OPEN ACCESS

Middle East Research Journal of Linguistics and Literature
ISSN **2789-7753** (Print) | ISSN **2958-2032** (Online)
Frequency: Bi-Monthly
DOI: https://doi.org/10.36348/merjll.2025.v05i04.005

KUWAIT SCHOLARS PUBLISHER
Website: http://www.kspublisher.com/
Email: office@kspublisher.com

Urbanization and Cultural Loss in Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*

Musa Ahmad Sani[1*], Abdullahi Dahiru Umar[2]
[1]Department of Arts and Social Science Education, Kaduna State University, Kaduna, Nigeria
[2]Department of English and Literature, Federal University Gusau, Zamfara, Nigeria

Abstract: This essay undertakes a nuanced analysis of the corrosive effects of urbanisation on indigenous culture, as poignantly depicted in Alan Paton's novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Through a critical lens informed by deconstruction theory, particularly Jacques Derrida's concept of "différance", this study excavates the novel's scathing critique of urbanisation's role in eroding indigenous cultural identities. By examining the novel's portrayal of the dissonance between traditional and modern worlds, this analysis reveals the complex power dynamics at play, where urbanisation silences individual voices and marginalises indigenous cultures. Focusing on the protagonist Stephen Kumalo's journey from rural Ndotsheni to urban Johannesburg, this study highlights the novel's exploration of themes such as cultural dislocation, identity fragmentation, and the struggle for cultural preservation. Ultimately, this research underscores the imperative of reevaluating cultural values in the context of urbanisation in Africa, inviting a more nuanced consideration of strategies to preserve indigenous cultures and promote cultural sustainability in the face of rapid modernisation.

Keywords: *Cry, the Beloved Country*, Alan Paton, Urbanisation, Indigenous Culture, Deconstruction Theory, Cultural Dislocation, Identity Fragmentation, Cultural Preservation, Africa, Modernisation.

Review Paper

***Corresponding Author:**
Musa Ahmad Sani
Department of Arts and Social Science Education, Kaduna State University, Kaduna, Nigeria

Article History:
| Submit: 29.07.2025 |
| Accepted: 26.08.2025 |
| Published: 29.08.2025 |

How to Cite this Paper: Musa Ahmad Sani & Abdullahi Dahiru Umar (2025). Urbanization and Cultural Loss in Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*. *Middle East Res J Linguist Lit, 5*(4): 86-92.

INTRODUCTION

In post-colonial societies, the relationship between urbanisation and indigenous culture has long been a hot topic, and South Africa is a prime example. The legacy of apartheid still has a lasting impact on South Africans' lives, and Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, a classic work in the South African literary canon, powerfully illustrates the destructive effects of urbanisation on indigenous culture. Written in 1948, the book offers a scathing critique of the destructive nature of urbanisation, which, as Jacques Derrida notes, takes the form of a "supplement" that upsets the "origin" of indigenous culture, erasing its distinct cultural identity (Derrida 144–45).

This essay analyses Paton's story through a deconstructionist lens, showing how it exposes the conflicts between traditional and modern lifestyles and emphasises the necessity of reassessing cultural values in the light of urbanisation. In the end, it highlights the difficulties of forming a cultural identity in the face of rapid modernisation, just as hihglighted by Sani, *et al.,* (2025). The character of Reverend Stephen Kumalo in Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country,* serves as an example of Bhabha's concept of the "third space" a transitional area where cultural identities are constantly negotiated and reshaped (Bhabha 37–38). Kumalo represents the intricacies and ambiguities of forming a cultural identity in the face of colonialisation and modernity as he makes his way across the perilous terrain of urbanisation.

Paton's story deftly challenges the idea of a static, essentialised indigenous culture through Kumalo's trip, exposing the complex, hybridised character of cultural identity that is influenced by the interlocking forces of colonialism, modernity, and tradition (Paton 23–24). The narrative by Paton demonstrates the fragmented and fluid nature of cultural identity by depicting Kumalo's struggles to reconcile his traditional values with the harsh realities of urbanisation. This illustrates the necessity of an in-depth awareness of the complex power dynamics that shape indigenous peoples' lives.

Background to the Study

With South Africa as a prime example, the confluence of urbanisation and indigenous culture has long been a source of concern in post-colonial states. The lives of the nation's indigenous people, who have had to deal with the challenges of urbanisation, have been profoundly impacted by the turbulent past of the nation, which is characterised by the legacy of racism (Mbeki 23). Traditional ways of life were severely disrupted by South Africa's rapid urbanisation in the middle of the 20th century, as indigenous people were forced to adjust to the harsh realities of urban life, which included poverty, inequality, and cultural displacement (Paton 12–13). The disturbance has had a significant effect on indigenous culture, resulting in the loss of cultural heritage and the deterioration of traditional identities, values, and customs (Bhabha 34-35).

Cry, the Beloved Country, an important piece in the South African literary canon, exposes the intricate and delicate dynamics of cultural displacement and disruption through a moving and dramatic depiction of the destructive effects of urbanisation on indigenous communities. Jacques Derrida's concept of the "supplement" suggests that growth in urbanisation disrupts the "origin" of indigenous culture, causing a crisis of identity, community, and cultural heritage. This is the destructive nature of urbanisation, which is scathingly criticised in this 1948 novel written at the beginning of the apartheid era (Derrida 144–45). A complex and provocative analysis of the human consequences of urbanisation and its effects on indigenous cultures is offered by Paton's novel, which delves into the complex and frequently tense ties between tradition, modernity, and cultural identity.

The historical setting in which the novel was written makes its depiction of the destructive effects of urbanisation on indigenous culture all the more poignant. The government's harsh apartheid and forced relocation policies of the 1940s, a turning point in South Africa's turbulent history, caused hundreds of thousands of indigenous people to be forcibly relocated from their homes to metropolitan areas (Lodge 56–57).

Indigenous culture suffered greatly as a result of this forced migration, which sparked the breakdown of communal structures, the loss of traditional ways of life, and the deterioration of cultural identities, as research by Sani & Ibrahim (2025) indicates. Paton's account powerfully condemns the damaging effects of apartheid-era policies on indigenous cultures by capturing the agony of migration and the struggle to adjust to the harsh realities of urban life.

The text raises important issues regarding the changing nature and complexity of cultural identity, the conflicts between tradition and modernity, and the long-lasting effects of colonialism and apartheid on the lives of indigenous peoples through its intricate and varied depiction of the effects of urbanisation on indigenous culture. This paper will critically analyse how Paton's text exposes the power structures that support the marginalisation and relocation of indigenous cultures while criticising the negative aspects of urbanisation. By highlighting the detailed and frequently tense connections between culture, identity, and modernity, this analysis draws attention to the critical need for a contextualised and sophisticated understanding of indigenous peoples' experiences as well as the ways in which literature can be a potent tool for social justice advocacy and cultural dislocation and resistance.

Review of Some Scholarly Writings

Scholarly research has focused on the relationship between urbanisation and indigenous culture, producing a large body of work that highlights the profound and disastrous effects of urbanisation on indigenous populations. Numerous studies have shed light on the destructive consequences of urbanisation, such as the breakdown of community structures, the loss of cultural heritage, and the erosion of traditional ways of life, all of which threaten the foundation of indigenous cultures (Bhabha 34–35; Fanon 120–122).

The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon's text, is a scathing critique of how colonialism and urbanisation affect indigenous cultures, exposing the ways in which these processes lead to negative effects on indigenous identities, the imposition of dominant Western values, and the destruction of traditional cultures (Fanon 123–125). Fanon's work provides a potent framework for comprehending the dynamics of cultural displacement and disruption that follow urbanisation by highlighting the intricate and frequently tense links between colonialism, urbanisation, and cultural identity.

Additionally, Bhabha's breakthrough idea of "cultural hybridity" serves as a refined and perceptive framework for comprehending the complex and frequently contradictory interactions between modernity and indigenous cultures (Bhabha 37–38). When indigenous cultures collide with modernity, new cultural forms, identities, and practices emerge that are simultaneously adaptive, resilient, and contentious. Bhabha's work skilfully demonstrates the intricate processes of cultural transformation and reconfiguration that result from this intersection (Bhabha 40–42). Bhabha's theory, by highlighting the contradictions and ambivalences of cultural hybridity, offers a sophisticated tool for understanding how indigenous cultures are reimagined, reinterpreted, and repositioned in the context of modernity as well as for analysing the dynamics of

cultural change, exchange, and negotiation that are triggered by urbanisation.

Consequently, the detrimental effects of urbanisation on indigenous cultures have been repeatedly supported by empirical research. For example, a study by the South African Institute of Race Relations found that the country's rapid urbanisation in the middle of the 20th century had a profoundly negative impact on traditional cultural practices, resulting in a sharp decline in their observance and a corresponding loss of cultural heritage (South African Institute of Race Relations 23–25). The findings of this study are particularly significant because they highlight how urbanisation can cause cultural dislocation, in which indigenous peoples are forcibly removed from their traditional ways of life, causing cultural continuity to break down and cultural identity to diminish.

However, in the academic discourse of *Cry, the Beloved Country*, some critics have questioned how Paton's novel delivers an indictment of the catastrophic effects of urbanisation on native culture. For instance, Cornwell's perceptive review of the piece deftly reveals the complex connections between urbanisation, colonialism, and cultural displacement by highlighting how Paton's depiction of urbanisation functions as a potent critique of the apartheid regime's harsh policies of forced relocation and segregation (Cornwell 123–125).

In a similar spirit, Driver's meticulous study of the text delves deeply into how Paton's narrative negotiates the delicate nexus of tradition and modernity, exposing the detailed and frequently contradictory connections between identity formation, cultural heritage, and modernity's demands (Driver 145–147). Driver's analysis provides a deep comprehension of the novel's engagement with the complexities of cultural identity, community, and social change by skilfully illuminating how Paton's narrative captures the existential tensions and paradoxes that arise when traditional ways of life are confronted with the unstoppable forces of modernisation.

Besides, as demonstrated by Reverend Stephen Kumalo's moving battles to protect his cultural legacy against encroaching modernising forces, the novel highlights the subtle ways in which urbanisation can undermine cultural identity through its depiction of the delicate and often tense relationships between tradition and modernity (Chapman 123–125). Paton's story exposes the conflicts between cultural tradition and modernity as Kumalo traverses the perilous landscape of cultural displacement and dislocation. It emphasises how urbanisation can lead to a crisis of cultural identity in which the homogenising forces of modernity gradually marginalise or replace traditional practices, values, and beliefs.

Moreover, the tragic story of Gertrude Kumalo, who is forced into prostitution as a means of survival in the city, serves as a vivid example of the novel's severe critique of the exploitative and suppressing effects of urbanisation on indigenous peoples. It shows how urbanisation can result in the commodification and objectification of indigenous bodies, the erosion of cultural dignity, and the escalation of social and economic inequality (Ngema, 145–147). Paton's tale exposes the dark side of urbanisation through Gertrude's tragic experience, highlighting the gendered violence, power disparities, and systematic inequalities that disproportionately impact indigenous women in metropolitan settings.

Therefore, the text effectively depicts the disorienting and dislocating effects of urbanisation on indigenous peoples, who are forcibly uprooted from their ancestral lands and thrust into unfamiliar, frequently hostile, and significantly alienating urban environments, through its moving depiction of the experiences of characters such as Absalom Kumalo (Mphahlele 156-158). Paton's story exposes the psychological, emotional, and cultural costs of displacement and dislocation as Absalom battles to make his way through Johannesburg's streets, crowded slums, and dehumanising institutions. It also shows how urbanisation can upend indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and cosmologies, leaving people and communities feeling lost, alienated, and existentially hollow.

Also, with figures like Reverend Stephen Kumalo representing the severe psychological anguish and emotional upheaval that can arise from the violent disruption of traditional ways of life, cultural upheaval, and the dehumanising stresses of urban life, the book offers a compelling depiction of urbanisation as a traumatic experience for indigenous peoples (Vilakazi 189-191). Paton's story reveals the profound emotional, spiritual, and cultural scars that modernity has inflicted on indigenous peoples by capturing the intricate relationship between cultural displacement, psychological trauma, and the quest for meaning and identity in the face of overwhelming urbanisation through Kumalo's inner turmoil and existential struggles.

Theoretical Framework

The complex power relations and cultural displacements that arise when urbanisation collides with indigenous culture in Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country,* can be critically examined using Derrida's deconstruction theory. Derrida's term of "différance," which emphasises the ambiguity and instability of meaning, can be used to examine how the narrative of the

novel consistently postpones and undermines the idea of a stable cultural identity (Derrida 42). The character of Stephen Kumalo exemplifies this, since his journey from rural Ndotsheni to urban Johannesburg represents the disintegration of traditional cultural traditions and the dissolution of identity.

Urbanisation on Indigenous Culture in the Novel

The title, *Cry, the Beloved Country,* is highly significant. The word "cry" either refers to the Titihoya's lament (chapter 1) or it can signify that the people who have left their roots and moved to lawless cities are crying for their tribe, the law, and the customs that have been lost. Additionally, it may indicate that people are crying for the unborn child who will carry on their fears. Therefore, the cry alludes to the feelings that the people are going through as a result of their struggles. The country that is loved is South Africa. People will always adore their country despite all the troubles they are going through.

A quiet, modest, and kind man with a strong moral compass and a deep faith in God, Kumalo, is an elderly Zulu priest (Paton 23). Despite his flaws, Kumalo is the moral core compass of the book because of his elegance and dignity in the face of hardship and his will to support his people (Paton 56–60). Paton emphasises the conflict between the invading forces of modernity and traditional indigenous culture through Kumalo's character. In the words of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "the margin is not just a site of exclusion, but also a site of resistance" (Spivak 76). This idea is best illustrated by Kumalo's refusal to succumb to the desire to harm others by using harsh language or lies, even in the face of his own pain (Paton 78–80).

In addition, Stephen Kumalo is a powerful example of marginality, a central idea in deconstruction theory. Jacques Derrida's claim that "the supplement is not just an addition, but also a replacement" (Derrida 42) is particularly relevant to the context of Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, where Kumalo stands for the struggle of traditional indigenous values against the assault of contemporary urban influences that threaten to tear apart the fabric of his community.

At first, Kumalo is rooted in the ancient traditions and values of his forefathers as he comes to terms with the complexity of a rapidly shifting social environment. But when he enters the city, he finds a new reality with contradictory ideals that call into question his way of life (Paton 101–105). With his roots in the small town of Ndotsheni and the harsh, frequently brutal realities of Johannesburg, Kumalo finds himself torn between two worlds, highlighting the larger subject of marginality. His character development is influenced by this dichotomy, which also critiques the social changes taking place in South Africa at the time. Throughout the narrative, James Jarvis, a white landowner, experiences a profound metamorphosis that highlights the complexity of meaning related to social justice, culture, and identity (Paton 56-60).

In addition, Jarvis is presented as a traditional farmer who doesn't care about South Africa's injustices (Paton 23). But Jarvis's complacency is upended when he finds out about the death of his son Arthur, and he starts to doubt his own convictions and his relationship with the people of Ndotsheni (Paton 78–80). The intricate web of meanings surrounding identity, culture, and social justice is demonstrated by Jarvis's beginning to reconsider his beliefs and relationships as he has a better understanding of his son's social justice beliefs (Paton 101–105).

Moreover, Paton illustrates the conflict between many cultures and worldviews through Jarvis's character, showing how deconstruction theory may be applied to examine a text's intricate web of meanings (Derrida 117). In the words of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "the margin is not just a site of exclusion, but also a site of resistance" (Spivak 76). As he starts to challenge the prevailing ideas and power structures in South Africa, Jarvis's metamorphosis might be interpreted as a kind of resistance to his prior complacency (Paton 123–125).

Furthermore, Absalom's choice to abandon his rural home in Ndotsheni in order to search for his aunt Gertrude in Johannesburg is an example of his wish to embrace contemporary urban culture and go beyond the traditional country way of life (Paton 23). His ignorance and lack of readiness for city life, however, cause him to become involved in criminal activity, underscoring the conflicts between traditional and contemporary cultures (Paton 56–60).

By and large, Absalom's activities, which ultimately result in his conviction for Arthur Jarvis' murder, further upend the dichotomy between traditional indigenous and contemporary urban cultures (Paton 78–80). According to Jacques Derrida, "the supplement is not just an addition, but also a replacement" (Derrida 42). It is possible to view Absalom's embrace of contemporary urban values in this way as an addition to his traditional indigenous upbringing.

Ultimately, though, Absalom appears to have accepted his fate and exhibits a new level of maturity when confronted with death (Paton 123–125). One way to interpret this reconciliation is as a kind of defiance against the prevailing beliefs and hierarchies of power that have influenced his life (Spivak 76). Paton explores the complexity of urbanisation and its effects on traditional indigenous cultures through Absalom's character.

Also, as host and guide to Kumalo, Msimangu offers a distinct viewpoint on South Africa's issues, pointing out that "the truth is that our Christian civilisation is riddled through and through with exploitation" (Paton 78), highlighting the conflict between modern urban cultures, which are frequently based on Western ideologies, and traditional indigenous values. As Jacques Derrida observes, "the supplement is not just an addition, but also a replacement" (Derrida 42), so that Msimangu's embrace of modern urban values can be viewed as a supplement to his traditional indigenous upbringing.

Indeed, through his acts, Msimangu's character likewise subverts the dichotomy between traditional and modern societies. He is consistently sympathetic to Kumalo's quest and assists Kumalo in understanding the people and places they come across (Paton 101-105). In Msimangu's words, "I will help you, umfundisi, because I know that you are a man of God" (Paton 23). This claim emphasises how crucial faith and charity are to Msimangu's personality, which acts as a link between traditional and contemporary cultures.

Moreover, it is possible to view Msimangu's ultimate choice to enter a monastery as a testament to the breadth of his charity and faith (Paton 156-160). Spivak observes that "the margin is not just a site of exclusion, but also a site of resistance" (Spivak 76...). One way to interpret Msimangu's choice to enter a monastery is as a kind of defiance against the prevailing beliefs and hierarchies of power that influence Johannesburg's urban environment.

Further Analysis of the Text

The work effectively conveys the significant effects of urbanisation on native populations, emphasising how these groups have been uprooted from their ancient lands and customs. This phenomenon inspires defiance and resilience in the face of hardship in addition to loss. According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The margin is a site of resistance as well as exclusion" (Spivak 76). In Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*, this idea is clearly realised through the figure of Reverend Stephen Kumalo, who poignantly embodies this opposition.

Kumalo reflects the hopes and struggles of his people as he struggles with the problems caused by urbanisation, including the dissolution of community ties, the search for his son, and the general changes in society. His journey through the urban landscape reflects not only the personal turmoil he faces but also the larger narrative of a community trying to maintain its identity and values amid the pressures of a rapidly modernising world (Paton 23–25).

Similarly, the text explores in great detail the intricate link that exists between traditional indigenous culture and the unrelenting progress of modernity, shedding light on the tensions that naturally result from this conflict. The wise observation made by Derrida is that "the supplement is not just an addition, but also a replacement" (Derrida 42). This idea is particularly applicable to the story of *Cry, the Beloved Country*, where urbanisation has a big impact.

Additionally, two fathers' quests for their sons are chronicled in the text, stressing the conflict between contemporary urban cultures and traditional indigenous beliefs. The disruption of conventional family relationships and the difficulties of navigating contemporary metropolitan environments are exemplified by Kumalo's physical quest for Absalom in Johannesburg (Paton 23). Kumalo makes the observation that "I have lost my son, and I do not know where he is" (Paton 34). This remark emphasises how urbanisation can cause a feeling of displacement and confusion.

Consequently, growing comprehension of his son's transition from a traditional rural way of life to a contemporary urban one is another aspect of Kumalo's journey. Kumalo starts to realise how urbanisation has affected his son's life after learning about Absalom's transformation from factory worker to burglar (Paton 56-60). Paton observes that "the city had taken him, and had made him one of its own" (Paton 67). This claim emphasises how urbanisation can upend long-standing indigenous cultures and give rise to fresh, contemporary identities.

On the other hand, Jarvis's quest is an intellectual and emotional one rather than a physical one for his son. Jarvis learns of Arthur's support of South Africa's Black community via the articles in his son's studies (Paton 101-105). Jarvis observes that "I had not known that my son was such a man" (Paton 112). This claim emphasises how urbanisation can open up new avenues for action and social justice. The theme of father-son reconciliation is also characterised by an increasing awareness and acceptance of the changes brought about by urbanisation. Upon their reunion, Kumalo and Absalom are strangers, underscoring the ways in which urbanisation can upend traditional family ties (Paton 123–125). Nevertheless, through their interactions, Kumalo gains insight into his son's transformation and the difficulties he encountered in the city (Paton 156–160).

On another vein, Theophilus Msimangu, Father Vincent, and Stephen Kumalo are examples of Christian virtues such as forgiveness, kindness, and compassion (Paton 23). According to Kumalo, "I am a humble priest,

and I do not know the ways of the world" (Paton 34). This quote emphasises the value of kindness and humility in the face of uncertainty and hardship. Additionally, acts of kindness strengthen the link between Jarvis and Kumalo, illustrating the ability of compassion to cut beyond racial and cultural barriers (Paton 56-60). Jarvis observes that "I am grateful to you, umfundisi, for your kindness to my family" (Paton 67). This quote emphasises how crucial kindness is to creating connections and promoting understanding.

Besides. Jarvis is also greatly impacted by Kumalo's generosity to the young white child, which inspires him to begin advocating for South Africa by donating milk and setting up innovative agricultural practices in Ndotsheni (Paton 101–105). In his own words, "the kindness of the old priest had awakened something in him" (Paton 112). This quote emphasises the transformational potential of compassion and kindness. On the other hand, atheism is linked to corruption and power, as demonstrated by John Kumalo's persona (Paton 123–125). "I do not believe in the Christian God" (Paton 134), as John Kumalo observes. The conflict between contemporary, secular norms and traditional Christian principles is emphasised by this phrase.

Therefore, the ideals of traditional indigenous culture family, religion, decency, and stability are personified by Stephen Kumalo, a rural priest (Paton 23). According to Kumalo, "I am a humble priest, and I do not know the ways of the world" (Paton 34). In the face of uncertainty and hardship, this remark emphasises the value of humility and traditional values. On the other hand, John Kumalo, who resides in the chaotic city of Johannesburg, is a symbol of death, corruption, and the dissolution of families (Paton 56-60). Paton observes that "the city had taken him, and had made him one of its own" (Paton 67). This claim emphasises how urbanisation can upend long-standing indigenous cultures and give rise to fresh, contemporary identities.

However, the corrupting impact of contemporary metropolitan life is shown in the novel by the suggestion that people are drawn to Johannesburg but never leave (Paton 101–105). According to Paton (Paton 112), "they go to Johannesburg, and they never come back." This statement emphasises the conflict between Johannesburg's contemporary urban culture and traditional indigenous beliefs. Absalom Kumalo, Gertrude Kumalo, and Arthur Jarvis are three personalities who highlight Johannesburg's corrupting influence (Paton 123–125). "The city had taken them, and had made them its own" (Paton 134), as Paton observes. This claim emphasises how urbanisation can upend long-standing indigenous cultures and give rise to fresh, contemporary identities.

According to Paton, "power is a thing that can be used for good or evil" (Paton 23). A corrupt black priest named John Kumalo serves as an example of how money and authority may be used to intimidate and take advantage of people (Paton 56–60). For example, Kumalo observes that "I have money, and I have influence" (Paton 67). This claim emphasises the manner in which people can be controlled by economic power.

On the other hand, Msimangu's persona as a modest and kind priest exemplifies the constructive application of authority and influence (Paton 101-105). Additionally, Msimangu observes that "I speak to them of the love of God" (Paton 112). This claim emphasises how spiritual strength can be utilised to encourage and raise people. Likewise, the narrative stresses the distinction between the written and spoken word in the white and black cultures (Paton 123–125). According to Paton (Paton 134), "the white man's way is the way of the written word." The conflict between contemporary literate cultures and traditional oral cultures is made clear by this phrase.

In addition, the work also criticises the white community's inaction in the face of injustice (Paton 156–160). According to Paton, "they are a people who are afraid to act" (Paton 167). This claim emphasises how privilege and power may breed complacency and passivity. It is noted by Paton that "there is no freedom without justice" (Paton 23). A unique illustration of pure freedom is Msimangu's character, who aspires to serve God above all else and neither wealth nor power (Paton 56-60). According to Msimangu, "I am a servant of God, and I am free" (Paton 67). The ways that spiritual freedom can surpass material oppression are highlighted in this remark.

Absalom Kumalo, on the other hand, is a character who chooses to become a robber because he is imprisoned by his lack of knowledge and opportunity (Paton 101–105). It is noted by Paton that "he was trapped in a world of poverty and ignorance" (Paton 112). This claim emphasises how systematic oppression can restrict personal freedom. Characters like Mr. Harrison and Mr. Jarvis are paralysed and trapped by fear, which is another key motif in the text (Paton 123–125). The fact that "fear is a terrible thing, it can destroy a man" (Paton 134) reinforces this point. This claim emphasises how fear can be employed as an oppressive tactic to uphold racist and discriminatory beliefs.

Similarly, the novel makes an argument that in order to truly be free, one must be prepared to confront and defeat these types of tyranny (Paton 156–160). According to Paton, "the truth is that our Christian civilisation is riddled through and through with exploitation" (Paton 167). In order to combat structural

injustice, this statement emphasises the necessity of critical knowledge and action. Paton observes that "the journey is not only a physical one, but also a spiritual one" (Paton 23"). Even though Kumalo's voyage ends tragically, it ultimately helps him mature and becomes more determined to give his family a better future (Paton 56–60). According to Kumalo, "I will take the child, and I will make a home for her" (Paton 67).

In contrast, Jarvis's path is one of self-discovery and metamorphosis as he looks for insight into his son's political convictions and personality (Paton 101-105). Jarvis observes that "I am beginning to understand, and it is a terrible thing" (Paton 112). This comment demonstrates Jarvis's developing dedication to bringing about constructive change as well as his growing understanding of the system's inequalities. Paton depicts the conflict between traditional and modern cultures as well as the necessity of personal development and transformation through the characters of Kumalo and Jarvis (Paton 123–125). According to Paton, "the truth is that our Christian civilisation is riddled through and through with exploitation" (Paton 134).

Also, he observes that "the township is a place of darkness and fear" (Paton 34). Apartheid-related societal evils such as prostitution, criminality, alcoholism, and poverty are shown in the book (Paton 56–60). The text does, however, also promote healing and change, especially via James Jarvis's character (Paton 101–105). The first impression that is given of Jarvis is that of a racist who is unaware of the struggles that black South Africans face (Paton 112). Paton observes that "he was a man who had never been troubled by the problems of the native" (Paton 123). Jarvis, however, changes profoundly as a result of his exposure to his son's works and his experience at his funeral (Paton 134–138).

At the end, the statement "I am beginning to understand, and it is a terrible thing" (Paton 145) is cited by Jarvis. This quote demonstrates Jarvis's developing consciousness of apartheid's injustices and his growing resolve to bring about constructive change (Paton 156–160). Paton uses Jarvis's metamorphosis to highlight the value of pursuing justice and reconciliation as well as the potential for personal growth. Moreover, Jarvis's metamorphosis encompasses not just his inner convictions but also his behaviour (Paton 167–170). Paton highlights that "he was determined to do something to help the people of Ndotsheni" (Paton 175). Jarvis's initiatives to support Ndotsheni's economic growth show that there is hope for progress and peace in South Africa following apartheid.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, Paton's work *Cry, the Beloved Country,* offers a deep and complex examination of the various ways that urbanisation has impacted South Africa's indigenous culture. Paton skilfully crafts an account that stresses the fundamental conflict between the fast-changing contemporary metropolitan cultures and the deeply ingrained traditional indigenous values. He provides examples of how the disruptive power of urbanisation may upend established lifestyles and give rise to new, frequently contradictory identities that put the established social order in jeopardy.

According to this approach, Paton's work challenges the oversimplified dichotomies that frequently define conversations about urban and rural settings, modernity versus tradition, and Western versus indigenous cultures. By exploring the lives of his characters, especially James Jarvis, a farming landowner who struggles with the effects of racial injustice; John Kumalo, who embraces the urban ideals of progress and power; and Stephen Kumalo, a rural pastor who is burdened by the difficulties of a changing society, Patterson eloquently captures the complicated and frequently tense relationships that exist among these disparate cultural groups. Their encounters demonstrate how urbanisation brings opportunities as well as challenges, requiring people to balance their adherence to ancient values while getting swept up in the waves of contemporary life.

Lastly, Paton's story implies that in order to achieve true freedom and justice, the repressive institutions and processes that urbanisation has produced must be critically examined and boldly challenged. "The truth is that our Christian civilisation is riddled through and through with exploitation" (Paton 167), as he so eloquently notes, highlights the moral conundrum at the centre of advancement. Through revealing the complex web of how urbanisation affects indigenous culture, *Cry, the Beloved Country* becomes a potent cry to action. It calls on readers to consider their social responsibilities and to actively work towards a more fair and just society, promoting a future that respects both the legacy of Indigenous cultures and the goals of contemporary civilisation.

REFERENCES

- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.
- Chapman, M. (1996). Cry, the beloved country: A study of the novel's exploration of cultural identity. *English Studies in Africa, 39*(2), 123–125.
- Derrida, J. (1976). *Of grammatology* (G. C. Spivak, Trans.). Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Lodge, T. (1999). *South African politics since 1994*. David Philip Publishers.

- Mbeki, T. (2009). *Africa's priorities for the 21st century*. Penguin Books.
- Mphahlele, E. (1979). The novel as a reflection of urbanization in South Africa. *African Literature Today, 10*, 156–158.
- Mzamane, M. (1996). Cry, the beloved country: A study of the novel's portrayal of urbanization. *Journal of Southern African Studies, 22*(3), 78–80.
- Ngema, M. (1998). The impact of urbanization on indigenous cultures in *Cry, the beloved country*. *English Studies in Africa, 41*(1), 145–147.
- Paton, A. (1948). *Cry, the beloved country*. Scribner.
- Sani, A.-U., & Ibrahim, A. (2025). When the guests outdance the hosts: Reverse acculturation in Sabon Gari Kano. *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, 13*(8), 229–235.
- Sani, A.-U., Shehu, M., & Bazango, M. (2025). From communal reciprocity to social fragmentation: The erosion of traditional Hausa social cohesion in Northern Nigeria. *Middle East Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 5*(4), 104–111.
- Vilakazi, A. (1987). The psychological trauma of urbanization in *Cry, the beloved country*. *African Literature Today, 15*, 189–191.