

**PRODUCTIONS OF IDEOLOGY : A COMPARATIVE AND CONTRASTING
ANALYSIS OF REPRESENTATIONS OF BLACK URBAN EXPERIENCE IN
PETER ABRAHAMS'S *MINE BOY*; ALAN PATON'S *CRY, THE BELOVED
COUNTRY* AND PHYLLIS ALTMAN'S *THE LAW OF THE VULTURES***

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted in any form to another university. Where use has been made of the works of others it has been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

The broad aim of this study is to show, through a comparative and contrasting analysis of three thematically related texts - namely Peter Abrahams's *Mine Boy*; Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* and Phyllis Altman's *The Law of the Vultures* - the ideologically mediated nature of the relationship between the 'real' history which constituted their context, and the representations of it in the historical realist form. An examination of the texts' characters and events; political formulations, and formal devices reveals three very different representations of the same object. This diversity is significant in so far as it supports a Marxist conceptualisation of the [historical] realist text as a *production of ideology* as opposed to a portrayal of reality. The study considers the nature of the relationship between each text and ideology in terms of three aspects of this relationship: the 'objectively determinable' relation between history, ideology and text; the ideology of the text itself, and the mode of a text's insertion into an 'ideological sub-ensemble.' In relation to the modes of a text's insertion into an ideological sub-ensemble, my specific aim is to assess the extent to which each text actually challenges the political dispensation to which it was addressed.

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INTRODUCTION

In their commitment to social transformation in an historical context characterised by racial discrimination and oppression for the majority of the South African population, the focus for our liberal and radical writers has been the lived experiences of the various sectors of that society. For these writers social 'reality' has constituted the subject matter of their fiction and the aesthetic mode through which they have executed this commitment has been predominantly that of realism. According to Christie *et al.*, realism in literature constitutes "the novelistic premise that social, political and economic forces are significant shapers of human life, not destiny or the *anima mundi*" (1980:99). The measure of the good realist writer would therefore by implication be the extent to which the fictive treatment of a writer's portrayal of reality can be shown to correspond with the real experience of it. Implicit in such postulations however are a number of assumptions which for the Marxist literary critic must be clarified and reformulated before an analysis of realist fiction may proceed. That a material reality does actually exist - and which presupposes the possibility of treating it fictionally - is one of the fundamental premises of Marxist thought that distinguishes it from other more idealist philosophies of the relation between the individual and reality. That there can be an objective experience of it translatable into any kind of fictionalised resemblance, is an assumption which a consideration of Louis Althusser's conception of ideology calls into question. Ideology for Althusser comprises two dimensions - a metaphysical and a material one. Metaphysically, he defines the concept as "a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence"(1971:153). Individuals, he says, live in ideology which in its metaphysical aspect is imaginary in the sense that it distorts the individual's perceptions of reality and manifests itself in the practices and rituals of daily life. These rituals and practices constitute the material component of Althusser's conception of ideology.

If this is indeed the mode that 'describes' the individual's experience of reality, then there are implications for the writer of realist and historical realist fiction whose intention it is to *portray* social reality. Whereas writers of realist fiction claim to *portray* the historical realities of particular sectors of society within particular circumstances, Eagleton qualifies the ability to do this in his attempt in *Criticism and Ideology*, to establish a scientific methodology of textual analysis. "The real," he says, "is by necessity empirically imperceptible, concealing itself in the phenomenal categories [of the capitalist mode of production] it offers spontaneously for inspection." (1976:69). In his explanation of the relation between history and the realist - and historical realist - work of fiction, he conceives of the text as a *production* of ideology - in the sense that literature gives ideology a concrete form - in which through a process of selection, organisation and exclusion, the realist text (in which category he includes historical fiction) produces *representations* of reality rather than reality itself:

Within the text itself, then, ideology becomes a dominant structure, determining the character and disposition of certain 'pseudo-real' constituents. This inversion, as it were, of the real historical process, whereby in the text itself ideology seems to determine the historically real rather than vice versa, is itself naturally determined *in the last instance* by history itself. (1976:72)

(Because his focus is on the realist text which distantiates history and which is thereby different from historical fiction which foregrounds particular historical circumstances, my emphasis would be on 'in the last instance', whereas his would be on 'history itself').

The conception of literature in this way has implications for the literary critic. If the text is to be conceived of as a production of ideology, the focus for the critic of realist fiction should be an analysis of the character and disposition of the text's "pseudo-real constituents" (1976:74) - its characters and events - to determine its relation to 'real' history. This is the "objectively determinable" (1976:80) relation between the text and ideology, which has another subjective dimension, and which Eagleton refers to as the

ideology of the text (1976:80). The *ideology of the text* “defines, operates and constitutes that ideology” (1976:80), giving it a concrete form. These processes within the text determine each other, and have a generally determining effect on the form of the text. It is these two aspects of the text’s relation to ideology, and in the last instance, to history, which I intend to investigate in an application of this ‘scientific’ methodology to three texts: Peter Abrahams’s *Mine Boy*, Alan Paton’s *Cry, the Beloved Country*, and Phyllis Altman’s *The Law of the Vultures*.

My choice of these texts is based partly on the fact that their thematic similarity provides an opportunity to demonstrate the validity of Eagleton’s conceptualisation of the relation between history, ideology and the literary text. “History,” according to Eagleton, “‘enters’ the text...but it enters it precisely as ideology, as a presence determined and distorted by its measurable absences” (1976:72). Although Eagleton is speaking specifically about the presence of history in the realist text, the formulation is true - although to a much lesser extent - in an historical realist text. In a literal sense of these “absences”, an analysis of such texts which proceeds along the lines of comparison and contrast, will reveal omissions in one text which are present, for example, in the other two, or vice versa. It will show, furthermore, an author’s insights as “the effect of a specific conjuncture of his mode of authorial insertion into ideology, the relations of the ideological region he inhabits to real history, the character of that stage of capitalist development, and the truth effect of the particular aesthetic form”(1976:70). That this conjuncture is specific is borne out by what I intend to show as three very different “productions” of the same set of historical facts, ie. the position of black South Africans in the years leading up to and including the institutionalisation of apartheid.

Critics of the texts have generally highlighted their objective relations to ideology, and conclusions about the texts in this regard have been diverse. Three of Abrahams’s major critics have expressed three very different assessments of *Mine Boy*’s objective relation to ideology. *Mine Boy*, according to Michael Wade, is “a proletarian novel whose plot

displays a Marxist perspective on life”(1978:96). The novel’s Marxist aspects according to Desiree Lewis, on the other hand, are intermittent within a text whose ideological character she describes as predominantly liberal. According to Robert Ensor, finally - in reference to all of Abrahams’s novels as opposed to *Mine Boy* specifically - the author’s works are underpinned by two modes of conceptualising historical processes which give rise to ideological discontinuities which “challenge any concept of a coherent or closed reading”(1992:107).



Critical response to *Cry, the Beloved Country*, has also been diverse, although much of it conceptualised in terms of the author’s ideological stance as opposed to the ideological significance of the text (a pedantic distinction, perhaps, but significant in terms of Eagleton’s conceptualisation of the author as one of the text’s ‘operators’). Paton, then, has been variously described by critics as a “liberalist”, a “cat’s paw of communists”(Callan:1982:4), a “moralist”, a “puritan”(Hutchings:1992:184), and politically naïve (Watson:1982:38).

In contrast to the abundance of critical interest in these two authors and their works, responses to Phyllis Altman’s *The Law of the Vultures*, have been minimal, and the assessment of the text’s ideological significance as “subversive”(Murray:1987:1) and “propagandistic”(Murray:1987:7) was more or less unanimous.

What this diversity of critical response suggests - even in relation to *Vultures*, as a non-interest is possibly as much an ‘effect’ as the nature of the various interests in relation to the other two - is the possibility that a critic’s analysis is as much an ‘effect’ of the same constituents which determine an author’s insights. The same applies, of course, in this particular study.

A consideration of the historical context to which the texts are addressed is necessary in order for the aims of this study to be coherently treated. The historical ‘real’ of the texts

- to the extent that it can be accessed, and from a historiographical perspective as opposed to a fictively treated one – was characterised by a number of economic, political and social features which the texts collectively treat in relative – albeit ideologically mediated - completeness. Economically, the context was one of massive industrialisation with a proletariat divided along racial lines. This cleavage had its origins in the different nature and extent of Black and White urbanisation and proletarianisation, (Nattrass:1988:59) and was fostered, furthermore, by the ideologies of White supremacy and a growing Afrikaner nationalism. Legislation passed in the decades leading up to the 1948 accession to power of the Afrikaner Nationalists was the manifestation of a racially discriminatory polity, and ultimately served the needs of capital by providing cheap Black labour near to the workplace, but separate from the White sector of the South African population. Legislation passed by the new government after the election institutionalised racial discrimination in a catalogue of racially defined laws. These acts reinforced and perpetuated the unequal distribution of land, economic opportunities and political representation which had characterised the economic and political dispensation in the first half of the century. The social aspects of all of these laws together translated into the precarious position of politically and economically oppressed Blacks living in impoverished and overcrowded areas in and around the cities. Rural Blacks also suffered throughout this period due to a combination of overpopulation precipitated by the Native Land Acts, a loss of able-bodied men and women to work the land in the rural reserves, and dependence on the wages earned by urban migrators to supplement rural subsistence.

In my analysis of the texts' relations to ideology and to history, the focus in the first chapter will be on the texts' "pseudo-real constituents". In this chapter it is my intention to compare and contrast the various conceptualisations and representations of the following: the characters; the constituents of the social structure in which they exist, and the effects of their relations to that structure. The focus in the second chapter will

shift to a consideration of the forms of social transformation represented in each of the texts, and the extent to which these forms challenge the political dispensation to which they are addressed. In the third chapter, finally, the study will consider the texts' formal devices. It is through a comparative and contrasting examination of these aspects of the texts, that I hope to show the nature of the relation between history and text as that of a *production of ideology*, as opposed to a *portrayal of reality*. It is my intention, furthermore, to show the process of selection, organisation and exclusion which mediates this relationship, within the texts themselves, and giving rise to the subjective dimension of the relationship between ideology and text discussed above.

CHAPTER I

MODES OF AUTHORIAL INSERTION

An analysis of a literary text whose aim it is to establish the relation of the text to 'real history' must at some point consider the role and position of the author in relation to the text and to his/her social context respectively. It is through the author that representations of the text's object – which in this study is South Africa in a particular time period – are mediated, and this mediation is done by an individual whose own insights are determined by ideology, which "by inserting individuals into history in a variety of ways, allows of multiple kinds and degrees of access to that history"(Eagleton:1976:69).

Information of a biographical nature is therefore necessary in an attempt to establish the ideological underpinnings of writers' works, since their positions within a particular social dispensation indicate and influence their perceptions. The chapter will proceed after this consideration, to a comparative and contrasting analysis of the texts' "pseudo-real constituents".

In terms of both racial and class position, then, both Paton and Altman were privileged, whereas Abrahams's position was the opposite. As a coloured South African, he experienced the poverty and exclusion of Blacks, first-hand, in Vrededorp, the Black location in which he grew up under the guardianship of various family members. At Adams Mission School, on the other hand, he was educated in the ways of the West. At the age of 19 he left South Africa for Britain, where he worked for a Communist book-distributing agency, and became involved with the Communist Party. Both these associations were short-lived, however, due to a conflict of ideologies (Ogungbesan:1992:174). Abrahams went on thereafter to establish himself as a journalist and writer. His departure from South Africa constituted a bid for personal freedom without which he felt he could not write, and he expressed the following

viewpoint in *Return to Goli*, a collection of articles written during his return to South Africa fifteen years after leaving:

My business as a writer was with people, with human thoughts, conflicts, longings and strivings, not with political causes. Painfully, I was slowly groping to a view of life which transcended my own personal problems as a member of one oppressed group of humanity. I felt that if I could see the whole thing with the long eye of history, I might be able to fit the problems of my own group into the general human scheme and, in doing so, become a writer. I knew that in order to write I would have to purge myself of hatred for good writing has always been born of love: Keats, Shelley, Shakespeare, Blake, Chaucer, Tolstoy, and all the host of others had testified to this in their writing. Art and beauty come of love: not of hate. And the rage and anger of love can be more powerful than that of hate. (1953:17)

Paton's position within the South African social dispensation was very different from that of Abrahams. Paton's was a middle-class upbringing which included the moral force of deeply religious parents. As an adult Paton served as the principal of Diepkloof Reformatory for African boys, and some time later became a founding member and the leader of the South African Liberal Party. Although in his fiction he addressed various aspects of the socio-political dispensation, his commitment to "the craft" has been expressed in terms of what he regarded as its specifically literary demands:

If you want to preach you must go to the pulpit. If you want to teach you must go to the podium, but if you want to tell a story you must go to the desk and obey the rules of the craft. If your story also expounds some moral truth because of the kind of person you are, that is acceptable so long as it is the writer and not the preacher or the teacher who tells the story. If the preacher or the teacher intrudes, that will mean the end of the story. (1980:272-273)

Like Paton, Phyllis Altman's childhood was middle-class. Her parents were 'liberal' but not politically active. A relatively short teaching career at a number of primary schools in Johannesburg came to an abrupt end when Altman left work because she did not share "the naked and unashamed racism" of fellow teachers which "they passed on to the children"(Murray:1987:96). She then worked as a welfare officer for the European section of the Springbok Legion, a left-wing organisation which assisted Black soldiers returning from active duty in World War 2, with the bureaucratic intricacies of the demobilisation scheme. It was the difficulties experienced by these soldiers that were initially to be the basis of *The Law of the Vultures*, which Altman hoped would conscientise White South Africans. Commenting in an interview with Murray on her "meagre output as a writer", she explained that she "had always intended to be a writer...However, at university (she) was drawn into active participation and protests against the injustices of South African society (Murray:1987:95).

What is common to all three of the writers is a commitment to social transformation, which they pursued through various means and institutions. For all three, writing was one of these. What is apparent from their attitudes towards writing, however, is a commitment on the part of Abrahams and Paton, to a literary aesthetic to which the content of their work had to conform. For Altman, on the other hand, writing was simply a tool to be used for the task of achieving social transformation. What distinguishes the three authors, furthermore, is the ways in which they conceptualised the nature of urban life for Black South Africans. This distinction is attributable in part to their own experiences of Black oppression, and is a determining factor in the texts in the ways in which they represent their Black characters; in their conceptualisations of the constituents of the social structure, and their conceptualisations of the effects of their characters' relations to that structure. It is these "pseudo-real constituents" of the three texts which I intend to examine in this chapter.

CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF CHARACTERS: DEHUMANISED, DISPLACED, DEFEATED

Peter Abrahams's concerns in his representation of the lives and struggles of a group of Black workers living on the outskirts of Johannesburg, are threefold, and addressed to a particular conception of a social system which he conceptualises as economically exploitative, racially discriminatory, and dehumanising to Black workers. In his portrayal of the 'ordinary' people of Malay camp, Abrahams's main concerns seem to be to establish a sense of their humanity - in terms of their vices and vitality - and to show their need for effective intervention to bring an end to their struggles through the provision of a political voice. Implicit in the portrayal of Xuma - a character whom the author shows to be less 'ordinary' - is a conceptualisation of the requirements for the most effective intervention.

Whereas Abrahams's characters are dehumanised by a social dispensation which is shown to exploit and exclude them, Paton's characters are displaced. The result of this displacement - which is how the author conceptualises the combined effects of industrialisation and Black migration to the city - is the "the disintegration of native community life, in the deterioration of native family life, in poverty, slums and crime"(1948:142). It is within such a conceptual framework that Paton depicts suffering and vulnerable Black characters whose moral deterioration is an inevitable result of being in Johannesburg, a dangerous and unfathomable realm in which they do not belong. Like Abrahams's characters, they are in need of intervention, and it is in his portrayal of the relationship that develops between Stephen Kumalo and James Jarvis that Paton illustrates a possible form that intervention could take.

Unlike the characters in *Mine Boy* and *Cry, the Beloved Country*, Altman's Blacks are not too fallible in their humanity, or vulnerable in their alleged displacement, to try to help themselves. In *The Law of the Vultures*, what is most striking about the

conceptualisation of the various characters is their ultimate lack of autonomy and agency in the face of economic and political difficulties. This lack is not indicative however, of a need for intervention. Altman's characters are defined as much by their strenuous efforts to achieve quite reasonable goals as by the inevitable defeat that befalls them. Implicit in the juxtaposition of the two competing political ideologies - namely a form of African Nationalism and Trade Unionism - that vie for the defeated characters' commitment, is a conceptualisation of the necessity of some form of politicisation for the individual characters in order for socially determined problems to be overcome.

SOURCES AND SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

In the representation of the Malay Camp's 'ordinary' people, the characters are conceptualised as the products of material forces. These 'forces' are conceptualised by Abrahams as a unified system of oppression whose constituents are racial discrimination, economic exploitation and political marginalisation. In the representation of their difficulties, experiences on both the work and the domestic fronts are depicted. As a worker and member of the community, Xuma is shown to be subject to the same system of oppression. Abrahams's portrayal of his responses, however, does not correspond with that of the 'ordinary' characters. It is my intention in this chapter to examine Abrahams's representation of the effects on the 'ordinary' characters, of their relations to the social structure.

Abrahams's ideologically significant representation of the mine workers' alienation is an aspect of his characters' social relations which has been well documented by critics of various political persuasions. In his analysis of *Mine Boy*, Pinel Viriri Shava cites Karl Marx's definition of alienation, "the practical dimension" of which, he says "Abrahams brilliantly demonstrates" (1989:23) in his description of Xuma's perceptions of the workers on his first day at the mine:

According to him [Marx] a worker becomes alienated in this way: First that the work is external to the worker, that it is not a part of his nature, that consequently he does not fulfil himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery, not of well being, does not develop freely a physical and mental energy, but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker therefore feels himself at home only during his leisure, whereas at work he feels homeless. His work is not voluntary but imposed, forced labour. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a means for satisfying other needs... Finally, the alienated character of work for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his work but work for someone else, that it is work that does not belong to himself but to another person. (1989:23)

The representation of Xuma's perceptions of the workers on his first day at the mine corresponds with Marx's conceptualisation of alienation :

But as fast as they moved the sand, so fast did the pile grow. A truck load would go and another would come up from the bowels of the earth. And another would go and another would come. And another. And yet another. So it went on all day long. On and on and on and on.

And men gasped for breath and their eyes turned red and beads of sweat stood on their foreheads and the muscles in their arms hardened with pain as they fought the pile of fine wet sand.

But the sand remained the same. A truck would come from the heart of the earth. A truck would go up to build the mine-dump. Another would come. Another would go...All day long.

And for all their sweating and hard breathing and for the redness of their eyes there would be nothing to show. In the morning the pile had been so big. Now it was the same. And the mine-dump did not seem to grow either.

It was this that frightened Xuma. This seeing of nothing for a man's work. This mocking of a man by the sand that was always wet and warm; by the mine-dump that would not grow; by the hard eyes of the white man who told them to hurry up. (1987:42)

Through the representations of Leah and the unnamed miner "who spat blood" (1987:113) an aspect of Black urban life is incorporated which neither Paton nor Alman explicitly considers – the extent to which these characters must go to ensure that they are able to maintain their financial support of the people who are dependent on them. Leah, a brewer of beer which she sells - illicitly - to the people of Malay Camp, wants to make money because in the city, "money is your best friend"(1987:50), but her opportunities are circumscribed by racially discriminatory legislation. This conflict of interests characterises her entire existence. Her desire to make money, moreover, is not based on a desire for self-enrichment, but rather, the support of a household of individuals whose opportunities are also limited. The conflict of interest between herself and the police affects them all, and is the main theme of Abrahams's portrayal of Leah and her household/enterprise. In her introduction to the narrative, she is presented standing at the front gate at two o'clock in the morning, on the lookout for police. In her exit from the narrative, she is depicted being led away by the police after having been given – at a price – false information about a planned raid. Her imprisonment after the trial does not constitute the end of the process. Implicit in her parting instructions to Ma Plank, one of her dependents and assistants in the enterprise, is a sense of the inevitability and familiarity of this defeat:

'I shall be gone for about six months, Ma Plank. Sell everything and keep the money. Keep it with the other money. We will need a new home when I return, heh? And remember, don't waste the money on lawyers. Good?' (1987:166)

The fact that “home” for her is not merely a place in which she lives but one from which she operates a business, implies furthermore, an intention to pick up from this same point at the end of her incarceration.

The difficulties which characterise Leah’s struggle to support herself and those who are dependent on her are similar to those experienced by the ‘ordinary’ mine workers. On his arrival in Malay Camp at the beginning of the novel, Leah warns Xuma about the health risks inherent in working on the mines:

‘The mines are no good Xuma, later on you cough and then you spit blood and you become weak and die. I have seen it many times. Today you are young and you are strong, and tomorrow you are thin and ready to die.’ (1987:5)

Leah’s prophecy is shown to be true, and more extensively treated, in Abrahams’s portrayal of one of the ordinary mine workers anonymously referred to by Xuma as “the one who spat blood” (1987:113). The reasons he gives Xuma for staying at work despite his condition are based on economic necessity:

When they [the workers] had gone Xuma spoke to the man:

‘ How long have you had this?’

‘ Two months now,’ the man said.

‘ Did you see the doctor?’

‘ No,’ the man said and hung his head.

‘ Why not?’

‘ Listen, Xuma, I have a wife and two children and I have worked it all out. We have a small farm and I owe a white man eight pounds. If I do not give it back to him he will take the farm. And if he takes it, where will my wife and children go? I have worked it all out, Xuma, really I have...I know I am going to die, but if there is a home for my wife and children I will be happy.’ (1987:108)

Exploited to within a few months of his life, it is only through Xuma's intervention that the man is paid off and sent home.

The representations of Leah and the man with mine sickness constitute a treatment of the material effects of Black political and economic subjection. Implicit in Abrahams's portrayal of the community's excessive drinking, reckless gambling and gratuitous violence, on the other hand, is his analysis of the detrimental psychological effects of their subjection. Whereas such patterns of behaviour exhibited by *Cry*'s characters signify moral deterioration, in *Mine Boy* they are symptomatic of the collective frustration and demoralisation arising from the inability of the 'ordinary' people to negotiate successfully or change the circumscribed parameters of social life. The point is explicitly treated in Ma Plank's defence of Daddy - an incontinent drunk - in response to Xuma's disgust at the sight of him lying unconscious on the floor:

'You scorn him, heb? Yet when he first came to the city he was a man...and when there was trouble about the passes he stood at the front of the people...he understood too much and it made him unhappy and he became like Eliza. Only he fought.' (1987:80)

An inability to maintain intimate relationships with members of the opposite sex is another aspect of the psychological effects whose origins are explicitly located within the relations of social being. Abrahams's most extensive treatment of this particular exigency in the text is represented in Eliza's dysfunctional emotional behaviour. Although attracted to Xuma, her brief relationship with him is unfulfilling because he does not share and nor can he provide her material desires. Furthermore, the materially down - scaled domesticity which they establish, is disrupted by Xuma's night shift, and is an aspect of his economic necessity with which she is dissatisfied:

'You are unhappy,' he [Xuma] said.

'No.'

'It is there in your voice.'

'No.'

'It is there.'

'When will your night-shift finish?'

'Why are you unhappy?'

'Don't be a fool, Xuma. Tell me about your night-shift. It is not good for a woman to sleep alone every night. Go on! Tell me.'

Xuma smiled. 'Another two weeks.'

'Then no more night-shift.'

'No more night-shift.'

'For how long?'

'I do not know.' (1987:140)

Through the representation of the domestic realm the treatment of the effects of the characters' social relations is extended. In the representation of this realm, three distinctly different sets of circumstances are depicted: that of the majority of the Blacks, that of the Whites, and juxtaposed with these two extremes, the home of Dr. Mini. The first two are conceptualised in terms of polar opposites: impoverishment and precariousness characterise the Black living quarters, in contrast with the relative opulence, comfort and stability of Paddy and Di's place. The reality of the material divide between these two is brought home to Xuma when he finds himself at the latter:

'This is my home,' Paddy said.

Xuma looked around. He had never seen a place like that before.

There was no fire, but it was warm...Xuma thought: now I understand what Eliza wants. But these things are only for white people. It is foolish to think we can get them. He looked round the room. Yes, it was fine. Carpets on the floor, books, radio. Beautiful things everywhere. Fine, all fine, but all the white man's things. To drink wine and keep the bottle on the table without fear of the

police. how could a black person do it. And how could Eliza be like this white woman of the Red One. (1987:64-65)

In their analyses of Alan Paton's *Cry: the Beloved Country*, both Geoffrey Hutchings and Es'kia Mphahlele criticise the author's mode of characterisation. According to Hutchings, Paton is "telling us about Kumalo's emotions rather than showing us" (1992:187). This mode, which he regards as giving rise to a flatness of characterisation, suits what he refers to as Paton's documentary technique, but at the cost of psychological profundity. Hutchings cites Mphahlele, whose criticism has a similar ring to it. Paton's message according to the latter "supersedes character", and as a result, the author neglects the opportunity "to study the characters in a process of change" (1992:185).

Such an analysis is characteristic of the kind of criticism which *evaluates* a text on the basis of the extent to which it fulfills the formal requirements of its genre. In terms of the characterisation of an individual in such an approach, it is a legitimate criticism. In terms of Stephen Kumalo's function within the narrative, however, it excludes the possibility that it is not Stephen's individualisation that is important so much as his representative status as the rural African in the initial stages of a process, the final and inevitable result of which, is depicted in the representation of the complete dissolution of the other members of the Kumalo family.

The representation of Stephen Kumalo's displacement begins with a depiction of the protagonist's established position within the hierarchical social structure of a traditional rural community. Within this traditional setting, Stephen Kumalo is addressed and referred to as "umfundisi" (1948:14). The young girl who delivers a fateful letter from Johannesburg is suitably respectful in what Paton refers to as "so important" and "so great" (1948:14) a house as Kumalo's is within the community.

The priest's position is reinforced by the representation of the train passengers' responses to him when he steps onto the train at Carishbrooke:

They saw his clerical collar, and moved up to make room for the umfundisi. He looked around, hoping there might be someone with whom he could talk. but there was no one who appeared of that class. (1948:22)

The terms of 'the umfundisi's' characterisation change as the train is shown departing from the environment with which he is familiar:

...the journey had begun. And now the fear again, the fear of the unknown, the fear of the great city where boys were killed crossing the street, the fears 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. (1948:22)

Fear subsides temporarily as Kumalo is depicted travelling past places and features of the landscape with which he is familiar and which he is able to recognise and name. At a certain point in the journey however, which is somewhere between the level plains of the Drakensberg, familiarity and recognition change to strangeness and an inability to put names to places:

This is a new country, a strange country, rolling and rolling away as far as the eye can see. There are new names here, hard names for a Zulu who has been schooled in English. For they are in the language that was called Afrikaans, a language that he had never yet heard spoken. (1948:23)

Kumalo at this point is no longer in an environment in which his position is established and in which he has the linguistic and cognitive abilities to negotiate the experience comfortably. His vulnerability to forces beyond his comprehension, and his dependence on others, is represented in his need to start asking his fellow passengers for names and explanations:

Are these the mines, those flat white hills in the distance? He can ask safely, for there is no one here who heard him yesterday.

- That is the rock out of the mines, umfundisi. The gold has been taken out of it.

-How does the rock come out?

-We go down and dig it out. umfundisi...

- How does it go up?

- It is wound up by a great wheel. Wait, and I shall show you one.

He is silent, and his heart beats a little faster, with excitement and fear.

(1948:23-24)

From the safety of “the greatest train of all, the train for Johannesburg... A white man’s wonder, a train that has no engine, only an iron cage on its head” (1948:23), the sights of the approaching city are conceptualised as “such a confusion” (1948:24) by Kumalo, whose response is defined in terms of alternating childlike wonder and cognitive overload which give way to anxiety and fear :

He sees great high buildings; there are red and green lights on them...it is too much to understand. He is silent, his head aches, he is afraid. (1948:25)

The characterisation of the protagonist in these terms culminates in the first of a number of instances in which he is shown, on his initial arrival in Johannesburg, to be completely unmanned by the force of his vulnerability and his inability to articulate a response to overwhelming circumstances:

But when he starts across [the street], a great bus swings across the path. There is some law of it that he does not understand, and he retreats again. He finds himself against the wall, he will look as though he is waiting for some purpose. His heart beats like that of a child, there is nothing to do or think to stop it. *Tixo*, watch over me, he says to himself. *Tixo*, watch over me. (1948:25)

Respite from his perilous vulnerability only comes after yet another instance of Kumalo's inability to comprehend his new surroundings. When approached by a young man who offers to show him the way to Sophiatown, Kumalo is unable to understand either his "strange Zulu" (1948:26), or his ulterior motive. The stranger makes off with Kumalo's money after promising to buy his ticket, leaving a self-conscious yet courageous Kumalo to find help elsewhere. Kumalo finally reaches his destination – the Mission House – after a long and unsettling bus trip, and for the rest of his stay in Johannesburg he is accompanied by other characters who provide various means of support and aid in the hardships that he experiences and observes.

Having established Stephen Kumalo's child-like vulnerability in a city whose landscape and social practices are completely beyond his comprehension, Paton's portrayal of Kumalo turns to that of his emotional vulnerability as he sets off in search of his sister Gertrude, his son Absalom and John Kumalo, his brother. It is through the representation of their alienation from Stephen that the breakdown of the family is depicted, which constitutes another effect in this text. of Black urbanisation. The effects of this breakdown on Stephen Kumalo, furthermore, are depicted through a catalogue of images of the protagonist's emotional fragility as he is shown tracing the steps of Absalom's moral disintegration, and dealing with its consequences. It is in his unexpected encounter with James Jarvis - the father of Absalom's victim - that the representation of Stephen's suffering in this way, culminates:

- Good morning, umfundisi, said Jarvis in Zulu, of which he was a master. The parson answered in a trembling voice. Umnumzana, which means Sir, and to Jarvis's surprise, he sat down on the lowest step, as though he were ill or starving...He continued to tremble, and looked down on the ground...He continued to tremble and look at the ground...The old man made an effort to rise, using his stick, but the stick slipped on the paved stone, and fell clattering on the stone. Jarvis picked it up and restored it to him, but the old man put it

down as a hindrance, and he put down his hat also, and tried to lift himself up by pressing his hands on the steps. But his first effort failed, and he sat down again, and continued to tremble... then the old man pressed his hands again on the steps, and lifted himself up. Then he lifted his face also and looked at Jarvis, and Jarvis saw that his face was full of suffering that was of neither illness nor hunger. (1948:171-172)

In contrast with the characterisation of Stephen in terms of emotional fragility and vulnerability, his urbanised family are depicted in terms of an inevitable moral decline. As such, Absalom, Gertrude and John Kumalo represent the final stage of an apparently inevitable process of emotional and moral dissolution which their 'displacement' from the traditional rural home precipitates. (In his portrayal of Absalom's movements from the time of his arrival in Johannesburg to the point to which Kumalo finds him in prison, Paton portrays this process in its completeness.) What this constitutes in relation to Absalom is his gradual assimilation into a life of crime which begins with petty theft and ends with murder. For Gertrude it is prostitution and the illicit brewing and selling of what Msimangu refers to as "bad liquor.. made strong with all manner of things that our people have never used" (1948:30).

Whereas Abrahams engages his characters in the same activities, in his portrayal of Black subjection, it is his characters' economic and political marginalisation which is ultimately shown to be the cause. In Paton's characters' moral deterioration, it is Johannesburg to which blame is attributed. For the people of Ndotsheni, Johannesburg is conceptualised in terms of its foreignness and danger, a place to which members of the village go but from which they never return. Its alienness to the rural people is initially established through the representation of Stephen Kumalo's inability to understand the "law of it" (1948:25). In the representation of Gertrude and Absalom, this sense of Johannesburg is conceptualised in similar terms. Although Gertrude

defends her prostitution and illicit liquor selling on the grounds of economic necessity, it is ultimately Johannesburg that is blamed for the shame she has brought on her family. Absalom explains his decline in similar terms. In the representation of their eventual meeting at the prison where he is being held, Stephen Kumalo asks his son to explain how he came to be there:

- Answer me, my child.

- I do not know, he [Absalom] says.

- Why did you carry a revolver?

The White warder stirs too, for this word in Zulu is like the word in English and Afrikaans. The boy too shows a sign of life.

- For safety, he says. This Johannesburg is a dangerous place. A man never knows when he will be attacked.(1948:98-99)

Whereas Johannesburg is conceived of by Gertrude and Absalom in the mystical terms of a malign and incomprehensible force against whose destructive capacity they have no defence, John Kumalo's analysis of the city, on the other hand, is based on a more materialist assessment of the dialectical processes at work there:

Here in Johannesburg it is the mines, he said. everything is the mines. These high buildings, this wonderful City Hall, this beautiful Parktown with its beautiful houses, all this is built with the gold from the mines. This wonderful hospital for Europeans, the biggest hospital south of the Equator, it is built with the gold from the mines....

Go to our hospital, he said, and see our people lying on the floors. They lie so close you cannot step over them. But it is they who dig the gold. For three shillings a day. We come from the Transkei, and from Basutoland, and from Bechuanaland, and from Swaziland, and from Zululand. And from Ndotsheni also. We live in the compounds, we must leave our wives and families behind. And when the new gold is found, it is not we who will get more for our labour,

it is the white man's shares that will rise, you will read it in all the papers. They go mad when new gold is found. They bring more of us to live in the compounds, to dig under the ground for three shillings a day. They do not think, here is a chance to pay more for our labour. They think only, here is a chance to build a bigger house and buy a bigger car. It is important to find gold, they say, for all South Africa is built on the mines.(1948:42)

John Kumalo's analysis of the source of Black difficulties is more cognisant of material historical forces but its validity is undermined by Paton's portrayal of this character as morally corrupt: as a husband he is unfaithful, as a father he is neglectful, as a brother he is disloyal, as a politician he is vainglorious and self-serving, and as a Black South African he does not subscribe to the kind of moderateness and passivity which Stephen Kumalo is shown to embrace in the text's didactic depiction of the solution to South Africa's race problem (which will be examined in the next chapter).

*

The depiction in *The Law of the Vultures* of Thabo Thaele from his childhood in the rural setting of Marah to the point at which he is accused of theft by a colleague at work after seventeen years of loyal service, is an exhaustive and excruciatingly detailed portrayal of the unrelenting catalogue of difficulties which he experiences from the time of his arrival in the city. Like *Mine Boy*, and in contrast with *Cry*, Altman represents - through particular and individualised characters - both the economic and political nature of Black urban subjection. In this part of his story, however - up to the point at which he is falsely accused - this duality is portrayed in such a way that it is the difficulties characteristic of his economic subjection which are explicitly treated, whereas his political subjection is implicit insofar as his story represents the circumscribed nature of Black experience in a racially discriminatory society.

The representation of Thaele's childhood dream to become a doctor, and his efforts to achieve this dream, is a tale of relentless economic hardships and sacrifice. Because his parents cannot afford to provide Thaele with a good education which he believes is the key to his future, Thaele gets a job in Johannesburg in order to finance his studies. At this point the job is of incidental importance in terms of fulfilling the personal and lifelong ambitions that he expresses, with naive determination, to his doubtful father:

'But I will work and save money. I will study at night. I must go - I must see everything in the world; I must see busses and trains, and tall buildings and shops, and aeroplanes and gold mines, and the sea and ships, and pictures that move and talk; all these things that I know about from the books of Reverend Pierre. And my father, I wish to become a doctor; to learn the white man's medicine; then I will come back and help the people of Marah.' (1987:12)

The exigencies of city life diminish the possibilities for Thaele, however. The values and beliefs with which he leaves Marah prove to be hopelessly idealistic, and his dreams unattainable. Thaele's efforts to study are made difficult by a combination of predominantly socio-economic factors: cramped living conditions; constant hunger because he does not earn enough money for food as well as for books and stationery; the fear of losing his job if his life outside of it starts to take its toll on him at work. These difficulties are compounded by a syllabus which is completely alien and inaccessible to him. Despite these difficulties however, Thaele ignores the badgering discouragement of his workmate Sam, the extent of whose aspirations to become a clerk and wear respectable clothes, Thaele eschews for himself.

The only respite and reward which Thaele receives during the long course of self-sacrifice and terminally deferred gratification are two promotions from messenger boy to clerk, the accompanying salary increases and the occasional pat-on-the-back from Mr. Dent for his abilities to work a duplicating machine. These relatively insignificant

rewards in a situation of intense personal and economic struggle, together with Sam's seemingly logical deprecations, precipitate a subtle and gradual erosion of Thaele's aspirations. The process culminates in Thaele's decision, after receiving a mediocre matric pass after four years of consummate hardship, to take a break. The disappointment is alleviated by the insidiousness with which his aspirations have been eroded to the extent that he is able to rationalise his failure and relativise his ambitions:

The ache across his eyes dulled his mind. He wished to rest, to save money, to think about a wife, to get away from the Mthebe's. He would not return to teach in Marah, and he had not the qualification for teaching in Johannesburg. In any case the salary of an African teacher was less than he earned as a clerk. He was an important man in his office - doing important work - because of his education. He had come far enough for the moment. (1987:51)

Thaele does not progress beyond this point in the realisation of his dream to become a doctor however. The representation of him after seventeen years of loyal service at Dent & Co. is a caricature of the pettiness and delusion to which he has been reduced by insurmountable socio-economic difficulties within a racially discriminatory political system:

At thirty-three Thabo Thaele was, he thought, an important person in the offices of Messrs. H. Dent & Co. Ltd., Import and Export agents in Johannesburg. He had graduated from messenger and tea-boy to Postal clerk and Duplicating Operator - important work which required a man of education, such as he was...the duplicating machine was his greatest joy...The last three days of the month were of supreme happiness to him, and he liked nothing better than to have the office messenger watching him round-eyed as he slowly, and with infinite care, placed the sheets on the roller and ran off the copies. And, as the messengers came and went with great frequency, he had a new one to impress every few months. (1987:5-6)

What is most striking in the depiction of this character, is the reduction and rationalisation which characterise it. Self-realisation and an ability to “help the people of Marah” (1987:12) were the ultimate goals of Thaele’s desire to become a doctor. At the age of thirty-three he is a clerk with an essentially false sense of social respectability and status, his White colleagues patronise him, and his less deluded Black peers criticise him for his political passivity and inflated sense of his position as “a stamp-licker” (1987:58).

From the point at which he is accused of theft, the terms of Altman's portrayal of urban Black subjection changes to a treatment of its explicitly racial dimension. The violence and brutality which accompany the accusation and subsequent arrest for theft, force upon Thaele an awareness of this aspect of his subjection. When he is released from jail, it is not the source of the insidious reduction and down-scaling of his aspirations and achievements that he addresses in his desire for retribution, but the racially based brutalisation that he has suffered at the hands of Whites.

At this point in the novel Thaele is ushered off centre stage by Altman, and the story of a new character is introduced into the narrative. David Nkosi is a demobilised veteran of the desert campaign in the Second World War who is forced to leave his rural home for Johannesburg because of the difficulties he has experienced in attempting to obtain government compensation for stock losses during his soldier's absence. The catalogue of difficulties which he experiences picks up the theme of specifically racial hardships which define the end of the depiction thus far of Thaele's experiences. Whereas Thaele's racial subjection is portrayed in terms of violence and brutality, the nature of Nkosi's difficulties is characterised by indifference towards and betrayal of Black South Africans by government institutions and their White representatives.

Thematically, Altman's portrayal of Nkosi is similar to that of Thaele: a naive and trusting African arrives in the city with certain personal hopes which are gradually

eroded. This process is shown to precipitate a development towards a definitively pessimistic political awareness for both protagonists. Underpinning both of those representations is a conceptualisation of the individual in relation to society. The portrayal of Thaele and the nature of his subjection constitutes a portrayal of conflict generated within the realms of his economic and political positions. The portrayal of Nkosi constitutes a similar representation of conflict arising in his case from his position of political marginalisation. A lack of agency in the mediation of the social processes which define their experiences underpins Altman's portrayal of them both ultimately as victims of forces beyond their control. Her portrayal of Jobula, the corrupt and self-serving secretary of the People of Africa Society, represents her only concession to the idea of individual autonomy. The nature of his agency, however, does not constitute an ideal possibility, compromised as it is by the constant threat of exposure.

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My examination in this chapter of the texts' "pseudo-real constituents" illustrates Eagleton's assertion that ideology, "by inserting individuals into history in a variety of ways, allows of multiple kinds and degrees of access to that history"(1976:69). It is because of the authors' various modes of insertion into ideology, that Abrahams's representations of the same object differ from Paton's, which in turn differ from Altman's. Abrahams's ordinary characters are conceptualised as alienated and exploited workers whose dehumanisation by a system of economic and racial oppression gives rise to problems which the author defines in the same terms. Paton's main Black characters on the other hand, are a divided rural family whose displacement in Johannesburg is conceptualised as the source of their vulnerability and inevitable moral deterioration. Finally, in Altman's representations of Black urban experiences, forces of oppression beyond her characters' individual control are shown to precipitate their eventual defeat.

CHAPTER 2

My focus in this chapter will move from the texts' particular "pseudo-real constituents", to an analysis of the forms of social transformation which are represented in the texts. Although these forms are also presented in the mode of the texts' "pseudo-real constituents", they are substantively different in so far as they represent a more formalized mode of the ideology which constitutes "a dominant structure" of the texts. Eagleton explains it thus:

'Pre-textual ideology' presents itself to the work in diverse forms: in 'ordinary language', accredited symbol and convention, codes of perceptual habit, other artefacts. It offers itself also in more formalized ways: in those particular aesthetic, political, ethical and other formulae which may at once permeate 'ordinary language' yet emerge from it as distinct crystallisations of meaning. (1976:81)

In all three of the texts which I have selected for this study, ideology – in the form of "political formulae"- enters the texts in this relatively "pure" form, in terms of the political solutions which are represented. That they permeate the ordinary language of the texts can be seen in so far as the solutions represented are logical and relatively coherent in relation to the character and disposition of the texts' "pseudo-real constituents" examined in the previous chapter. What is striking about all three of the texts, however, is the discontinuities and contradictions at this same level of their ideological formulations. It is my intention in the beginning of this chapter to elucidate this aspect of the texts' dominant structures. My analysis will then proceed to an assessment of the extent to which the ideological underpinnings of the texts differ from those of the social system whose inequality they ostensibly challenge.

In their commitment to social transformation - which constitutes a particular mode of ideological insertion in relation to history - the texts which I have selected for this

study were addressed to a political dispensation based on a notion of fundamental differences between races in which Blacks had no political voice. My intention in the second part of this chapter is to examine the extent to which this system is challenged in each of the texts, or to assess the mode of each text's insertion into an "ideological sub-ensemble"(Eagleton: 1976:70). My conceptualisation of the three texts in terms of an "ideological sub-ensemble" is based on the notion that "When a literary work with a strong 'national' flavour places at its centre a particular community, it is arguing for the centrality of that community in the narrative of the nation of which it is a part." (Lenta:1995). In assessing the texts on such grounds, it is my intention to investigate the treatment of the notion of 'difference' in each of the texts, and to assess the nature and degree of Black politicisation implicit in their respective representations of forms of transformation.

SOLUTIONS AND DISCONTINUITIES

In *Mine Boy*, two sets of crises are represented - that of the 'ordinary' characters and that of Xuma. In the text's solutions, both of these problems are apparently addressed. The text's 'ordinary' characters are locked into a cycle of self-defeating behaviour which constitutes an inability to negotiate successfully the marginalisation and oppression which derives from their social position. The solution to this problem involves a call to Whites - to whom the novel is implicitly addressed - to allow intervention on the peoples' behalf by a Black leader who by virtue of his intimate involvement with them, is most qualified to act on their behalf.

Xuma's crisis is different from that of the ordinary people. Unlike them, he has an absolute and uncompromising system of values, which include a deference to authority and the principles of law and order. In the city the unfairness of the political dispensation affects him in two ways - through his exclusion from a particular way of life, and through his awareness of its completely demoralising effects on 'his people'.

The solution for Xuma involves a change of attitude: the protagonist needs to acquire a belief in himself in defiance of a political system that denies his humanity; a belief in the possibility of a dispensation in which his equality is acknowledged, and the 'freedom' which this new attitude will bring, to demand justice in defiance of a system of law which discriminates against people on the basis of race.

The story of Xuma shows him going through a process of development towards this position of self-belief, as well as a process of getting to understand the people for whom he will eventually intervene. This process depends for its success, furthermore, on a certain change of attitude in Whites, towards the idea of Black leadership. This aspect of the political solution is presented implicitly in Paddy's support of Xuma's strike in the final scene of the novel, and is a response conceptualised in terms of Di's challenge to him in an earlier scene:

'So many of the people who consider themselves progressive have their own weird notions of the native, but they all have one thing in common. They want to decide who the good native is and they want to do good things for him. You know what I mean. They want to lead him. To tell him what to do. They want to think for him and he must accept their thoughts. And they like him to depend on them....the whole point is that a native who wants the things the whites have is suspect if he does not apply to them for leadership.'

'That leaves a pretty hopeless position for your hypothetical progressives.'

'Yes, until they accept the fact that the natives can lead; not only themselves but the whites as well.'(1987:68-69)

Although these solutions seem coherent with the problems, there are inconsistencies. The representation in *Mine Boy* of the 'ordinary' characters' difficulties, is underpinned by a conceptualisation of a unified system of racial and class-based oppression. A comprehensive solution to such a dispensation would address both of these aspects of their dissolution. In Xuma's vision of transformation, however, there is no sign of

material change or political reorganisation apart from his own inclusion into a realm which is depicted throughout the text as an exclusively 'white' one. Although this realm is characterised by an absence of the prohibitions which circumscribe the lives of the 'ordinary' people, it is striking also in terms of the material aspect of its difference in relation to the 'Black' equivalent, and for its illusion of comfortable domesticity. One of the most symbolic images in the text of the protagonist's exclusion from this realm, is *re-presented* in Xuma's "vision" of the "world without colour"(quoted below). In the former, the protagonist is depicted on the outside looking in, whilst walking through the 'white' "heart of Johannesburg":

He passed the window of a restaurant. Inside, white people sat eating and talking and smoking and laughing at each other. It looked warm and comfortable and inviting. He looked away quickly. (1987:62)

In his "vision", Xuma's position has changed, but a social hierarchy still exists:

The vision carried him along. He could see himself and Eliza and Paddy and Paddy's woman all sitting at a table in one of those little tea places in the heart of Johannesburg and drinking tea and laughing and talking. And around them would be other people all happy and without colour. And everywhere in the land it was so. People worked side by side and the earth was cheerful and rich and yielded a fat crop and there was food for everybody and work for everybody and there was singing while people worked and there was much laughter. And in the cities too it was so. People worked. People ate. People were happy. And oh the laughter! It was like a huge wave that swept over the land. And all eyes shone with it as they worked in the sun, and there was a new brightness in the sun...(1987:174)

In so far as this vision applies, Xuma's mobilisation of the ordinary people in the final scene of the novel seems more in the nature of a call for support for his own cause -

political inclusion - than it does for their emancipation. Robert Ensor's analysis of ideological discontinuities in Peter Abrahams's novels is applicable here:

The concept of the liberation of the community, nation or people is... conceptualised in individualist terms as the attainment of individual freedoms. In stressing the attainment of individual freedom, Abrahams develops a silence around the social relations that differentiate 'the people' into classes... (1992:111)

This "silence" constitutes a discontinuity at the level of the text's ideological formulations. Although the difficulties of the ordinary people are extensively represented and comprehensively defined in terms of their material oppression, Xuma's vision of transformation does not constitute a resolution of these difficulties in the same terms. Ensor's analysis of the ideological underpinning of this contradiction illuminates the representation of Xuma's 'difference' - treated below - from the 'ordinary' characters:

In attempting to develop an ideology of humanist individualism in the context of the mass movements in Africa in the 1940's and 1950's...and with a concern for the transformation of society as a whole, Abrahams incorporated elements of historical-materialism into his mode of conceptualisation. (1992:108)

The structure of the narrative bears out Ensor's implication of a hierarchy of interests in *Mine Boy*. Although the community is extensively treated in the narrative, its difficulties - presented in terms of an historical-materialist conceptualisation of historical processes - constitutes the narrative backdrop to the representation of Xuma's character and his development. This aspect of the narrative is underpinned by an essentially idealist conceptualisation of an individual within the dialectical processes of history. It is this aspect of the text's "pseudo-real constituents" to which the text's more formalised ideological component corresponds.

In *Cry, the Beloved Country* a set of solutions to the problems of Black crime and the breakdown of traditional African social structures is presented. These problems are conceptualised as the result of White "selfishness"(1948:143). As in *Mine Boy*, a change of White attitudes towards Blacks is necessary at the outset in order for the more concrete possible solution - the rehabilitation of Blacks through the restoration of a traditional social system - to become viable. Although the conceptualisation of such a solution is completely coherent with the way in which problems are represented, there is an explicitly articulated inconsistency which effectively reveals the idealism underpinning the text's production.

The political agenda in *Cry, the Beloved Country* consists of a call to White South Africans - to whom the novel is implicitly addressed - to accept responsibility for their part in the "destruction of a tribal system"(1948:143) and the displacement of Blacks from their rural environment, to forgive Blacks their part in the rampant crime which this displacement has engendered, and to implement a workable system of intervention in an effort to "build something in the place of what is broken" (1948:33).

* This agenda is presented both explicitly, in the form of Arthur Jarvis's political manifesto, and implicitly, in the form of an essentially didactic portrayal of the relationship between James Jarvis and Stephen Kumalo in Part Three of the novel, and which constitutes a possible form of the former's 'restoration'. Paton is aware however of the limitations of his solution : Stephen Kumalo's failure to retrieve and relocate his immediate family is symbolic. In a more explicit concession to the determinism of historical processes, Paton creates a character who expresses the limitations of the form of redress which has been implemented. Napoleon Letsitsi, the agricultural instructor appointed by James Jarvis to assist and educate the people of Ndotsheni about more productive agricultural practices, expresses his doubts to Stephen Kumalo:

- I understand you, umfundisi, I understand you completely. But let me ask one thing of you.

- Ask it then.

- If this valley were restored, as you are always asking in your prayers, do you think it would hold all the people of this tribe if they all returned.
- I do not know indeed.
- But I know, umfundisi. We can restore this valley for those who are here, but when the children grow up, there will again be too many. Some will have to go still. (1948:254)

That Paton envisions a form of intervention as necessary for Black rehabilitation is implicit in his portrayal of Stephen Kumalo and the various partnerships he forms with other characters in the novel. The protagonist's complete vulnerability on his trip to, and initial arrival in Johannesburg establishes his need for protection. Whilst in Johannesburg he is sheltered by the Christians at the Mission House, and accompanied on his expeditions into the Black locations by Msimangu. That it is the responsibility of the White South Africans to intervene on behalf of the Black 'tribe', is alluded to through Msimangu's numerous explanations to Stephen about the state of Black and White relations in Johannesburg; and is explicitly articulated in Arthur Jarvis's political manifesto:

* The old tribal system was, for all its violence and savagery, for all its superstition and witchcraft, a moral system. Our natives today produce criminals and prostitutes and drunkards, not because it is their nature to do so, but because their simple system of order and tradition and convention has been destroyed. It was destroyed by the impact of our own civilisation. Our civilisation has therefore an inescapable duty to set up another system of order and tradition and convention. (1948:143)

Paton's opinion of intervention by Blacks on behalf of 'the tribe' is implicit in his portrayal of John Kumalo, whose analysis of the material processes which precipitated Black urbanisation is similar to Arthur Jarvis's. In the portrayal of the relationship that develops between Stephen Kumalo and James Jarvis on their returns to Ndotsheni and

Carisbrooke respectively, Paton shows what form this intervention could take: active participation as opposed to detached speculation and extreme and punitive measures motivated by fear. The latter are the terms in which the more typical White responses are represented throughout the text in the form of what Pajalich terms its “polyphonicity” (1992) and by which he means the inclusion within the narrative of various representative voices.

* An integral part of the ‘solution’ in *Cry, the Beloved Country* is the politicisation of Whites, which involves a change of attitude towards Blacks, from one of vilification and fear, to an attitude of sympathy and forgiveness; and from passive speculation about the source of Black disintegration, to active intervention on their behalf. These are the terms of James Jarvis’s politicisation. In the text’s introduction of him into the narrative, he is portrayed sitting at the top of the valley where he farms; surveying the desolation of the land at the bottom where the Blacks of Ndotsheni farm; worrying about the gradual encroachment upwards of this desolation to the White farms, and recalling the speculation of the other White farmers about its causes and possible solutions:

* Jarvis grunted, and calling his dog, set out along the kaffir path that led up to the tops [of the valley]. There was no sign of drought there...but below the tops the grass was dry, and the hills of Ndotsheni were red and bare, and the farmers on the tops had begun to fear that the desolation of them would eat back, year by year, mile by mile, until they too were overtaken.

Indeed they talked about it often...there were too many cattle there, and the fields were eroded and barren; each new field extended the devastation. Something might have been done if these people had only learned how to fight erosion, if they had built walls...if they had ploughed along the contours...But the hills were steep...and the oxen were weak...and the people were ignorant...Indeed it was a problem almost beyond solution. (1948:128)

By the end of the novel, Jarvis has forgiven a Black man for a crime which has affected him personally and with tragic consequences, taken responsibility for his own passive indifference to the breakdown of 'the tribe', and implemented a system of restoration of the land on which Blacks subsist. The ultimate goal of his efforts is to implement a practicable method of restoration which will facilitate a rehabilitation of Black traditional life within a particular community and which is conceptualised in contradistinction to White industrialised life.

The idea of a change of mind on the part of Whites does not constitute an aspect of the solutions to Black problems represented in *The Law of the Vultures*. In this text, it is at the level of specifically structural social relations that difficulties are shown to arise, and at the level of specifically structural social relations that the solution to them lies. Individual consciousness is relevant in so far as the specifically ideological perspectives of individuals - as opposed to a conceptualisation of conscious attitudes - are shown to distort perceptions of their real conditions of existence. Two different crises are represented through the two protagonists in the first half of the novel. Although different, both sets of problems are related in so far as they are manifestations of an economically inequitable system within which racial oppression is a form of economic exploitation. For Thaele, a lack of economic resources makes it impossible for him to achieve his desires for self-realisation through becoming a doctor. For Nkosi, on the other hand, the indifference of a racially discriminatory political system makes it impossible for him to live his life in the way that he would like to. The solution to both of these problems involves the consolidation of oppressed individuals within a political organisation through which complete transformation of the social system can be achieved. Two political ideologies are represented in the text as the possible alternatives for consolidation by Blacks: a Black nationalist organisation, and a trade union. It is the trade union representative, however, whose organisation is implicitly endorsed as the one which offers the only hope of real

transformation. In the representation of Dhlamini's class-based trade unionism, racial discrimination is explained by him as a form of economic exploitation, thereby constituting the most comprehensive grounds for consolidation in relation to the character and disposition of the text's "pseudo-real constituents". The second half of the novel is constituted by the juxtaposition of two modes of politicisation available to an individual who is reluctant to commit himself to either of them because of a desire for individual autonomy in relation to social processes. In his attempts to persuade Nkosi to join the trade union movement, Dhlamini is unable to persuade the latter because of his implicit conceptualisation of his own autonomy :

'I [Nkosi] do not want to be a Johannesburg man. I wish to remain a farmer...I must rest and be with my family and struggle hard with our small land and few beasts. I will not have time to think of all these things.' (1987:200)

Nkosi's response is ironic in view of the depiction of Mamakhoka's on Nkosi's return after the war. The land is drought-stricken and many of its inhabitants are the sick and suffering products of an exploitative social system which can no longer accommodate them. By the end of the novel, however, he has changed his mind, having realised the consummately politicised nature of life, and decided on the mode of politicisation which corresponds with his perceptions of the source and nature of Black difficulties. When Nkosi does eventually decide to make a political commitment, it is on the basis of his horror at the traumatised Letsie's experiences of violence and brutality at the hands of his White missus, the White police and White farmers. Thaele's African Nationalism seems the more logical choice to Nkosi, with its racial interpretation of injustice. Dhlamini's explanation of Letsie's experience in terms of class-based factors confuses Nkosi, whose response is significant in so far as it is indicative of the way he perceives the nature and source of Black subjection.

CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF DIFFERENCE

Underlying all three of the texts' treatment of Black oppression and its effects in an urban environment, is an implicit conceptualisation of the notion of 'difference', which is present in the texts' ideological formulations. In *Mine Boy*, the protagonist's 'difference' from the 'ordinary' characters is the basis upon which his role as their potential leader is ostensibly established. In *Cry, the Beloved Country*'s ostensible challenge to the political dispensation on the other hand, Paton's representation of the ideal form of transformation is based on an implicit notion of fundamental differences between Blacks and Whites. Whereas Abrahams shows differences between Blacks in terms of the 'ordinary' characters in need of intervention and the 'extraordinary' Black who can intervene for them, Paton's representation of Blacks is underpinned by a kind of cultural idealism in terms of which they are construed as homogeneous and intrinsically different from Whites. It is in the conceptualisation of difference that *The Law of the Vultures* is most fundamentally antithetical to *Mine Boy* and *Cry*. In Altman's text, 'difference' is not represented either inter - or intra-racially, and individual difference is shown to make no difference in relation to the determinism of social forces.

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Abrahams's extensive treatment of Xuma's difference from the 'ordinary' characters ostensibly underpins a political call to Whites to give a voice to Blacks. Part of the protagonist's difference in relation to Leah is constituted by his deference to established authority, and its agents of law and order, as long as it is fairly implemented. Leah's intervention in the lives of her less resilient friends, constitutes a complete defiance of these forces: as a brewer of beer she operates outside of the law. Xuma's difference in this respect is established with his rejection of the offer of work which Leah extends to him on his initial arrival at Malay Camp. In a number of later

instances in which Xuma is depicted in confrontation with the agents of law and order, on the other hand, his defiance of them is framed within representations of the irrationality of these forces: in the first such instance Xuma is shown to defend himself against an unprovoked attack by the police; at the end of the novel he defies the mine managers' completely unreasonable demands that the workers return to work after an accident which is a result of their - the managers' - carelessness, and which has left two people dead.

Leah's adversary, on the other hand, is represented in very different terms: he is amiable and respectful towards her. Her defiance of "The Fox" (1987:136) is not framed within the exonerating grounds of uncompromising adherence to a principle against the irrational enforcement of injustice. Xuma's defiance and intervention constitute a demand for justice, whereas Leah's are based entirely on material need. In her efforts to intervene on behalf of others, principles are consistently compromised. Loyalty to the other beer brewers is contingent to her own safety: she will contribute to the Stockvel and she will not share the information about police raids with its other members. Although she defends herself on the basis of economic necessity, Xuma's disapproval is based on an uncompromising sense of loyalty to others.

Another aspect of Xuma's difference is represented through the portrayal of his relationship with Paddy, his boss at the mine, and one of the mediators of his personal and political development. Whereas the other "boss boys" are represented in terms of their deference to the white managers, Xuma is different in so far as "...he did not say baas to the white man but knew how to deal with him." (1987:63). In terms of physical strength, moreover, Xuma is shown to match Paddy - in one particular work scene, there is an unequivocal reference to the two of them working "shoulder to shoulder. Two strong men. A white man and a black" (1987:106). Although Xuma is aware of his difference in relation to the others in both of these senses, his exclusion from what he perceives as a 'white' world undermines his self-belief. Through his politicisation

through Di and Paddy, however, and his realisation of a distinction amongst 'his people', he acquires the self-belief to assert his equality and establish his humanity.

In the scene proceeding Xuma's departure from Paddy and Di's place, Xuma becomes involved in a Black man's desperate attempt to escape the police after he has been caught gambling. The man's flight ends with his plummeting to the ground and the arrival of the police to take him away. The distinguished Dr. Mini intervenes, however, insisting on the renegade's need for medical treatment. The doctor enlists Xuma's assistance at this point and the three of them proceed to the former's house on the outskirts of Malay Camp. On his way there Xuma articulates an awareness for the first time of a distinction amongst 'his people':

For the rest of the way they drove in silence. Xuma kept looking from the man by his side to the man in front. They were both his people but they were so different. For the one by his side he didn't have much respect. There were so many like him. They drank and they fought and they gambled. And there were so many like that in the city. He had watched them. But this other one was different. Different from all the other people who had stood around there [in the crowd watching the injured man's attempted escape]. Even the white people saw the difference and treated him differently. No one Xuma knew could have done what this one had done. And yet this was one of his people. (1987:73-74)

This experience precipitates in Xuma the realisation that it is not racial identity so much as personal distinction and integrity that determine social possibilities. Paddy's challenge to Xuma at a later stage to "be a man first and then a Black man"(1987:173) is a form of political empowerment in so far as it is after this encounter that he is able to envision a world in which he is included and fulfilled, and which inspires his mobilisation of the workers in the final scene of the novel. Through his relationship with Paddy, therefore, he is able to attain the 'freedom' that this assertion of his humanity on behalf of 'his people' actually constitutes. It is this freedom which enables

the implementation of his politicisation in the form of his assumption of a voice, with which he intends to speak on behalf of 'his people':

'No, Ma Plank. I must go....And there are many things that I want to say too. I want to tell them [the white mine managers] how I feel and how the black people feel. It is good that a black man should tell the white people how we feel. And also, a black man must tell the black people how they feel and what they want. These things I must do, and then I will feel like a man.'(1987:183)

One final and ideologically revealing aspect of Xuma's difference in relation to the ordinary people of Malay Camp is his symbolic relation to the country. Whereas both Paton's and Altman's 'country' realms are represented as the products of a system of industrialisation and urbanisation rooted in racially oppressive and economically exploitative practices, Abrahams's 'country' is represented in the unreal terms of an historically transcendent and morally incorruptible realm. The distinction between the country and the city in these terms is articulated in Xuma's impressions of the country whilst on a trip to Hoopvlei with Maisy:

He had forgotten Eliza and Leah and Daddy and Ma Plank and the mines and everything connected with the city. And it seemed that Maisy was not connected with the city. And there had been laughter, free and happy as in the old days on the farms...And again there had been the flow of beer. And life was good for the beer was the beer of the farms and not the poison of the city that was only to make you drunk and not to make you happy. (1987:96-97)

The binary oppositional position of this realm in relation to that of the city is similar to that of Xuma's in relation to the 'ordinary' people of Malay Camp. In his analysis of *Mine Boy*, Michael Wade explains the significance of this similarity in terms of a specific narrative configuration:

He [Xuma] undergoes a transformation in the course of the novel, from being the embodiment of everything that is rural in location and traditional in morals,

to the new man, hero and leader of the new class: but his successful growth depends on the health of his former roots...If Xuma represents the rural life at the beginning of the book, Leah embodies all the learning that the city has to teach, and the polarity that quickly emerges between town and country is first manifested through their relationship. (1978:96-97)

The conceptualisation of the country in *Cry* is different from that in *Mine Boy* in a certain historical- materialist sense. However, the representation of two realms - the country and the city - and their relations to Paton's Black characters' moral condition in his text, is underpinned by a similar kind of idealism which gives rise to ideological discontinuities in both texts. What distinguishes them in this regard, however, is the way in which their protagonists negotiate the process of urbanisation. Michael Wade's final word on *Mine Boy* encapsulates the contrast: "*Mine Boy*...turns the literary stereotype of the inevitable corruption of the black man by the white city on its head" (1978:113).

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Whereas 'difference' in *Mine Boy* is represented intra- racially - between the ordinary people and an individual who is extraordinary - in *Cry, the Beloved Country* the representation of Blacks is underpinned by a conceptualisation of their homogeneity. This ideological formulation permeates the text's ordinary language, the character and disposition of its "pseudo-real constituents" discussed above, and is present in a more 'pure' form in the representation of social transformation. Implicit in these same aspects of the text, is the corollary of this idea: Blacks' inherent difference in relation to Whites. This difference is implicit, furthermore, in the uncritical 'non-treatment' in the text of some of its content, and which represents aspects of the author's desire to show the "plain and simple truth" (1948:9).

Although Paron's linguistic significations had a certain currency in the time about and during which he wrote, the assignation of Blacks in terms of 'native' and 'the tribe' is ideologically significant in so far as they are underpinned by a conceptualisation of homogeneity. Connoting as they do, ideas of inherent belonging to a place and people, these terms constitute the most basic aspect of the text's ideological underpinnings. The text's protagonist, furthermore, is a brother/father who leaves his traditional home in search of his brother, sister and son, whom he intends to take back home with him in order that his family will be restored. The portrayal of the protagonist's quest in such terms is a representation in microcosm of the South African 'native problem', which is presented in a more 'pure' ideological form in Arthur Jarvis's political manifesto (quoted above) and which is implicitly endorsed through his characterisation.

Xuma's association with the country and the values which it represents is an aspect of his difference from the ordinary people in so far as their values are conceptualised as those of the city. Although the conceptualisation of the country in *Cry* as the product of the forces of 'White' industrialisation is fundamentally different from the completely idealised country in *Mine Boy*, the representation in *Cry* of Johannesburg has symbolic significance. It is within this realm that the moral disintegration of Black individuals occurs. This disintegration is represented as the culmination of an inevitable process which is initiated by departure from the traditional/tribal home and exacerbated by the 'alienness' of Johannesburg.

It is in Johannesburg, however, that the White characters attain moral heights. Whereas the 'displaced' Blacks in Johannesburg are represented in terms of a complete vulnerability to moral corruption, the main White characters represent a certain moral heroism. The most notable of these is Arthur Jarvis, whose tragically ironic death invests him with the status of a martyr. Mr Carmichael, the lawyer who defends Absalom "for God" (1948: 123), is well known for his honesty and altruism in the service of Black South Africans. Although the young White principal of the

reformatory to which Absalom is sent after having committed petty crime, does not scale the same lofty moral heights as these two, it is his job nevertheless "to reform, to help, to uplift" (1948:102). The judge who passes sentence on Absalom, furthermore, is the guardian of the sacrosanctity of the rule of law. Although the representation of this binary opposition of extremes bears out Paul Rich's reading of the text as a kind of "romantic realism"(1984:130), it is significant also in so far as it is indicative of the same cultural idealism which underpins the conceptualisation of Black homogeneity and its corollary, ie. inherent racial difference.

It is this conceptualisation, furthermore, of racial relations which underpins the critical non-treatment in the text of material disparities between Blacks and Whites. Although the material aspects of James Jarvis's trip to Johannesburg are strikingly different from those of Stephen Kumalo's journey, it is not for the sake of contrast that the accounts of the two trips are depicted in detail. Whereas disparity of this nature is explicitly contrasted in *Mine Boy* through various characters' express desire for material equality with Whites, this desire in John Kumalo - who is the only character who wants what he refers to as "a man's freedom to sell his labour for what it is worth"(1948:179) - is one of the concomitants of his complete moral dissolution. Similarly, after the detailed accounts of the problems experienced by Blacks to find accommodation, the long passageway in Arthur Jarvis's house is symbolic of extreme material disparity. The non-treatment of this aspect of the material inequality between Blacks and Whites, however, is indicative of the conceptualisation of inherent difference between them. Material impoverishment of Blacks, it would seem, is a concomitant of their displacement in the same way that the material wealth of Whites is an aspect of their apparently organic relation to Johannesburg.

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In *The Law of the Vultures*, the only references to difference are in relation to the apparently superior intellectual abilities of characters whose capacities make no material difference in their lives. Thabo Thaele's belief in his own individual difference in relation to his peers derives from his position within the rural community as the son of the village priest. In the city, however, unfavourable economic conditions ultimately impede his attempts to obtain an education so that he can eventually become a doctor. Nchana, one of his more fortunate peers in that regard – he managed to obtain a law degree in spite of similar economic hardships to Thaele's – is unable to practise law because of political forces which defy his individual efforts and ability.

CHAPTER 3

FORMAL DEVICES OF THE TEXTS - INVERSIONS BACK AND TRANSFORMATIONS

Eagleton's conceptualisation of the nature of the relationship between the raw materials of the text and its formal devices is similar to his conceptualisation of the nature of the relationship between the text's representations and history. In his view, the text does not *reflect* history, but rather *produces* it in the form of ideological representations. These representations are determined by real history, but are not 'real' because of the mediation of ideology between real history and one's access to it. It is because ideology "inserts individuals into history in a number of ways [that it] allows of multiple kinds and degrees of access to that history" (Eagleton: 1976:69). The writer's ideological relation to history - amongst other factors discussed above - will determine the representation of it in fiction. This same determinative relationship exists between the text's content and its forms. Eagleton explains it thus:

The form of the ideological content - the categorical structure of the ideological problematic - has a generally determining effect on the form of the text, not least in the determination of genre. But the form of the text itself is not, of course, identical with its genre: it is, rather, a unique production of it. (1976:85)

The texts which I have selected for this study are all 'unique productions' of the realist genre. Traditionally, the realist novel has been the form through which writers have attempted to 'show' - to the extent that it is possible to do so - the truth about human experience through a number of conventions which distinguish this genre from others; through which it explores "the development of its characters in the course of time"; and whose combined effects are "realistic particularity" (Watt: 1957:22). These conventions include the individualisation of characters and the detailed presentation of their environment. The time frame within which the story unfolds is important, as it

facilitates the extensive individualisation of characters, in so far as past experiences can be shown to influence present action. Chronology and continuity, furthermore, reinforce the authenticity of representations of individual experiences, and allow for the development of individual characters in time. Underpinning these conventions is the belief that “individual experience is the ultimate arbiter of reality”(Watt:1957:14).

In South Africa, the realist novel form has been modified by writers committed to social transformation. Traditional novelistic realism foregrounds the particular experiences of *unique* individuals. The political commitment of South African writers has precipitated a focus on characters whose individualisation and development through the course of time, includes a political dimension which is an integral aspect of their identities and the events which constitute their lives.

These conventions are the focus of my attempt to assess the relationship between the texts' ideological categories and their formal devices. Eagleton's distinction between two possible forms of this relationship are useful. In the first, he refers to the “relatively ‘pure’ ideological work”, in which “ideological discourses are so produced as to appear ‘inverted back’ into the categories which give rise to them”(1976:82). The relationship between the text's content and its formal devices in such a case, is a direct one in so far as the forms appear to “mime” the text's “general ideology” (1976:82). The relationship in his second possibility, is a “transformative” one, in which, he says, “...the materials appropriated for production are more obviously those of ideology ‘at work’ - as spontaneously secreted in immediate experience, and so as ‘unconscious’ of its categorical structure”(1976:82). It is this second possibility that best describes the traditional realist novel in which the belief that “truth can be discovered by the individual through his senses” (Watt:1957:12) underpins the primacy of the individual within the narrative.

INDIVIDUALISATION VS. DOCUMENTATION

In both *Mine Boy* and *Cry, the Beloved Country*, the formal device of a particular individual protagonist is the vehicle through which the 'reality' of life for Black South Africans is represented. Implicit in the use in both texts, of a character newly arrived in the city and learning through observation, is the idea of 'truth' in the typically realist sense. The fact that the learning experience in both cases is mediated by other characters - Leah and Paddy in *Mine Boy* and Msimangu in *Cry* - is significant as well in so far as 'the truth' is arrived at through exchange between characters whose insights are reliable. Through the mediation of this formal device, both texts proceed to represent the immediate experiences of their characters. Implicit in Michael Wade's (qualified) appreciation of a particular scene in *Mine Boy*, is a conceptualisation of the 'unconsciousness' of the text's categorical structure in relation to how it 'works':

The central character (who unavoidably belongs to a different class from that of the reader) is presented to the reader as possessing an inner reality much like his own, as feeling and suffering in the same ways for reasons which emerge to attain concrete and specific substance in relation to the genuineness of the hero's emotional life. The hero becomes an individual, shedding the grey garb of 'the worker' or 'the Black man', and his circumstances become real in proportion to his individuality...In short, the main propaganda function of the proletarian novel is to transform the worker into a suffering (in the broadest sense) human being; and this is where it coincides with its purpose as a work of literature. (1978: 109-110)

In both *Mine Boy* and *Cry, the Beloved Country*, the foregrounding of the protagonists' emotional responses to their experiences and observations of the other characters' states of being, facilitates the establishment of a relationship of identification between the reader and the protagonists. The story of Xuma is represented rather traditionally in terms of the conventions of realism. Xuma arrives in the city in a state of innocence

and naivete, and develops towards a point of understanding of the people, and an empowering belief in himself. Throughout the narrative, evocations of his thoughts and feelings add a dimension of complexity and flux to his individualisation. Through his observations and responses, the difficulties experienced by the ordinary characters are mediated, effecting a shared and developing consciousness between protagonist and reader.

In *Cry, the Beloved Country*, the effect of Stephen's characterisation is that of an emotional force, the most logical reaction to which is didactically illustrated in James Jarvis's sympathetic and pro-active response to him. Through the representation of the process which Stephen Kumalo undergoes on his way to, and arrival in, Johannesburg, a kind of psychological retrospective is provided through which to contextualise the moral disintegration of the urbanised and dissolute Blacks who are introduced only after this history has been provided. Stephen Kumalo, it would seem, represents the Black man in an 'original' state, and the others, the 'fallen'. The representation of the moral disintegration of the 'fallen' members of Stephen's family is mediated through the protagonist's responses to it, the majority of which contribute to his characterisation as emotionally fragile and vulnerable. A specific effect of this character's deployment in the narrative in such emotive terms, is identification on the part of the reader with Stephen as an individual through the intimate representation of his very human suffering. The combined effect of these devices is a pre-empting of the kinds of responses which Black crime usually elicits: fear and moralistic disapproval.

In both texts, furthermore, a relationship based on commonality between a Black and a White character, is suggestive of the possibility of identification. In *Mine Boy*, there is an initially unspoken bond between Xuma and Paddy which develops into mutual support and the possibility of friendship between equals. In *Cry*, a Black and a White father are able to identify with each other's pain.

In *The Law of the Vultures*, on the other hand, it is not only the emotional responses of the individual protagonists which are foregrounded in the narrative. In this text, equal weight is attached to the invariably futile efforts that the characters make in order to achieve certain things, and how they perceive and address defeat. The 'reality' of life for the characters in *Vultures* is not constituted solely by their emotional responses which facilitate on the part of the reader a recognition of their humanity. An important 'truth' about life which is effected by the relentless documentation of confounding difficulties, is its dialectical nature and the individuals' lack of autonomy in relation to social forces. 'Reality' is located as much in the gulf between what individuals want and what they are able to achieve, as in the individual apprehension of it (reality).

The formal differences between *Mine Boy* and *Cry*, on the one hand, and *Vultures* on the other, in relation to the production of 'reality' of life for Blacks, are explicable ultimately in terms of the character of the ideological categories which underpin the texts' representations. *Mine Boy*'s 'problems' for which a solution must be found, are conceptualised in humanist terms: the emotional dissolution and dehumanisation of the 'ordinary' characters, and the isolation of the main protagonist. In *Cry* the ideological problematic is conceptualised in both humanist and moral terms: White selfishness, greed and irresponsibility have led to the breakdown of the Black 'tribe', which has led in turn to Black crime and White fear. *Mine Boy*'s 'solution' is a recognition by Whites of the humanity of 'ordinary' Blacks, and the equality of the 'extraordinary' individual. *Cry*'s 'solution' is constituted by two stages: a realisation by White South Africans of the vulnerable humanity of Blacks, followed by a willingness to take responsibility for their rehabilitation. In both texts, the formal devices adequated to effect change, are commensurate with the character of their ideological formulations. Implicit in both texts, is a conceptualisation of change at the level of human response. In *Vultures*, on the other hand, both the 'problem' and the 'solution' are conceptualised in Marxist terms: the text's characters are powerless because of their position within a racially discriminatory capitalist social system. The solution -

complete social transformation - is only attainable through the consolidation of individuals who are aware of the real nature of their oppression.

The chronological shifts and displacements which characterise the narrative structure of *The Law of the Vultures* is another aspect of the text's formal devices which is commensurate with the character of its ideological underpinnings. In the traditional realist novel, the focus on the development of characters over the course of time is formally effected through a chronological unfolding of events in which causal connections operating through time effect a coherent and continuous narrative structure. The narrative structure of *The Law of the Vultures*, however, is strikingly discontinuous. The first half of the novel consists of two stories. The first of these focuses on Thabo Thaele, who is introduced into the novel's 'present' at the age of thirty-three. At this point, he is working as a clerk for a firm in Johannesburg. The pride that Thaele takes in his rather menial tasks at work, and his delusions of respectability and acceptance by his White colleagues are quite extensively treated, from which point the narrative shifts to his teenage past. It proceeds chronologically from this point, recounting in unrelenting detail the difficulties and sacrifices which Thaele makes in his attempts to realise his boyhood dream to become a doctor. Early adulthood is treated quite summarily, and the eight years between the birth of his first child and the point at which he is initially introduced into the narrative, are treated in the form of a number of significant incidents. From this point, the story proceeds rather briefly in the novel's present, and consists of the events leading up to his violent arrest for a petty crime which he did not commit. At this point in the narrative, the story of Thabo Thaele is abruptly terminated, and the story of a new character introduced. The unexpected nature of the introduction of Nkosi and his story into the narrative is not mitigated by a connection between the two characters which is immediately apparent. Only much later in the narrative do the two characters meet, in a way that further confounds the principle of narrative continuity, ie. coincidentally. Throughout the narrative, new characters are introduced and incorporated in this way.

The discontinuity and absence of causal connection throughout the narrative, constitute a formal configuration which seems to 'mime' the nature of the lived experiences of its characters. There is no causal connection between the strenuousness of Thaele's efforts to obtain a matric, and his failure to do so. His arrest and brutalisation by the police defy the same principle of continuity. The same is true of Nkosi's failure to obtain the compensation which was rightfully his, and of the fates of Letsie and Mary, two minor characters whose 'stories' feature towards the end of the narrative. In all of these 'stories within the story', material social forces beyond the control of the characters disrupt the continuity and coherence of their lives.

This is not the only aspect of the text's ideological discourse which is 'inverted back' into the ideological categories which underpin it. The 'unique production' in *Vultures*, of the conventions of the traditional realist text, is as subversive as its explicitly "subversive politics" (Murray: 1987:1). An analysis of the effects of the formal devices implemented in the representation of Thaele's story in the first half of the novel, illuminates the coherence of the text's general method of sociological explanation. (This is the fundamental difference between Paton and Altman). The point at which Thaele is introduced into the narrative is significant in so far as it marks the end of the representation of his specifically economic subjection. The representation of the specifically racial nature of his socio-political position proceeds only after the former has been comprehensively documented. In *Mine Boy*, by contrast, the dual nature of the 'ordinary' characters oppression is represented - for the most part - simultaneously. What arises from such a treatment, is the implication in the end, that specifically class-based divisions and difficulties will automatically disappear with the eradication of racial discrimination. This lack of clarity is pre-empted in *Vultures* by the comprehensive treatment in the first part of Thaele's story, of specifically economic difficulties, and the "spiritual contagion of economic alienation" (Barthes: 1992:139); and in the second half of the novel, in the form of Dhlamini's political philosophy.

The chronological shifts and displacements in the narrative structure of Thaele's story, furthermore, have three other specific effects which illustrate three concepts central to Marxist ideology. By proceeding backwards from an initial representation of Thaele's deluded sense of self-importance as a clerk whose tasks are definitively menial, to the documentation of his strenuous efforts to become a doctor, Thaele's life becomes a measure of the dialectical nature of life in so far as it represents the difference between what things are and what he had originally wanted things to be (Barthes:1992:139). The representation of Thaele's deluded sense of his own importance is extremely ironic given the extent of this contrast, and is indicative of the effects of ideology in the Althusserian sense of the concept, as "an imaginary representation of the real conditions of one's existence"(1971:153). Thaele's fate, finally, confounds the idealism on which his original life hopes and efforts to achieve them, were based: hard work, self-sacrifice, obedience to the law and loyalty to others. Ultimately, it is his position within a particular social order which determines his fate. What this constitutes in ideological terms, is an historical-materialist conceptualisation of historical processes, in terms of which the idea of individual autonomy is undermined.

SOLUTIONS AND NON-SOLUTIONS

Whereas the representation of Xuma is structurally quite traditional in terms of its continuity and resolution, the narrative backdrop - which is the story of the people - is different. The story of Leah and the rest of the community begins at a rather arbitrary point in what is essentially a cyclical history with neither a beginning nor an ending. At the beginning of the story - in terms of the text's structural chronology - Leah is standing at the gate looking out for the police, and at the end she is being led off to prison to serve a short term for her illicit liquor business which she intends to go straight back into after her release.

The individualisation of characters is based on a similar mode. The process of the 'ordinary' characters' dehumanisation is not shown in the form of an extended chronological unfolding within the narrative. They are introduced, rather, in a dissolute state, and the activities in which they engage on a daily basis, compound the dissolution. By the end of the narrative, Daddy has died an ignominious death, Eliza has left Malay Camp on a futile quest, Leah has been imprisoned and Ma Plank is left waiting for the former's release so that they can pick up exactly where they have been forced to leave off. Although able to explain the source and nature of their difficulties, they are not able to address it in a meaningful way. The story of the ordinary people precedes the beginning of the novel, and continues beyond its end, although a hope of salvation through Xuma makes resolution seem imminent. The novel ends in a state of suspension as opposed to comprehensive resolution.

The resolution of crises in *Cry, the Beloved Country* is undermined both symbolically and explicitly. The narrative begins with Stephen Kumalo's journey to Johannesburg which unwittingly becomes a quest in which the protagonist passes through all of the city's Black areas until finally finding what he left home in search of - his family. The

understanding and knowledge which he has acquired along the way alleviate to a certain extent the shocking nature of the truth about his son. Because of the other more general truths that he learns about social processes, he is able to find some “comfort in desolation”. It is this knowledge which empowers him to take the tentative steps that he does in initiating the rehabilitation of Ndotsheni. It is also the basis of his ability to understand Napoleon Letsitsi’s warning that good will and co-operation between Whites and Blacks will not restore the tribe. The agricultural demonstrator’s warning to Stephen at the end of the novel is a partial concession to the materialist determinants of historical processes, which are ultimately conceptualised as originating from within the nature of human nature. In *Cry*, it is not the nature of a particular social system which has led to the ‘desolation’ of the subtitle, but the nature of man within that system. This is the essentially idealist conceptualisation of historical processes which underpins the text’s ideological categories and which is implicit in Arthur Jarvis’s analysis of ‘the native problem’:

It was true that we [White South Africans] hoped to preserve the tribal system by a policy of segregation. That was permissible. But we never did it thoroughly or honestly. We set aside one-tenth of the land for four-fifths of the people. Thus we made it inevitable, and some say we did it knowingly, that labour would come to the towns. We are caught in the toils of our own selfishness. (1948:143)

As with the rest of its formal effects, the non-solution of *The Law of the Vultures* is an “inversion back” of one of its ideological categories. Consolidation of individuals based on a consciousness of class as the main source of social inequality is the most comprehensive solution to the problems which constitute the representations of the characters’ lives. Because of his failure to realise the real conditions of his existence, however, Nkosi is both unwilling and unable to make a political commitment to either Thaele or Dhlamini. In his final answer to Dhlamini, he expresses the desire to live independently of active political commitment. The irony of this desire, however, is

reiterated in the final scene of the novel, in which Nkosi is arrested and sentenced to five years imprisonment. The sentence forces upon him in a simultaneously symbolic and material way, the complete absence of individual autonomy within a social system whose most fundamental inequalities are obscured by the brutal nature of racial discrimination.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study has been to show, through a comparative and contrasting analysis of three thematically related texts, the ideologically mediated nature of the relationship between 'real' history and the texts' representations of it in the historical realist form. An examination of three such texts which shows - as I hope to have done - three very different representations of the same object, undermines the notion of a direct relationship between history and the representation of it in literature.

Common to Abrahams, Paton and Altman was a desire to effect social transformation through literature. The manifestation of this in all three texts, is constituted not only by ideologically mediated representations of the South African problem, but by a representation of explicitly formulated political solutions as well. What these 'solutions' constitute, are distinct ideologies whose constituents in fact permeate the conceptualisations of the texts' representations examined in chapter 1 of this study. The helplessness and vulnerability of *Mine Boy's* and *Cry's* 'ordinary' characters respectively, for example, is evidence of their need for intervention, which is an integral aspect of the texts' political solutions. The futility of individual characters' efforts to achieve various socially related aims in *The Law of the Vultures*, on the other hand, is evidence of their need for consolidation within a political organisation in order to bring about change at a structural level. In all three texts, a process of determination operates at the level of the their various categories, and constitutes what Eagleton refers to as the *ideology of the text*.

This determinative process within the text is analogous with the objectively determinable relationship between ideology, the text and the 'real' history - as opposed to fictively treated history - which is the texts' ostensible object. Eagleton explains it thus:

The 'textual real' is related to the historical real...as the product of certain signifying practices whose source and referent is, in the last instance, history itself. (1976:75)

This determinative relationship operates, furthermore, at the level of the texts' formal devices:

The text establishes a relationship with ideology by means of its forms, but does so on the basis of the character of the ideology it works. It is the character of that ideology, in conjunction with the transmutative operations of the literary forms it produces or enables, which determines the degree to which the text achieves significant or nugatory perceptions. (1976:84)

The significance or otherwise of the perceptions of each of the texts selected for this study is a matter for the critic - through the mediation of his/her specific ideological conjuncture - to decide. The specific interest of this study in relation to the texts' various perceptions, is the extent to which they may be regarded as challenging in relation to the political dispensation to which they were addressed. What this constitutes in theoretical terms, is "the mode of a text's insertion into an ideological sub-ensemble" (1976:70). That all three of the texts are challenging in relation to their political context is implicit in the placing at the centre of their narratives a sector of South African society which was politically marginalised. A close examination of the various aspects of the texts, and the ideological underpinnings of their representations, reveals the need for a finer distinction to be made between a text which merely challenges an existing dispensation, one whose challenge takes the form of an attempt to seize existing authority, and one which challenges the principles upon which authority is based. These are the modes of the texts' insertion into an ideological sub-ensemble which I would ascribe to *Cry, the Beloved Country*, *Mine Boy* and *The Law of the Vultures* respectively.

The most challenging aspect of *Cry*'s call to White South Africans to address South Africa's 'native problem' is its attribution of responsibility for the problem to the White sector. The notion of fundamental differences between Blacks and Whites is implicitly reinforced in the novel through the conceptualisation of Black homogeneity. The notion of the acquisition of a political voice by Black South Africans, furthermore, is unequivocally rejected through the representation of John Kumalo as consummately dissolute. The treatment in the text of the socio-economic constituents underpinning the 'native problem' is represented as a concomitant of White 'selfishness', and the concession at the end of the novel to the determinism of social forces in relation to historical processes is ultimately undermined by a conceptualisation of them as concomitants and manifestations of human nature.

The solution to the difficulties represented in *Mine Boy* is constituted by a call to White South Africans to allow intervention on behalf of Black South Africans by a Black leader. Although this challenges a political dispensation in which Blacks had no voice, the socio-economic aspect of their oppression remains unchallenged. This "silence" constitutes a significant contradiction within the narrative in view of the fact that the economic dimension of the 'ordinary' characters' difficulties is an integral constituent underpinning the representation of their difficulties. Furthermore, implicit in the representations of the main protagonist's 'extraordinary' qualities; his 'crisis', and the political vision which motivates his assumption of a voice at the end of the novel, is a conceptualisation of his difference which is the basis ultimately of the text's call for political inclusion.

In *The Law of the Vultures*, finally, the foregrounding of a social system whose economic and political dimensions are both implicated in the oppression of the Black characters, is the basis upon which the need for social change at a structural level is represented. The conceptualisation of difference - both inter and intra-racially - is absent in both the text's "pseudo-real constituents" and solutions. It is an aspect,

however, of the characters' failure to conceptualise the 'real' nature of their subjection in so far as they perceive only racial discrimination to be the ultimate source of their difficulties.

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