominous conclusion. Against an arcadian background of village togetherness, Roy and Bess, deeply involved in one another, are rudely interrupted by the Flight-Lieutenant:

... 'I say, Roy, ... I'm afraid I've potted your old man.'
I knew immediately from these words, inadequate as they were, that the Rector had been either killed or seriously wounded in some accident for which the Flight-Lieutenant had been responsible... he had actually used live instead of blank ammunition in the machine-gun whose performance he had been demonstrating...
(pp.69-70)

In hindsight one may observe that these incidents allegorically foreshadow the unforeseen divisions that ultimately accompany the new order, with its total disregard
for human life. The book examines the threat of a totalitarian takeover and shows its repercussions at the level of the human. It is an exposition of the artist's confrontation with the values of totalitarianism as it desperately tries to obtain a certificate of natural citizenship within the village. The consequent subversion of order aiming to sabotage ties of blood and of nature, throws up a political scenario that is rife with contradictions and beset by deeply human implications where the only options that exist remain closed ones. The framework of the family that has, to date, been the bedrock of village life is virtually destroyed. On the other hand, what seems to hold sway are the compelling sophisms of the Air Vice-Marshal as he attempts to lead the young recruits, aspirants to that remote order of "freedom" away from the convictions of the heart:

'... science will show you that in our species the period of physical evolution is over. There remains the evolution, or rather the transformation, of consciousness and will, the escape from time, the mastery of the self, ... your preliminary training has been exhausting, your discipline will continue to be exact, though the period of your hardship is over. But this discipline has one aim, the acquisition of power, and by power-freedom'. (p.188)

Roy has also chosen to be part of the aerodrome. He successfully merges himself with it until his inevitable confrontation with his own past which revives his slumbering
humanity and reveals to him the excesses of the aerodrome. When he puts on the garb of an airman, he had, by all means, been irrevocably lost to the world of human relationships. Allegorically, this is the dark phase of his life that would either portend life or death for him. Fortunately for Roy, the transfiguring love of Eustasia for him and his discovery of his own love for Bess allows him to realise that "it was one thing to lose one's way, another to proclaim, as the Air Vice-Marshal had done, that no way was to be found". (p.265)

From now onwards, there would be on Roy's part an attempt to consolidate his own life, to route it through the rediscovered principles of love and sympathy. His life as a free individual is restricted when his right to expression through love is challenged, and it is then that Roy begins to re-examine his own situation and his relationship with the universe, to find it wanting in intensity and love:

... And it had been gradually, almost insensibly, that I had lost touch with the country where I had been bred, looking down on it from the sky with a kind of contempt, indifferent to the changes of climate and of seasons, the rising and falling of the ground, except in so far as these things affected the readings of my instruments or the immediate purpose of the hour. Now I thought with longing, and with shame for my neglect of them. ... (p.260)

When he dons what might be understood to be the mask of the anti-personal self, the garb of an airman which is a visible
denial of the inner life, he becomes a robotic servant of a single "will and imagination", (p.261) devoid of human feeling. It is only then that he begins to see the aerodrome for what it is. It is only when his ties with the village are almost severed that he begins to understand his position in life to find it seriously wanting in the values of a love-based existence:

And I saw again the stalks of the prim roses in Bess's lap, and it seemed to me certain that there was more in life even in despair, even in the Rector's rankling conscience, even in the Flight-Lieutenant's perplexity and in Eustasia's disappointment, than there was in the ease, efficiency, and confidence of our ways. (pp.260-261)

Roy begins his life all over again. His is a rediscovery of his own humanity and of the healing power of a love that may only be identified with a future waiting to be explored. Allegorically, the moral resuscitation of the individual can only come from within. Eustasia's tragic choice awakens Roy's capacity for love and in direct contravention of the aerodrome begins to seek out Bess in reaffirmation of his love for her: "there was, I think ... a tacit understanding between us that if there was anything in the past on either side to be forgiven it was forgiven, if there was anything in the future that could be shared then it would be shared". (p.272) He succeeds in taking that one crucial step further than his father, to be able to realise a process of "change"
(p.277) within Bess and within himself which presupposes the kind of moral flexibility that does permit forgiveness of oneself and of others.

The concluding section of the book deals with the moral consolidation of characters like Roy and Bess, and with the crystallisation of the aerodrome’s values as embodied in the Air Vice-Marshal’s failure to come to terms with his own humanity. With the incident of the deliberate murder of his former mistress Florence, the Squire’s sister, events shaping the destiny of the characters begin to take an uncompromising urgency. The symbolically sacrificial death of Eustasia and the Flight Lieutenant for the ideal of love, exposes the aerodrome’s weaknesses and propels Roy to a greater vision of love and to a deeper sensitivity of the Air Vice-Marshal’s feelings. Not until the end, however, does he learn who the Air Vice-Marshal is. When he confronts the Air Vice-Marshal with the facts of his own involvement with Eustasia, the Air Vice-Marshal’s reactions are typical of the "inhumanity of the organisation which he had constructed with such an expense of will and which seemed ... to be designed to stifle life". (p.280) As events begin to speed up in justification of the respective values of the aerodrome and of the more enriching values of love and compassion, there is an audible clash of the principles of human emotion with the principles of "the Air Vice-Marshal’s undeviating success". (p.284) The
allegorical confrontation takes the reader into a realm of feeling and thought that has directed the course of events within the novel. Warner allegorises the will to power in the implacable figure of the Air Vice-Marshal who has succeeded in capturing the imagination of the young villagers and in claiming a major part of the village upon which to construct his antiseptic society of the future. The allegorical figurations of life and death, of love and hatred, of guilt and forgiveness fall into place as Roy makes the ultimate moral choices that would free him from the "iron ring" into which he had "forced" himself. (p.290) The forced entry of the Rector's wife into the Air Vice-Marshal's office is, on an allegorical level, the final confrontation that must take place between village and aerodrome. The Rector's wife, whom Roy discovers to be his own mother is bent upon stopping her former lover's brutal reign of oppression. "You have killed one of your sons. I have come to do what I can to save the other, my son as well as yours". (p.293) However melodramatic the situation, it metaphorically spells out the urgency of the individual's need to defend his own moral position in life. "She spoke with a power and a determination that I had never seen her show before" (p.292) as she appeals to the Air Vice-Marshal's basic humanity:

'Antony', she said 'why must these crimes and cruelties continue? You have the power to put an end to them'.

He looked at her gravely and said:
'these crimes, as you call them, must continue so that the world may be clean'.
(p.296)

His overriding will to succeed makes him emotionally inaccessible. The name 'Antony' no longer has any meaningful connotations for him; symbolically, he has yielded his identity to the scientific forces of achievement which has blunted his intuitive capacity for perception and understanding. He remains the Air Vice-Marshall of a remote order of freedom, a fixed entity of unbending will and unreasoning intelligence.

Even if Warner's essay "The Allegorical Method" is kept in mind, the novel does not fit into the form used in traditional allegory nor is it a modern equivalent of its traditional counterpart. What one finds hidden within the narrative folds of the book, is the vision of an artist who is deeply bothered about the plight of the individual who must face his destiny alone and yet be able to preserve his moral integrity. The result is a fictionalisation of events that dramatises the conflict between the individual self and the powerful forces of political ideologies. The characters have a psychological consistency which arises from Warner's instinct for portraying only what is human and, therefore, deeply relevant. The allegorical mode that he adopts is an expressive means of communication, "to it men have recourse when their thoughts seem to have outrun the ordinary and
accepted modes of expression". It proves to be an important tool of moral interpretation and of moral understanding for it provides an ethical framework of moral absolutes which educates the reader. Ideas and philosophies are put to positive or to negative uses in the lives of the characters and in the network of human relationships that govern the realities of the novel. Warner succeeds in launching a story that involves a realistic portrayal of the "moral anarchist", the Air Vice-Marshal, who is "the individual asserting himself against general standards that seem too weak to be able to restrain him". This study which has a sociological, psychological, and an historical basis is given a dramatic turn at the end, where "the only reply to the cult of individual or racial power and violence is the actual practice of general justice, mercy, brotherhood and understanding". These are values that are associated with Roy’s freshly discovered humanity.

It must be remembered that Warner or, for that matter, all the other novelists to be studied in this thesis, function from within the established tradition of a narrative literature that takes into account the recent evolution of fictional narrative. This is a form which is perennially "governed by two opposing impulses: the esthetic and the intellectual, the desire for beauty and the desire for truth. An extreme form of esthetically controlled fiction which
minimises both specific relationship to reality and intellectual control is romance. Extreme forms of intellectually controlled fiction, whether more or less specifically related to the real world" are called "didactic". These "didactic forms" are primarily "allegory and satire". This brings the discussion to a reading of The Aerodrome and to a reading of the other texts, as novels that specifically pertain to the common realities of the "real world" intellectually probing and didactically seeking out for themselves the reality that underlies all appearances. In The Aerodrome, this is not something to be easily understood nor easily achieved for it lies neither with village nor with aerodrome, but with a genuine capacity for love which makes one fallible to mistakes, and to one's acceptance and forgiveness of them.

Roy is thus able to tell us in the concluding chapter that:

... I knew that, but for accidents of various kinds, I should myself have followed in my father's path ... Now I had found my parents and I had found that I was both united and at variance with them both. In so doing I had also found myself. (p.301)

His discovery of himself lies in his ultimate ability to accept his own humanity which is also an acceptance of the past with all its mistakes. He has succeeded in taking that
one crucial step further than his father to realise this for himself,

'That the world may be clean': I remember my father's words. Clean indeed it was and most intricate, fiercer than tigers, wonderful and infinitely forgiving. (p.302)

to be unafraid to retract the mistakes that he has committed, to take the plunge back to the self, to revive the realities that the aerodrome had partially destroyed: "the spirit of adventure, inquiry, the sweet and terrifying sympathy of love that can acknowledge mystery, danger, and dependence". (pp.261-262) Therein lay the intricacy, the ferocity and the wonder of a life that could forgive him as it could have forgiven his father, the Air Vice-Marshal of the sins of his past. He realises more than before, especially in the concluding pages, after he has withstood the challenge of his father's personal appeal to him, to join him in a lifelong partnership of unquenching ambition and unexcelled success that he is bound to others by a common heritage of "sinne" and "love". This realisation and the violent end that subsequently follows his father puts Roy in touch with the greater realities of a love fulfilled in its capacity for self-forgiveness, self-discipline and of ultimate insight into the dual partnership of "sinne" and "love".

The Aerodrome appropriates not so much the style as the profound moral vision of allegory, which, of necessity, must
dictate the presentation of its story. The allegorical mode used within the novel emulates its literary predecessor only to the extent of allowing for certain didactic impulses to mobilise a fictional canvas that is heavily charged with human concerns. The nature of the imagination at work is never constricted by what was perforce considered to be the ultimate message to be delivered. The book allegorically chalks out its unique responses to the human and contemporary issues of survival in a highly politicised world. Its importance as an allegorical work of fiction lies in its ability to negotiate with the facts of contemporary history to bring to it an added dimension of allegorical significance that echoes with the universal in life. Given the turbulence of the 1940’s, Warner has succeeded in transcending it by rooting events in the timeless arena of undated history and unspecified geography. He has updated and overhauled the unwieldy convention of the allegorical mode to fit the demands of fiction, which is a fairly recent off-shoot of narrative literature.

The book must, therefore, be read as it is; a novel of the early twentieth century era that delves into the nature and the significance of the changes that come about with the regimentation of ordinary life. It allegorically objectifies an era that was torn asunder by the warring principles of a love-centred universe and a politically motivated existence.
It examines causes and consequences through characters who may appear to be one-dimensional and melodramatic but who are the mainstay of the plot and its vehicle of communication as in the other five novels. Similar to the characters in the other five texts, they show a natural propensity for love which in the novel is thwarted by the dehumanising currents of political change. The allegorical conflict between village and aerodrome, between the need to find oneself through love and the sub-human forces of totalitarianism bring about a tragic reversal at the level of the personal, in the mutilated history of the Air Vice-Marshal. There is also a deeper sense of failure in the larger political sphere of the macrocosmic universe which bears the imprint of crumbling ideologies. The book probes the very element of political upheaval. It is governed by an imagination that has a clear perception of the ironies ingrained in life. These exist in both village and aerodrome, so that the Air Vice-Marshal cannot in all justification, simply jettison his past overboard. He who is the sole engineer of the aerodrome has the dubious distinction of being the father of two airmen, who will in course of time be estranged from him by a natural process of self-discovery, both being born of women who have a natural bond with the village. Village and aerodrome, are linked to one another through the sanctity of the familial
which the Air Vice-Marshal has attempted to erase but which Roy has succeeded in coming to terms with:

If there had been guilt in the village, there had been guilt also at the aerodrome, for the two worlds were not exclusive, and by denying one or the other the security that was gained was an illusion. (p.295)

Allegorically, Roy has been able to stay the threat of a totalitarian takeover by his uncompromising commitment to the ideal of love which humbles him in the face of adversity but which may not be identified with the easy-going ways of the village. Underlying the political crisis of the 1940’s are the realities that have to be met with in the life of the individual. A contemporary reader may empathise with Roy’s crucial struggle to identify himself as a free individual. Allegorically, his world is equally dominated by the seismic waves of personal stress and political challenge; forces that continually plot to destabilise the individual.

Cry, the Beloved Country (1948), is a novel whose literary status has often been questioned. The fact is, that, it has already established itself as Edward Callan states, upon the one enduring principle of literary achievement: universality.

An essential mark of any great work of literature is its universal acceptance; and evidence of universal acceptance is, in part, an enduring interest in the work through the passage of time and in part, the response the work elicits from readers whose languages and cultures
differ from those of the writer. Both of these measures attest to the remarkable esteem in which Alan Paton’s novel, Cry, the Beloved Country continues to be held.22

The above statement includes within its parameters of judgement an important criterion, that of having withstood the test of time for nearly half a century. Though South Africa is now fighting its own war against apartheid, though there have been surprising upheavals in politics and reversals in world governments, Cry, the Beloved Country, remains as topical, as human, and as relevant, as it was, when it was first written; born of the travails of a nation, that was hardly known to the rest of the world. No matter how personal one’s reading of the novel may be, the hard core of truth in it remains undisguisedly affiliated to all things human. Nothing could be closer to the truth than its allegorical subtitle “A Story of Comfort in Desolation”, which actually spells out the inexpresible and which gives voice to the mute suffering of a nation even as it strives to restore to itself a vision of the "dawn" yet to come. In the light of recent occurrences, Paton’s vision has, unbelievably enough, been able to realise itself in historical fact. It would not be presumptuous to state that South African reconstruction would depend upon the kind of inner heroism that the novel depicts, which in turn would depend upon the rapport that would be ultimately forged between the
individual tribes and races of South Africa. There can be no hope for restoration in South Africa unless a James Jarvis and a Stephen Kumalo understand one another as only two men can who have been similarly tested.

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

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

So they were silent. Jarvis left him and walked out into the trees of the garden ... He went back to him.

-I have heard you, he said. I understand what I did not understand. There is no anger in me. (pp.155-156)

The profound depths of the book rises from an underplay of emotion and a classic understatement of the truth. The focus in the confrontation between the two bereaved men, is upon a shared sorrow, respectively haunting them but which paradoxically draws them together, uniting them in a common understanding of the unfulfilled realities of South Africa.

The suffering in the old man's face smote him ... and Jarvis said to him, not looking at him. There is something between you and me, but I do not know what it is.

... you are in fear of me ...

... It is very heavy, umnumza. It is the heaviest thing of all my years. ...

... Tell me, he said, it will lighten you.

- I am afraid, umnumzana.

... But I tell you, you need not be afraid. I shall not be angry. There will be no anger in me against you. (p.155)
The unburdening that follows "it was my son that killed your son", climaxes in a symbolic communion of pain. For James Jarvis this is an open acknowledgement of his own weak humanity in the presence of a black priest. "He himself was moved and unmanned, and he would have brought the thing to an end, but he could find no quick voice for it". (p.156) For Stephen Kumalo this is a tragic milestone in an odyssey of suffering that would metaphorically take him to the ends of the earth through darkness and death and bring him face to face with violence and evil. Were it not for the search of a missing son, Stephen Kumalo would never have been able to realise the unmeasurable depths of a faith that would steer him through grief and alienation. The "comfort" born of conflict and strife is one to be bought with the price of one's heart. The conversation that follows delineates the indifference that characterises life in Johannesburg:

... This old man, he said in English, has come to inquire about the daughter of a native named Sibeko, who used to work for you in Ixopo ...
- I had to send her away, said Smith's daughter. She was good when she started, and I promised her father to look after her. But she went to the bad and started to brew liquor in her room. She was arrested and sent to jail for a month, and after that of course I could not take her back again.
- You do not know where she is? asked Jarvis.
- I'm sure I do not know, said Smith's daughter in English. And I do not care.
- She does not know, said Jarvis in
Zulu. But he did not add that Smith's daughter did not care. (p.156)

It bears its own consequences in the lost and broken lives of Cry, the Beloved Country. The attitude of indifference and the problem of social and moral delinquency are but aspects of a greater evil that reside within the brutalised realities of Johannesburg. The human face of this evil is symbolically incarnated in the slaying of Arthur Jarvis, a zealous spokesman of equality and fraternity. He "represents an ideal in which Paton was passionately interested", the only character whose heart is not shadowed with doubt, whose death it may be said, brings reconciliation to some. Meanwhile as the story progresses from the rural to the urban, from simplicity to complexity, from Ndotsheni to Johannesburg, Paton builds up a conglomerate picture of violence and love, of harshness and sorrow. At the level of the plot, the narrative emphasises the unreconciled heart of Johannesburg. At a deeper level it echoes Stephen Kumalo's faltering vision of love and reconciliation. He valiantly struggles to maintain faith in the face of despair. "One day in Johannesburg, and already the tribe was being rebuilt, the house and the soul restored". (p.31) The condition of despair has so overwhelmed life in Johannesburg that it dogs Stephen Kumalo wherever he goes. There is a doubleness to life in Cry, the Beloved Country which rarely escapes the penetrating insight of the novelist. It echoes the frustrations of a
bonded humanity which has bound itself to a crass metropolitanism. It also abounds with moving instances of sympathy and love that cross the barriers of caste and race. This dual insight into the contradictory realities of Johannesburg has been lyrically encoded in a story that spells out the anguished "cry" of one's "beloved country" and the need thereof to find the "comfort" that must be born of "desolation" for wherever one looks one finds, as does Stephen Kumalo, evidences of dishonesty and guilt. One also finds evidences of loving and caring. They do not cancel each other out, however. They paradoxically exist side by side in a country that spills over with the cruel ironies of life whose hope for redemption lies not in isolated instances of faith but in a macrocosmic revival that would reclaim the broken heart. However, one realises as one follows the story that the moral end in sight is never visible to all. Faith rests with the few who may be crucified for it as Arthur Jarvis, but whose missionary sense of it outlasts the anarchical forces that bring confusion and disunity. The book has to do with the loss of vision of a particular race. It also deals with the valorous attempt of a few to maintain spiritual integrity in the face of disunity. The embodiment of faith within the book rests with a humble priest, Stephen Kumalo, whose sole confidant is his God. He establishes a pattern of experience which echoes with the kind of hope that
has been lyrically enshrined in the most unexpected of places, in Shanty Town and in Ezenzeleni. The novel strives to maintain a two-way vision of the human heart; of its ability to love and of its ability to hate. Allegorical depths are sounded out everywhere when a picture of the human heart is portrayed as being split into two by its inability to overcome itself. The two irreconcilables of hope and disillusionment render Paton’s story about South Africa’s crisis into an allegorical one of universal significance.

There is a matching of style and vision in the book which is reflected in its narrative:

It is not only in its emotional power, or in its evocation of those aspects of Hebrew poetry found in good translations of the Bible, that the style of Cry, the Beloved Country attains to the intensity of poetry. As implied earlier the novel may be classified stylistically with those modern works of fiction that, like Joyce’s Ulysses, have the intensity, compression, and connotative power of poetry in one or more of its three forms: lyric, dramatic, and narrative.

Paton’s vision in Cry, the Beloved Country is rooted in the social. It seeks to express itself through the figurative medium of the allegorical mode. It enhances itself through the allusiveness of its language and its figurative exploitation of the realities governing life in South Africa. He has succeeded “to a remarkable degree in portraying a segment of South African life during a brief period
immediately following the end of World War-II". The various strands of the narrative which consists of social documentation, of sensitive insights, of a compelling sense of human tragedy, of a Christian sense of forgiveness and of an apocalyptic foresighting of the future coalesce in various hues together to formalise a "regional portrait" of South African "actualities" founded upon the more "fundamental themes of social disintegration and moral restoration". How he verbalises his thoughts, how he transcends the immediate to solicit the lasting spiritual values of love and faith, how his characters are shaped, are questions not easily answered until one begins from the beginning which is at the primary level of sensitively responding to the undertones of human distress and human faith contained within each recorded episode in the book. This implies the reader’s need to assimilate the extraordinary milieu of South African life. Allegorical parallels also arise between the South African dilemma and the inner dilemma of the individual. The novel’s ability to yield its meanings at several levels, at both the literal and at the allegorical level, makes it valid enough for a multiple interpretation of its themes which are those related to the contradictory realities of the human heart with its vast potential for creativity or destructivity. Its "humanism" has been said to be "old fashioned" and "sentimental". Nevertheless, therein lies its strength for
it upholds within the traditional genre of the novel the moral values of a Christian life of patience and love, values that are shown to be universally dependent upon the cumulative effort of all individuals. Although there is a thematic insistence upon the "fear" that has seized reality within the novel, this may be overcome by "something good and deep" even though it be accompanied by "tears". (p.187) There are other alternatives to this fear suggestedly, through the use of violence or through the devious ways of politics. Both fail disastrously, however. In the final summing up of the truly meaningful existence, Stephen Kumalo's faith succeeds where all other means have failed. His is a vision of the ultimate reconciliation that must remain a "secret" yet to mankind's unseeing heart:

- I am sorry my friend.
- This world is full of trouble, umfundisi.
- Who knows it better?
- Yet you believe?
Kumalo looked at him under the light of the lamp. I believe, he said, but I have learned that it is a secret. Pain and suffering, they are a secret. Kindness and love, they are a secret. But I have learned that kindness and love can pay for pain and suffering. There is my wife, and you, my friend, and these people who welcomed me, and the child who is so eager to be with us here in Ndotsheni - so in my suffering I can believe. (p.193)

The visionary quality of Stephen Kumalo's faith ties up the novel within a framework of explicit moral values that give
the book its underlying sense of spiritual coherence even in the face of confusion and pain.

The method of narration relies heavily upon Paton's ear for the modalities of "the rhythms of Zulu speech" which, in Callan's explanation of it, is a "recreation in English of the sound and syntax of spoken Zulu". The effect is unduly authentic as it simulates living history and gets as close to the truth as possible in order to convey the excruciating dilemma of a lost individual and a broken tribe. As one follows the unnatural course of Absalom Kumalo's life, one realises the irretrievability of a condition that may be traced to a pattern of cultural dismemberment which is the tragic malaise of South Africa. Several allegorical parallels may be drawn with the desolation of life in Cry, the Beloved Country. Paton, however, is not using South Africa as an analogy to illustrate his findings about something else. The novel emerges as it is, of a distinctively hybrid form of narrative that incorporates a variety of technical methods to capture the truth in its various allegorical mutations: in the personal odyssey of Stephen Kumalo and James Jarvis; in Arthur Jarvis' unfortunate commitment to the ideals of social justice and human dignity and in the paltry justice meted out by the colonised race to the colonised one. The irregularities that have shaped Absalom Kumalo's life carry him through a life of criminal excesses. He is unable to
offer any reasonable explanation for his actions locked as he is in an isolating wilderness of confusion. He is neither able to defend himself nor absolve himself of any crime. Thus the only answer that he is capable of, before the pronouncement of judgement upon him, is: "- I have only this to say, that I killed this man, but I did not mean to kill him, only I was afraid". (p.173) This is the fear that stalks life in Johannesburg and represses one’s potential for love.

Whenever something is observed or commented upon, or identities revealed, as in Stephen Kumalo’s reunion with his sister Gertrude,

There is laughter in the house, the kind of laughter of which one is afraid. Perhaps because one is afraid already, perhaps because it is in truth bad laughter. A woman’s voice, and men’s voices. But he knocks, and she opens. It is I, my sister. Have no doubt it is fear in her eyes. ... They stand and look at each other, he anxious, she afraid ... (p.28)

there are always echoes of deeper meanings within the narrative which irradiate the entire book with a pervasive sense of moral uneasiness. It is at this level that the novel churns up its resonating themes of endless strife which endows the story of Absalom Kumalo’s delinquency with allegorical dimensions. Unlike Lord of the Flies which builds up its story pattern through a symbolic manipulation of psychic states and emotions, Cry, the Beloved Country, achieves its allegorical unity through extended meanings:
"Here no doubt it is fear in the land. For what can men do when so many have grown lawless?" (p.67) They connote a universal range of feelings and experiences that have been primarily derived from one's insight into the South African dilemma. The plight of the characters allegorise the plight of those individuals who are bound to the inflexible laws of a regimented society. Thus the face of the Law in South Africa ironically bears the face of the White People "for it is the White People that make the Law". (p.137) The implications are obvious, the Law legitimises only the White Man's dictum.

The novel speaks of the wounded psyche. It also speaks of matters that relate to the social; of social immobilisation and social alienation, yet it directs its ultimate vision to a deeply moral evaluation of life. This conditions a narrative presentation where the reader finds himself intensely moved by an imagination that is sensitized to the tragic ironies contained in the life of South African blacks. It sincerely tries to apprehend the truth in its human aspect in a manner that could be said to be truly allegorical. The mode that it adopts subsumes within itself the different narrative strains that lie with the dramatic, the lyrical, the Biblical, the poetic, and with the use of uniquely indigenous patterns of speech. These enrich the narrative by manipulating the story to partake of the universal, through
common metaphors, common symbols, and through a shared knowledge of Biblical values. They extend the scope of the novel to allow for reader participation and reader identification to such a degree, that, in the end the book has to be taken out of its regional confines to be allegorically understood for what it is: "A Story of Comfort in Desolation". Even as there must be disillusionment in life so must there be hope. "And while there is life, there is hope for amendment of life", (p.94) says Father Vincent to Stephen Kumalo who desperately wishes to believe in his son's innocence. The anxiety-ridden "search" becomes steeped in fear. But, as Father Vincent continues, the fear must be turned to sorrow, "for fear impoverishes always, while sorrow may enrich". (p.96) Thus Stephen Kumalo's quest becomes a learning process and an initiation into the dynamics of a living faith. In Book three, he can actually identify the solace that comes to him in Ndotsheni, for he knows that "something deep is touched here, something that is good and deep. Although it comes with tears, it is like a comfort in such desolation". (p.187) The allegorical mode is clearly visible in the various methods that Paton uses, to wield out of his South African homeland a story that has been founded upon the conflicting principles of love and violence.

One may observe that in the novel's primary evocation of the South African homestead, there is also a significant
undertone that invokes an easily understood and easily perceived frame of reference, in the mention that it symbolically makes of the land. These are lines often quoted and often mentioned as profound examples of the novel's lyricism. They initiate the reader into the stalwart values of the land. They create an anticipatory sense of fulfilment:

There is a lovely road that runs from Ixopo into the hills ... The road climbs seven miles ... to Carisbrooke; and from there, if there is no mist, you look down on one of the fairest valleys of Africa. ...

The grass is rich and matted, you cannot see the soil. It holds the rain and the mist ... 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, guards men, cares for men. Destroy it and man is destroyed. (p.7)

Only to be erased by the lines that follow it. Towards the end of the section, the narrative begins to narrow its focus down to the particular and the individual to the "valley below". (p.7) The sweeping canvas of the land is undercut by a tragic sense of alienation which symbolically plays upon the desolation of life:

The great red hills stand desolate, and the earth has torn away like flesh ... 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 any more. (pp.7-8)
In the opening lines itself the narrative modulates from a sense of productivity to a tragic sense of betrayal with its inevitable result in despair. This is the kind of despair that dominates reality in Johannesburg, the figurative metropolis that ironically offers itself to young refugees fleeing from their rural homesteads. Paton states his themes at the allusive level of the plot. This creates an anticipatory sense of the disturbing realities of the novel, both good and bad, both fulfilling and unfulfilling. It plays upon the reader’s perception of the dualities surrounding life. The reader’s attention is then steered to the

Rev. Stephen Kumalo
St. Mark’s Church
Ndotsheni
Natal (p.9)

The land has been figuratively identified and humanised though its people and its priest. What follows is a dramatisation of the events that implicate the reader in an allegorical voyage into the unknown darkness of the human heart. This would mean the “bitter” (p.25) journey to Johannesburg, undertaken by Stephen Kumalo to bring a sister back; but which would also result in an attempt to recover the prodigal son and to trace an erring brother.

- He is in Johannesburg, she said wearily. When people go to Johannesburg, they do not come back.
- You have said it, he said. It is said now. This money which was saved for that
purposes will never be used for it. You
have opened a door and because you have
opened it, we must go through. And Jixo
alone knows where we shall go. (p.11)

Whilst the themes related to the novel converge upon Stephen
Kumalo and his revelatory experiences at Johannesburg they
also cut across the narrow divides of history and geography
to bring out the tangibly universal theme of strife, both at
the personal and the extra-personal level. The ordeal of
Stephen Kumalo ultimately portrays the classic ordeal of
personal pain and private loss. The divisions that are
perceived to be endemic to Johannesburg reflect as much upon
the theme of betrayal as upon the heart's propensity for
rebellion and disorder.

As a point of interest, it should be noted that in one
of the more recent definitions of the allegorical narrative
it has been said:

Since the development of an allegorical
narrative is determined at every point by
its one-to-one correspondence to the
implied meaning, it tends to work against
what Henry James called "the sense of
felt life" in the novel. Allegory,
therefore, appears in mainstream fiction,
if at all, in interpolated narratives
like dreams ... or stories told by one
character to another.30

The implied relevance of Cry, the Beloved Country as a novel
with human and, therefore, universal and allegorical
dimensions does not presuppose a reading that makes that
"one-to-one correspondence". The primary aim of the novel is
to render the depths of South Africa's crisis into the kind of fiction that morally seeks responsibility for every utterance that it makes. This puts it at par with the kind of narrative that is guided by didactic norms that seek to appropriate the truth through various guises like the parable or the fable. In the process, fundamental depths are perceived within the novel. These establish meaningful correspondences with the reader's experiential knowledge of life. The pattern that finally emerges from the story is, as already stated earlier, of a two-fold nature: the pattern of South African life, and the steadfast relation that this bears to easily identifiable forms of experiences that have allegorical significance. It is to Paton's credit as a sensitive artist, that he has been able to wield the element of the human from a story that could have been overrun by an irreparable sense of loss. The vision that shapes the allegorical pattern of the novel is one that lies with the novelist's ability to trace meaning out of meaninglessness. Cry, the Beloved Country fulfils its endeavour to universalise the trials of alienation through the allegorical associations that it creates with its allusive references to universal symbols. The novel has been influenced by the writer's liberalism, his Christian insight and his literary expertise. Hence, the allegorical mode that he adopts rises from an imagination expansive and educated enough to perceive
the paradoxical in life. He refuses to simplify issues and weaves into his story the allegorically contradictory elements of life itself: of love and abandonment, of suffering and despair, of indifference and hope, and of pain and fortitude. Any strict conformity to a preconceived notion of how to read the book would drastically reduce one's understanding of it. Once the initial impact of the story about the break up of South Africa is felt and understood, there follows an inevitable association of its latent meanings with one's personal experiences and understanding of life itself. This is how the allegorical mode functions within the novel. Its "sense of felt life" is not in any way diminished because the book is not a symbolic narrative. Symbolic associations arise only after the initial story has unfolded itself to the reader. The characters are not types nor are they predisposed to a particular kind of behaviour. They all have an inner complexity that comes from life itself. The book is, on the whole, evocative of life in all its regional and extra-regional colours. It sustains a sense of human complexity by its adherence to a mode of narration that takes into account the lived reality, teeming with all manner of contradictions. It contains within its vision, that allegorical sense of life which perceives reality not in material forms but in the immaterial ways of the spirit. The following incident characteristically chronicles an event.
that involves the main characters in the book. Paton draws upon his ability to fuse a diversity of feelings within a single episode. As he objectifies a picture of the Law in the form of the Judge he juxtaposes it with the figure of a man black and broken, and that of his guilty son; both arbitrary victims of society and of fate. The involuntary gesture of compassionate understanding on the part of the white man for the black man focusses upon the underlying potential for love on the part of all men. However, the reality is that nothing has been resolved until the Court has made its decision. The ironic sense of reality is reinforced by the allegorical implications that relate to the nature of men as they must conform to a code of behaviour instilled in them by the restrictive rules of an apartheid society. The episode gathers a number of allegorical associations, so that the ultimate picture is dense with meaning:

The Judge rises, and the people rise. But not all is silent. The guilty one falls to the floor, crying and sobbing. And there is a woman wailing, and an old man crying, Tixo, Tixo. No one calls for silence, through the Judge is not quite gone. For who can stop the heart from breaking?

They come out of the Court, the white on one side, the black on the other, according to the custom. But the young white man breaks the custom, and he and Msimangu help the old and broken man, one on each side of him. It is not often that such a custom is broken. It is only when there is a deep experience that such a custom is broken. The young man’s brow is set, and he looks fiercely before him.
That is partly because it is a deep experience, and partly because of the custom that is being broken. For such a thing is not lightly done. (p.174)

References have been made to the allegorical content in the names of both Stephen and Absalom Kumalo. This, however, is not indicative of Paton's explicit intentions of writing an allegorical work of fiction. In calling his vision allegorical, one would also have to be conversant with the forces that went into the shaping of the novel. In his book on Cry, the Beloved Country, Edward Callan has explained this in a manner both detailed and enlightening. He has pointed out how some characters have emerged from the original in life. He has also shown how Paton's liberal upbringing shaped his attitude towards South Africa which made it possible for him in Book Three, to visualise the fulfilment of Ndotsheni. In keeping with the allegorical mode of perception, which must apprehend the ultimate meanings of life, this is a symbolic envisioning of the fulfilment of South Africa. The novel has been said to be Christian in spirit. The Biblical overtones add moral significance to it. The tragic has been deliberately dramatised. Callan has also accounted for the preciseness with which Paton employs the narrative technique to effect the startling realities of South Africa and ultimately of life itself. Paton's literary accomplishments
may be discerned in *Cry, the Beloved Country* through his use of

... a narrative voice not merely to complement the dramatic method. He employs a number of narrative voices, one of which is both omniscient and markedly poetic. It may be said that Paton, a writer of both poetry and drama, effectively combined aspects of his talent for both modes of expression in his novel.33

Wedded to his versatile technique is a heartfelt sympathy for the human lot. All the characters bear the stamp of self-dignity. He has extended the limits of South African history and found in it a broad spectrum of everything conceivably human. Nadine Gardimer’s review of Alan Paton’s book *The Long View* is also a helpful aid to one’s understanding of *Cry, the Beloved Country*,

Alan Paton is a liberal with a large “L”... Alan Paton is not a black man, but as one who lives definitely as a member of the human race, he has seen the black man’s disabilities as his own. There is no them in his viewpoint only an us.34

The novel continues to be read on the strength of the novelist’s infinite ability to place his concern for the human above everything else. The tragic momentum of the narrative, builds up to its climactic moment of death, in the irrevocable fate of Absalom Kumalo; of denial, in Gertrude’s abject surrender to carnality; and of betrayal, in John Kumalo’s indifference to the ties of blood. On the other hand, there is a spiritual sense of certainty in Book Three
in the re-affirmation of life in Ndotsheni and in its continuity, symbolised by the young "inkosi", the son of the dead Arthur Jarvis. In Book Three, the reader is permitted an insight into the future, in much the same way as the Red Cross Knight is granted a vision of the New Jerusalem in Book One of the Faerie Queene. Until he fulfils his duty as a Christian Knight, however, that spiritual consummation will have to wait. In Cry, the Beloved Country, the "comfort" born of "desolation" is dependent upon the faith that one must achieve in order to have sight of that "dawn" of "emancipation, from the fear of bondage and the bondage of fear". (p.296) When that would be fulfilled, remains a "secret" until men discover the secret power of love:

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

Cry, the Beloved Country, does not yield itself to a simplistic interpretation of its meanings. The allegory latent in the book is inextricable from the theme and the plot. This has been structured around the novelist's intuition of the spiritual pattern underlying confusion and death. The guiding metaphor is South Africa's capacity for
life, discernible in Shanty Town’s courageous acceptance of its lot, however despicable, however unfortunate.

... There is not much food there, but it is shared by all together. ...
... What shall we do in the rain, in the winter? Quietly my child, your mother is by you. ...
... O lie quietly, little one. Doctor, can you not come? ...
... We do not need the doctor anymore. ... Such is the nature of women. Such is the lot of women, to carry, to bear, to watch, and to lose. (pp.52,53,54)

In a generation known for its conflicting awareness of basic human rights, the novel will, allegorically continue to remind the reader of the individual’s right to freedom and of one’s duty towards one another. These dramatic interludes heighten the underlying sense of fear and insecurity.

It was a white man that brought my father out of darkness. ... The tragedy is not that things are broken. The tragedy is that they are not mended again. ...
- It suited the white man to break the tribe, he continued gravely. But it has not suited him to build something in the place of what is broken. ... there are some white men who give their lives to build up what is broken.
- But they are not enough, he said. They are afraid, that is the truth. It is fear that rules this land. (p.25)

The theme of the disintegration of life in South Africa is repeatedly emphasised to show that Paton’s multi-dimensional appraisal of life is a "bitter" but necessary "journey" (p.25) undertaken to understand the problems of South Africa better. This has resulted in a sharpening of perspective
which enables the reader to understand the magnitude of pain and despair that consumes the individual. On the other hand, the book may also be understood to be a record of the individual’s struggle, represented by Stephen Kumalo and Arthur Jarvis, to identify the life of the spirit in a wilderness of sin and grief. The alternating tones of hope and despair dramatise the opposed realities of life, in Cry, the Beloved Country. Repeated throughout the novel are the significantly human refrains that reflect upon the heart’s ability to overcome its own anguish. On the other hand, it is an enunciation of the bitter hardening of the human heart. "And our lives will shrink, but they shall be the lives of superior beings". (p.71)

The sociological overtones in the book are balanced by the psychological undertones. The classically tragic sense of human wastage is counter-balanced by the Christian overview of faith, hope and love. The actual presentation of South Africa’s dilemma is figuratively enhanced, extended and universalised through the allegorical mode of narration. One finds that the book is governed by a sense of morality compelling and realistic enough to initiate the kind of associations that it does with issues beyond it. Allegorically, therefore, the situation in South Africa could be likened to a similar situation elsewhere in life. Unlike allegory, however, the characters live out their lives in
conflict and pain. They are not mere personifications. The allegorical mode of narration used within the novel is derived from Paton’s ability to relate in the dual language of ordinary sensation and of extraordinary perception. When a particular incident is being depicted as in Stephen Kumalo’s reunion with his son, there are emotions that remain unacknowledged and questions that remain unanswered. They find relevance not only in the excruciating agony of the moment, but in all other similar moments of unfulfilled reunions and unappeased feelings. The questions repeatedly asked, pertain to the questions that one asks of life but which remain lost and unanswered because of the obduracy of life’s realities:

- My child, my child.
- Yes, my father.
- At last I have found you.
- Yes, my father.
- And it is too late.
... Is it not too late? he asks.
... You were at the reformatory, my child?
...
- And this is your repayment, my child?
...
- Why did you leave the work that I got for you?
...

And again the tears in the eyes. Who knows if he weeps for the girl he has deserted? Who knows if he weeps for a promise broken? Who knows if he weeps for ... another self that has always been defeated? Or does he weep for himself alone, to be let be, to be let alone, to be free of the merciless rain of questions, why, why, why, when he knows not why? ... . (p.89)
As one follows the narrative, one is immediately caught in the atmosphere of uncertainty and doubt that accompanies the mysterious letter from Johannesburg. The contrast is already established between the simple lifestyle of the Reverend Stephen Kumalo and his wife in Ndotsheni; and the hidden complexities hinted out in the letter, of life in Johannesburg which has already claimed a sister and a son. "He is in Johannesburg, she said wearily. When people go to Johannesburg, they do not come back". (p.11) There are inevitabilities to be faced, however, which Stephen Kumalo intuitively understands. "You have opened a door, and because you have opened it, we must go through". (p.11) The narrative pace in Chapter Two matches the "slow tribal rhythm" (p.99) of life in Ndotsheni, but there is an emotional quickening at the end of Chapter Three, which forbodes ill:

The journey had begun. And now the fear back again, the fear of the unknown, the fear of the great city where boys were killed crossing the street, the fear of Gertrude's sickness. Deep down the fear for his son. Deep down the fear of a man who lives in a world not made for him, whose own world is slipping away, dying, being destroyed, beyond any recall. (p.15)

Revelations concerning his fallen sister, Gertrude, and his brother, John Kumalo, a carpenter turned politician, who "has no use for the Church anymore" because "what God has not done for South Africa, man must do", (p.25) come swiftly and
painfully to Stephen Kumalo. But, implanted in his faith is a resilience born of an inner vision of God’s plan for human kind. This imposes its own sense of order amidst the tangle of uncertainties: "the humble man reached in his pocket for his sacred book, and began to read. It was this world alone that was certain". (p.16) It rises poetically and lyrically to the surface of the narrative, to re-echo in the larger human context and to give the narrative its Biblical overtones of prophetic insight. As important as it is for Stephen Kumalo to find his lost son, so is it for the reader to come to grips with the tragic reality of lost and broken lives in South Africa. Thus the drama enacted is one of universal pain and suffering, one which Edward Callan observes to be a metaphoric representation of the quest for unity:

Set over against Arthur Jarvis’s intellectual quest, and transcending it, is the spiritual aspect of the quest of the chief pilgrim in this novel, Stephen Kumalo. Through its association with St. Stephen, the first Christian Martyr who was cruelly stoned to death, Stephen Kumalo’s name implies the way of suffering. Thus Paton created another metaphor, this time for the Christian journey, in the character and quest of Stephen Kumalo who, on the physical level, searches for his lost son, and on the intellectual level seeks to understand what must be done to restore society, and finally, on a spiritual level, faces the temptation of despair before going forward in faith to endure the pain of his son’s fate.

Kumalo’s vision of peace, like Dante’s glimpse of Paradise, cannot be reached on the earthly journey.
This reading of the text could be taken as a starting point, a helpful aid towards a wholesome understanding of its more general meanings.

Several contradictory statements have been made concerning the book's value. It has been called a "good bestseller",36 with the comfort offered in Book Three described as being a "trifle pat".37 Paton's literary work has been considered to be more "significant as propaganda than as literature".38 In another essay, a "moral geography" has been attributed to the book. It symbolically matches the physical terrain within the book with a moral one: "Paton has, in fact, even readjusted South Africa's profile to resemble that moral terrain which both Bunyan and Dante travelled and of which everyman knows something, I think, though he has read neither".39 The last statement gets too close to a literal approximation of the novel as pure allegory to be wholly acceptable whilst the other statements disprove themselves by the very fact that the book has, as initially confirmed, "universal acceptance".40 A critical opinion worth pondering over, is of an examination of the book as "parable"; of Paton, simplifying issues in order to "move" people and to catch their "attention":

"... It is almost as if a serious novel on the theme of the disintegration of African culture and society, a serious novel on the misfits of our culture, would not be accepted or would not be
understood; but reduced to these simple, almost fabular terms, it was intelligible and it made an impact”.41

The most conclusive of all observations, however, is Paton’s own statement on the book in Kontakion For You Departed, which is a requiem for his dead wife:

So many things have been written about this book that I would not add to them if I did not believe that I know best what kind of book it is. It is a song of love for one’s far distant country, it is informed with longing for that land where they shall not hurt or destroy in all that holy mountain, for that unattainable and ineffable land where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for that land that cannot be again, of hills and grass and bracken, the land where you were born. It is a story of the beauty and terror of human life, and it cannot be written again because it cannot be felt again. Just how good it is, I do not know and do not care. All I know is that it changed our lives. It opened the doors of the world to us, and we went through.42

A greater perception of life’s inequalities and a deeper appreciation of the permanence of love is born of one’s association with the land and the characters in the novel. Allegorically, the lyricism which defines the novel is a reflection of the potential dynamism of the human heart, of its capacity for transmitting sorrow and pain.

The element of fear predominates. It is, what Stephen Kumalo begins to realise for himself, that "... Everywhere it is so. The peace of God escapes us". (p.23) It assumes dimensions menacing enough to paralyze ordinary human
feelings. "Have no doubt it is fear in the land. For what can men do when so many have grown lawless? ... There are voices crying what must be done, a hundred, a thousand voices. ... and one cries that, and another cries something that is neither this nor that". (p.68) The book has a series of interpolated chapters that are contrapuntal to one another and which sound out the basic themes of the story. Edward Callan calls these chapters "the dramatic choral chapters that seem to break the sequence of the story for social commentary, but which in fact widen the horizon of the particular segments of action to embrace the whole land, as well as such universal concerns as fear, hate and justice". 43

In Book One, Chapter Twelve, in its brief dramatic sections the theme of fear and the plight of South Africa resounds with the "cry" of the "beloved country, for the unborn child that is the inheritor of our fear. Let him not love the earth too deeply" continues the refrain "for fear will rob him of all if he gives too much". (p.72) Such is the conflict of loyalties which blights human faith in South Africa. Absalom is at the receiving end of the injustices meted out by a racialist system. In Book Two, Chapter Eleven, in the courtroom scene, one may observe the implementation of a swift and retributive justice. The judge argues out his reasons for having to deliver the death sentence. There is an element of truth in his findings:
The most important point to consider here is the accused's repeated assertion that he had no intention to kill, that the coming of the white man was unexpected, and that he fired the revolver out of panic and fear. If the court could accept this as truth, then the court must find that the accused did not commit murder. (p.172)

There is also an element of irony in the presentation of the actual facts of the murder, which glosses over the criminal activities of Absalom's accomplices, and disregards Absalom's confession if only to help mitigate the yet, undelivered sentence. Although the judge draws attention to the pleas of the defending lawyer on grounds of "the disastrous effect of a great and wicked city, on the character of a simple tribal boy", (p.171) yet reality is harsh, for the Law has been solicited to defend society from itself: "it is one of the most monumental achievements of this defective society that it has made a Law, and has set judges to administer it and has freed those judges from any obligation whatsoever but to administer the Law". (p.170) The Law enacted is, supposedly, the impartial servant of a society that is bent upon righting its wrongs through a rigid enforcement of justice. Under the Law, Absalom stands condemned, for to all appearances he is a dangerous man, who must be dealt with accordingly. Truth becomes a misfit within the context of the South African judiciary; so too is mercy. Book Two rings with the anguished
cry of the condemned juvenile who has barely learnt anything at all about his own life.

At those dread words the boy fell on the floor, he was crouched in the way that some of the Indians pray, and he began to sob, with great tearing sounds that convulsed him. For a boy is afraid of death....
- Be of courage, my son.
- I am afraid, he cried. I am afraid.
- Be of courage, my son.
The boy reared up on his haunches. He hid nothing, his face was distorted by his cries. Au! au! I am afraid of the hanging, he sobbed, I am afraid of the hanging.
...
He stood up, but the boy caught his father by the knees, and cried out to him, you must not leave me, you must not leave me. ... (p.177-178)

The other face of the observable reality may be seen at the beginning of Book Two, Chapter Six:

There is little attention being paid to the trial of those accused of the murder of Arthur Jarvis of Parkwold. For gold has been discovered, more gold, rich gold. ...

This gold is as rich as any gold that has ever been discovered in South Africa, as rich as anything in Johannesburg. Men are prophesying that a new Johannesburg will rise there ...

Oh, but it is wonderful, South Africa is wonderful. We shall hold up our heads the higher when we go abroad, and people say, oh, but you are rich in South Africa. (pp.145-146)

which altogether dispenses with human feeling and human sympathy. There is an indifference inbuilt in South African society, which at first reveals itself in the anarchical
confusion awaiting Stephen Kumalo when he first arrives at Johannesburg. This is the climate of indifference that typifies the lives of the white colonisers in their bid for authoritarian rule. The inherent disparities are brought out at all levels and reflect upon the colonising instinct for preserving identity at the cost of freedom. This becomes an oppressive tool of exploitation which holds up the impenetrable barrier of the closed heart:

... Who knows how we shall fashion a land of peace where black outnumbers white so greatly? ...

Who knows how we shall fashion such a land? For we fear not only the loss of our possessions, but the loss of our superiority and the loss of our whiteness. ... Is it not better to hold what we have, and to pay the price for it with fear? ... (p.71)

The overwhelming sense of white supremacy is a total denial of South Africa's potential. The book reveals South Africa's inbuilt prejudices, which narrows life, down to the most primeval instinct which is that of fear and hostility. The perennial theme of Appearance versus Reality is repeatedly emphasised in the incidents that cover Book Two. In a society that is bent upon achieving its own ends, the human factor is obliterated. As a result, its vision becomes blurred, and there is an interchanging of values to suit itself. Arthur Jarvis is slain by a society that, bent upon withholding profits to itself, produces a class of over-exploited natives
who "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". In Arthur Jarvis's own words:

\[
\text{It was permissible to allow the destruction of a tribal system that impeded the growth of the country. It was permissible to believe that its destruction was inevitable. But it is not permissible to watch its destruction, and to replace it by nothing, or by so little, that a whole people deteriorates, physically and morally. (p.127)}
\]

Ironically enough, Arthur Jarvis's implementation of the Law, and his faith in it is inadequate to protect him. He is crucified on the very principles of destruction against which he has been crusading. The tragedy about such a society lies in its chronic indifference. It is unable to recognise its own heroes and its own martyrs. This in effect, is the whole truth about South African society. It is bound hand and foot to an unyielding law of survival. This is the Law that brings justice to James Jarvis's household, but which is unable to give him spiritual succour.

In his quest for Sibeko's daughter, Stephen Kumalo is brought face to face with James Jarvis. The ensuing conversation points to the human aspect of a meeting between two men, who are for a brief moment, alone, free of social obligation and, especially on the part of James Jarvis, with no desire to put up the facade of a social pretence. This is
the reason why both understand each other so well. But when the mistress of the house returns, social hierarchy is once again restored and with it, the merciless face of the Law that must at all costs be implemented. Thus, this is the answer that Stephen Kumalo receives when he questions her about the whereabouts of her maid, Sibeko's daughter:

- I had to send her away, said Smith's daughter.
- You do not know where she is? asked Jarvis
- I am sure I do not know, said Smith's daughter in English. And I do not care.
- She does not know, said Jarvis in Zulu. But he did not add that Smith's daughter did not care. (p.157)

In many incidents of the book, this attitude of indifference inhumanly seals up the fate of several others.

Meanwhile, the meeting between the two men has already had its effect on James Jarvis:

Why are you so disturbed, James? she asked.
Why were you so disturbed when you came into the house? (p.157)

whose vision of death has been supplanted by an inner vision of love and understanding. This is the theme of reconciliation that must follow Stephen Kumalo's return to Ndotsheni in Book Three. It is in tune with the procreative forces of the land visible to the reader in the novels initial evocation of its verdant plenitude. It manifests itself in Johannesburg, in Ezenzeleni, the colony of the blind. It is a force that has remained potent and alive,
throughout the ordeal of suffering and pain and has been responsible for generating the kind of inner strength that allows characters like Msimangu and Stephen Kumalo to pilot themselves on the hidden trail of faith. It is thus able to write off the penalty of the Law, not in any legal terms but in the unwritten terms of forgiveness and mercy.

The story of Absalom Kumalo's crime ends with his death, but its full significance does not. The sense of futility associated with it is countered by the essentially Christian spirit of hope, even in the face of death, hence Absalom Kumalo's marriage. The implications are quite obvious: that Stephen Kumalo would care for the unborn child "even as if" he were his "own"; that in losing a son, he would have gained a daughter; that another son is already given to him by a sister who in her desertion of him and of everything that he stands for, is symbolically dead, that in the paradoxical way of all Christian truth in death is life. The death of Absalom presages the restoration of Stephen Kumalo in a way never before anticipated by him. In a similar manner, the death of Arthur Jarvis opens up avenues of human sympathy between the white world and the black world in Book Three.

Edward Callan has pointed out how Book Three is easily given to "charges of sentimentality" from those who do not share Paton's Christian perspective, and of "uncritical
applause" from those who do. Although the protagonist is a priest who "invites us to enter a realm beyond tragedy and to witness a resolution on a higher plane" any sensitive reader would be open to the novel's insistent search for order; to its mystical suggestions of love; to see it being practically fulfilled in the lives of some of the more positive characters who, even in death, as in the case of Arthur Jarvis, proclaim their visionary message of hope.

Restoration does not come easily to Stephen Kumalo nor to the people of Ndotsheni for it is dependent upon the spirit of penitence and forgiveness, of sacrifice and love that must prove itself in outward action. When Stephen Kumalo sends up his prayers of thanksgiving he prays also for that which is "hardest":

And this is the hardest that must be prayed, but he humbles himself.

And Tixo, my son ...
They do not moan, they are silent. Even the woman who gossips does not moan. His voice drops to a whisper:
Forgive him his trespasses.
It is done, it is out, the hard thing that was so feared. He knows it is not he, it is these people who have done it. Kneel, he says. So they kneel on the bare red earth, and he raises his hand, and his voice also, and strength comes into the old and broken man, for is he not a priest? (p.191)

Whether he would still be allowed to remain a shepherd to his flock after circumstantial evidence of the guilt that stains
him and his family would be a question to be answered only in
the mysterious ways of faith. It comes in the form of a
letter from James Jarvis thanking him and his church for
their sympathy in the death of his wife, and which also
solicits his help in the construction of a new church for
Ndotsheni. "Kumalo stood up, and he said in a voice that
astonished the Bishop. This is from God." (p.223) Although
harmony must logically follow Stephen Kumalo's return to his
village this is dependent upon the people's continued
acceptance of him as their priest. There is, in the final
section, an emphasis upon the element of shared suffering
that draws humanity both black and white together, and which
reinstates Stephen Kumalo to his rightful position as priest.
The conclusion of the book is a looking forward to life and
renewal even as Stephen Kumalo keeps a prayerful vigil on his
son's last night on earth. Paton ends the book in the same
manner with which he started it on a note of hope. It is the
sort of hope that has learnt to reconcile itself to an
intervening period of darkness for it knows that the coming
of the "light" is a "secret" yet unrevealed. It affirms the
coming of the light in the same way that Stephen Kumalo
affirms God's presence by partaking of his repast, in
thanksgiving and prayer, with a spirit of calmness trusting
himself completely to God. The end of all strife symbolises
the beginning of a new "dawn". This is an optimism that is
tinged with the fearful understanding that "one day when they turn to loving they will find that we are turned to hating". (p.235) At every turn of the story the reader is constantly brought back to a realistic confrontation with the bitter truth. Hence the optimism attained by the characters and displayed within the book itself, has not been an easy one. It has been bought with the price of fear; a deadening emotion that brings in its accompanying weight of pain, but which also sees love as the only alternative to it:

That men should walk upright in the land where they were born, and be free to use the fruits of the earth, what was there evil in it? Yet men were afraid, with a fear that was deep, deep in the heart, a fear so deep that they hid their kindness... And such fear could not be cast out, but by love. (p.235)

This is what Stephen Kumalo realises when he reaches home, that "something deep is touched here, something that is good and deep. Although it comes with tears, it is like a comfort in such desolation". (p.187)

Stephen Kumalo's faith finds natural restoration in the simple environment of his own village. "Our home is simple and quiet, there are no great things there". There is a deep sense of certainty in his homecoming which reinstates the familiar values of the land:

The path is dropping into the real land of Ndotsheni. It is a wasted land, a land of old men and women and children, but it is home. The maize hardly grows to the height of a man, but it is home. (p.188)
Book Three abounds with images of natural harmony and of quiet restoration. Though Absalom's death is an unmitigated part of the future Stephen Kumalo's faith dignifies it with a quiet sense of hope for his son's ultimate reconciliation. Meanwhile the emphasis in this section is upon the young people who have been literally and allegorically rescued from the travails of Johannesburg. The young inkosana, Arthur Jarvis' son, also embodies the regenerative vision of hope that would mark the recovery of a nation. Symbolically, though Ndotsheni is a "land of old men and women and children" (p.188) its spiritual dynamism transcends its limitations. It represents the other hopeful face of reality. In its valley, humanity thrives because the natural processes of life have never been aborted. There is hence, an anticipatory sense of new beginnings:

- Umfundisi, said the young man, and his face was eager, there is no reason why this valley should not be what it was before. But it will not happen quickly. Not in a day. (p.217)

The natural rhythms of the universe symbolically restore the balance in life. The much awaited rain comes down as a rejuvenative symbol of God's love. Stephen Kumalo's confirmation of the young believers whom he knows, "will go away, for the soil cannot keep them any more" (p.220) as it has not been able to keep the "men ... the youngmen and the girls", becomes, however, an affirmative act of faith in the
spiritual pattern that ordains life. Bereavement and death may therefore be viewed in the mellowness of spiritual insight.

The resolving vision of Book Three is an allegorical denouement of the spiritual crisis that has seized humanity in Johannesburg. It works on the simple values of human faith and challenges the contemporary reader to commiserate with its vision of total forgiveness and childlike acceptance of life’s inevitabilities. Simplistic as it may seem it posits the only hope for the human heart allegorically riddled with its own contradictions. Ironically, the symbolic centre of faith, hope and love; and of violence, hatred and death within the novel, is the human heart. *Cry, the Beloved Country* symbolically portrays these contradictory impulses raging within it. Each character has to bear the heavy burden of knowledge both carnal and spiritual, for which he must inevitably pay. Experience has been bought at the metropolitan wasteland of Johannesburg and for each questor the existential dilemma has to be confronted in the face. Each character has had to face the natural consequences of the choices that he has made. Death awaits Absalom Kumalo as meaninglessness awaits Bertrude, and political power, John Kumalo. The death of Arthur Jarvis is proof of the cumulative consequences of the moral evasions of South African whites. *Cry, the Beloved Country* dramatises history but
metaphorically searches for the truth within the human heart so that the tragic senselessness of colonisation has been juxtaposed to the consistent faithfulness of Stephen Kumalo. The novel emphasises the dual element of suffering and love which presupposes life. When James Jarvis and Stephen Kumalo meet for the last time they are brought together in a symbolic moment of understanding". I understand you, he said, I understand completely". (p.232) The process of healing has already begun to take place within the human heart. The last section anticipates the restoration of South Africa in no simple way. It follows Stephen Kumalo’s anguish through a night of prayerful questioning. As he keeps vigil on the night before his son’s death and as he waits for the moment of death there is a sense of fortitude and calm born of a spiritual acceptance of the mysterious ways of God. The dawn presages symbolic beginnings possible only through Stephen Kumalo’s recognition of the paradoxical realities of life and death. His envisioning of a future temporarily buried in a fearful present is an affirmation of faith in human restoration. This is the transcending vision of the book. It allegorically reinstates the simple values of the South African homeland.
2. Ibid., Preface to the Novel.
3. Ibid., p.10.
10. Ibid., p.52.
12. Ibid., p.432.
13. Ibid., p.432.
16. Ibid., p.441.


19. Ibid., p.16.

20. Ibid., p.28.


25. Ibid., p.44.


27. Ibid., p.395.

28. Ibid., p.395.

29. *Cry, the Beloved Country A Novel of South Africa*, p.42.


31. *Cry, the Beloved Country A Novel of South Africa*, p.46.

32. Ibid., p.47.

33. Ibid., p.50.

35. *Cry, the Beloved Country* A Novel of South Africa, p.36.


