Too Late the Phalarope Study Guide

Too Late the Phalarope by Alan Paton

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Contents

Introduction

Following his successful debut with *Cry, the Beloved Country,* Alan Paton wrote a second novel set in South Africa, *Too Late the Phalarope.* This second novel continues to be overshadowed by its predecessor, despite considerable critical opinion that it is the more polished of the two. Both books carry Paton's imprint in their portrayal of unfairness in a system designed to keep the races separate. As a dedicated political activist, Paton saw his writing as a means to a higher end. *Too Late the Phalarope* clearly exhibits the author's disgust with injustice in a supposedly "moral" society.

Cry, the Beloved Country centers on the black experience in South Africa, while *Too Late the Phalarope* depicts the lives of Afrikaners (descendants of Dutch settlers who traveled to South Africa three hundred years ago). Specifically, Paton depicts a heroic protagonist, Pieter van Vlaanderen, grappling with private issues in the face of a strict law forbidding interracial sexual relationships. Pieter's internal struggles are intensified by the fact that, as a top-ranking police officer, he represents lawfulness and duty. His inability to resolve his dilemma with self-control leads to his ruin.

Numerous critics regard *Too Late the Phalarope* as a modern-day Greek tragedy. The story features an extremely virtuous and upright hero whose downfall comes about as the result of his own tragic flaw. Further, secondary characters (such as Pieter's family) are destroyed by forces outside themselves and over which they have no control. The narrator, Sophie, is somewhat removed from the rest of the characters because of her disfigurement, and thus serves as the chorus, commenting on the action of the plot. By updating the Greek tragedy, Paton refers to the universality of human suffering and weakness while demonstrating the dangers of an unjust social structure.

Author Biography

Alan Paton is remembered as an exceptional writer, a passionate activist, and a compelling educator. He was born on January 11, 1903, in Pietermaritzburg in Natal, a province of South Africa. Paton's father, like Jakob van Vlaanderen in *Too Late the Phalarope,* was a domineering, harsh, and religious man. Although he was a tyrant at home, James Paton also passed along his love of literature and writing to his children. Alan Paton married in 1928, had two children with his wife, and was widowed in 1967. He remarried two years later.

After completing his education at Pietermaritzburg College and Natal University, Paton taught for three years in rural Ixopo, which would later serve as the setting for *Cry, the Beloved Country.* In 1935, he became the principal of Diepkloof, a school for delinquent boys. Paton changed the dynamics in the school from force and conflict to trust and respect. This experience prompted him to travel around the world to study prison systems. He wrote his first novel during these travels. Upon his return to South Africa, Paton went to live on the south coast of Natal, where he wrote articles about issues pertinent to South Africa. In the early 1950s, he became a founder of the liberal Association of South Africa, which would later evolve into a political party. In the 1960s, the South African government attempted to control Paton's actions by revoking his passport, so that if he left the country he would not be allowed to return. This did not, however, slow him down in his fight against racism and apartheid on his native soil.

In 1948, Paton published his first and bestknown work, the novel *Cry, the Beloved Country. Too Late the Phalarope* was published in 1953, and although most critics regard it as his best work, Paton's reputation as a writer rests largely on his first novel. Both novels reflect the author's antiapartheid sentiment and his hope for a brighter future for South Africa. Paton also wrote poetry and short stories, but felt too strongly about remaining politically active to devote all of his time to writing.

Critics admire Paton's fiction for messages that are clear without being heavyhanded and for his sympathetic portrayal of black characters suffering exploitation. For a short while, members of the South African black community criticized Paton for depicting black characters as either victims of uncontrollable passions or as members of a beaten-down race. This controversy soon subsided, and the continued popularity of his works today suggests that readers around the world are still responsive to his writing.

Paton died of throat cancer on April 12, 1988, at his home in Natal, South Africa.

Plot Summary

Chapters 1-13

The narrator, Sophie van Vlaanderen, begins by describing her nephew Pieter's childhood. Because Sophie has lived with her brother and his family for many years, she has known Pieter his entire life. His relationship with his father has always been strained because his father is harsh and distant. Sophie believes that Pieter has his father's strength and masculinity and his mother's gentleness and caring nature.

From the very beginning, Sophie refers to the family's eventual destruction and how she might have saved Pieter from his fall. Because she tells the story in past tense, she often foreshadows events to come.

Pieter has grown up and was a decorated soldier in the war, after which he was given a highranking position with the police. As secondin- command, he is resented by Sergeant Steyn, who is older and more experienced than Pieter, and yet must report to him.

Pieter is a well-known rugby player who often plays with the younger men in the town. One night, he catches one of the players pursuing a young black woman. Because of the Immorality Act of 1927, which forbids sexual relationships between blacks and whites, the young man could face serious charges. Instead, Pieter talks to him and allows him to go free.

The next day, Pieter visits his friend Matthew Kaplan ("Kappie"), with whom he shares an interest in stamp collecting. While Pieter is looking over some stamps for purchase, Pieter's father, Jakob, enters Kappie's store. Because of past incidents related to stamp collecting, Pieter becomes uncomfortable in his father's presence, and finishes his business quickly. This interaction brings about one of his "black" moods that haunts him throughout the story.

A man named Smith is sentenced to hang for murder. He had impregnated one of his black servants, and knew that it would be obvious that he was the father. To avoid punishment under the Immorality Act, he and his wife killed the girl and cut off her head so that the body could not be identified if it was found. The crime is discovered, however, and Smith faces murder charges, of which he is found guilty and sentenced to hang.

Pieter is sent to find Stephanie, a young woman who makes a living for herself and her illegitimate child by brewing and selling illegal liquor. She is often arrested and seems unaffected by serving jail time. When Pieter finds her, he experiences a strange attraction to her, which he terms "the mad sickness." He denies it to himself and takes the girl to town to face charges. The judge warns her that if she does not find legal work, she may lose her child. She reacts strongly; this threat pierces her veil of nonchalance.

A new minister arrives in town and everyone comes to see him, having heard that he is an impressive speaker. Pieter's sister, Martha, blushes as she looks at the new minister, as do all the young unmarried women.

A large party is planned for Jakob's birthday. Pieter gives his father a book, which is a bold gesture because Jakob only reads from the family Bible. Pieter gives him *The Birds of South Africa* and Jakob is so pleased that the entire family is proud of Pieter.

Chapters 14-26

Nella leaves with the children to visit her parents for an extended stay. Her marriage to Pieter has been tense; both are relieved but also anxious at the prospect of being apart for a while. Stephanie stops by Pieter's house to tell him that she has gotten legitimate work, and Sophie notices a look pass between them. She senses danger and from here on is nervous for her nephew.

Plagued by his attraction to Stephanie, a woman who should repulse him, Pieter decides to talk to Kappie about his problem. However, he cannot bring himself to confess the desire that shames him. Kappie can tell that something is wrong, but does not try to push Pieter into telling him.

A few days later, Pieter meets with his cousin Anna, and they talk and drink brandy. Pieter does not usually drink, so the brandy takes effect and he goes to a place where he knows he will see Stephanie. He finds her, and they sleep together, and when Pieter returns home there is a note on his door that reads, "I saw you." Overwhelmed by guilt and terror, he becomes paranoid. He imagines that everyone has found out about his crime and judged him until Kappie tells him off-handedly that he left the note because he saw Pieter drinking brandy with his cousin.

Deeply relieved, Pieter returns to his routine. Sergeant Steyn leaves on vacation with his family, where his daughter picks up small seashells as souvenirs. Sophie mentions this in a mysterious, foreshadowing way.

Nella returns home with the children and she and Pieter enjoy a very romantic evening that rekindles their love. The joy is only temporary, however, because they soon return to their old habits and patterns. As a result, Pieter's "black mood" returns, and he seeks Stephanie out and has sex with her a second time.

Chapters 27-39

Once again filled with guilt, Pieter feels profoundly ashamed of himself. The young minister visits, asking Pieter if he thinks Jakob will allow him to marry Martha. In a lightened mood, Pieter assures him that Jakob will approve and gives the young man advice on dealing with Jakob.

Pieter, Jakob, Sophie, and the rest of the family go on a picnic. Sophie describes it as the last time they were all truly happy before they were destroyed. In an unusual moment of togetherness, Jakob takes Pieter on a walk to show him some of the birds from his book, most notably the phalarope.

Back at work, Pieter learns that Stephanie has lost her job. She is distraught at the thought of losing her child, and when she runs into him in the street, she explains that she needs a lawyer but has no money. He offers to give her some money, but they must meet privately so as not to arouse suspicion. They agree to meet at night, and when they do, she seduces him, even though he promised himself he would not have sex with her again.

The next day, he is called into the captain's office. The captain is the highest-ranking police authority and he tells Pieter that a charge has been made against him of violating the Immorality Act. Pieter denies it repeatedly until evidence mounts against him. The final proof is a small seashell placed in Pieter's pocket by Stephanie. Steyn has given it to her for that very purpose. Stephanie's knowledge that there is a seashell in Pieter's pocket, and her accurate description of it, are proof that she has been intimate with him.

Jakob disowns Pieter, crossing his name out of the family Bible. He demands that Pieter's name never be mentioned in the house again. He changes his will, removing Pieter and adding Nella and the children on the condition that they never have anything more to do with Pieter. When Jakob's wife says she must see her son Pieter once more, he tells her that if she leaves the house, she cannot return. Sophie chooses to see her nephew, even though she will no longer be allowed in her brother's house.

Pieter loses his job and faces imprisonment, but his aunt, Kappie, and the captain stay by his side. As it turns out, the captain is the father of Stephanie's child. Martha is forced by the scandal to break off her engagement to the minister, who leaves town shortly thereafter. The townspeople whisper about the incident, and soon after, Jakob dies. Before he goes to prison, Pieter gives Sophie his diary that tells the story of his downfall. He says it is for Nella to read, in hopes that she will come back to him. It is the diary that enables Sophie to tell the story of the novel.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Much like Macbeth, and other Greek tragedies of the type, *Too Late the Phalarope* is the tale of a tragic hero: a great man, admired and loved by those around him, whose fundamental character flaw brings about the destruction of himself and all who are near to him. Pieter van Vlaanderen, the protagonist of the piece, is shown to be at conflict within his self from early childhood. He is capable of feats that endear him to men and women alike and possesses a caring, gentle nature but also a maligned soul that is never at peace with itself.

This first chapter is a decidedly somber one, and gives an insight into the duality of Pieter's personality.

Chapter 1 Analysis

"Perhaps I could have saved him, with only a word, two words, out of my mouth." This, the very first line of text in the book is a simple yet powerful one. It portends tragedy--not death, but the ruin of a man who is unlike any other around him.

The narrator, the disfigured aunt of Pieter van Vlaanderen, speaks of a child that is both a boy and a girl, for he has the soft-nature and pure heart of a woman and the physical strength and fortitude of a man. The comparison to Macbeth is unavoidable as, like he, Pieter is destined for greatness, with the world (the world being rugby, church and family in this small community) seemingly at his feet. Ultimately, he will be destroyed through his own actions.

Additionally, Pieter is symbolic of South African society at the time in that on the surface he appears fine but underneath malcontent festers. Pieter, it is made clear, is not like other Afrikaners. His views are more liberal, much like that of the English in the country. He is tolerated, however, because he appears to represent that which is held most dear by the Afrikaner 'volk' (people), namely: rugby, religion and authority.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The lieutenant, Pieter van Vlaanderen, prevents a rape. He catches a young Afrikaner called Dick chasing Stephanie, a black woman, through the streets of Venterspan. When questioned, the boy offers a thinly veiled lie, saying he was chasing someone whom he believed was a thief. The lieutenant releases him, tells him to go to the lieutenant's house and wait for him there.

When the boy is gone, he questions the woman, in her mid-twenties, about the incident. She is well known to the police having been jailed a number of times previously for making and selling liquor. It is also known that she has a child, though it lives not in town with her, but in the countryside. She knows her would-be attacker, but the lieutenant makes her see, without force or threat, that telling anyone would cause considerable trouble for the boy and his family.

Chapter 2 Analysis

This incident demonstrates the unspoken authority Pieter van Vlaanderen commands. He neither threatens nor rebukes her, but instead allows her to understand that telling anyone about the evening's events would kill Dick's mother. That is, instead of trying to elicit sympathy for her would-be attacker, for which she would likely have none, he tells her what the knowledge would do to his mother, who Stephanie knows well.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Pieter returns home and meets with the boy in his study. He confronts Dick, asking him why he would do such a thing. The boy denies it, saying that he thought he was chasing a man. Pieter asks him if he is familiar with the Immorality Act – interracial relationships are, simply put, against the law. The boy says he is, but fervently denies any wrongdoing. With nary a harsh word, merely the knowledge that he can go to the location (an area set aside for black people to live in) to find the girl, and therefore the truth, he manages to elicit a confession from Dick and a promise that he will never do such a thing again.

He kisses his sleeping children, a six-year-old boy and a three-year-old girl, goodnight, and prays for his family, himself and the boy, Dick. His wife wakes up, realizes that something has happened and asks him about it. He tells her. She is shocked and disgusted and says she will not forgive Dick. In addition, if he must come back to the house, she will not permit him anywhere but the study.

Chapter 3 Analysis

So too, his time with Dick demonstrates the extent of Pieter's compassion. It may at first appear that his actions in the previous chapter were merely in solidarity with another white person, but in making Dick admit to his actions and repent, he gives him the chance to go on with his life, instead of simply turning a blind eye. Also demonstrated here is just how different is Pieter's from the mindset of those around him. His wife, outwardly meek and gentle, is appalled by Dick's actions and refuses to forgive him, going so far as to refuse to allow him anywhere in the house but the study in the future, while Pieter has already forgiven him.

The hypocrisy of the Apartheid regime is also illustrated in that the black people, having years before been subjugated, are treated as second-class citizens, seen even as sub-human and yet clearly, the men are quite prepared to sleep with black women.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Pieter goes to the location in Venterspan in search of Stephanie. Here, he encounters Esther, the old woman whom Stephanie lives with and cares for. Stephanie has a court appearance in two days, though she is no longer in the town. Esther tells him to find Stephanie's child for in doing so, Pieter would find her.

While walking back to the police station, he visits Matthew Kaplan, a friend, and the Jewish owner of the Southern Transvaal Trading store. His brother, Abraham Kaplan, runs the Royal Hotel. The two men share a mutual interest in stamps and Kaplan, or Kappie as he is called, shows Pieter a set of four 'Cape triangulars' for which he paid thirty-two pounds; an obscenely large sum. He offers Pieter a pair of stamps, one English and one Afrikaans, as a present but Pieter insists on paying for them. Kaplan, not wishing to displease him, asks a mere five shillings as recompense.

Suddenly, Kaplan hides his stamps and tells Pieter to do the same. Pieter, however, does not understand his meaning, and his father, who has just now entered the store, sees the stamps, and immediately upon doing so turns around and says he will return when "this other business is finished."

Chapter 4 Analysis

If before his qualities are lauded, then it is here that they are stated unequivocally; so respected and admired is Pieter that he is like a god to the black people of the area. His friendship with a Jewish man, Kappie, is further evidence that the bigotry that is so pervasive in the country and society during the era is not something of which he can be accused.

The incident involving the stamps hints once more at the troubled relationship, first spoken of in the opening chapter, Pieter maintains with his father. The stamps themselves play a significant role in this strained relationship because it is through them that Pieter first manages to humble Jakob, and in his mind make him appear foolish. He is resentful of that fact.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

His father's slight still fresh in his mind, Pieter leaves the store in a sullen mood. The narrator, Pieter's Tante ("Aunt") Sophie, recalls that Pieter was fourteen when his father took Pieter's stamps away and forbade him from collecting any more, reasoning that it was interfering with his schoolwork. At the age of seventeen, having matriculated from high school first in his class, his father allowed the stamps to be returned.

Upon receiving the wrapped package however, the boy shows no emotion, and simply thanks his father. His mother takes him by the hand to his room and tells him to open it. Inside the parcel are his own books of stamps, along with packets his mother and aunt had purchased for him in the intervening years. Sitting with his mother, he weeps but never brings them out again, keeping the stamps only in his room where over the years he continues his hobby.

Having returned to the station, the lieutenant begins the yard and cell inspection. Upon discovering an unclean cell (seeds of maize are found scattered in a corner), and because of his angry state, he admonishes and embarrasses Sergeant Steyn, a man with whom he has never seen eye-to-eye. Back in his office, he is visited by the captain, an Englishman (surnamed Massingham), who among other things tells him that Smith has been sentenced to death.

Chapter 5 Analysis

The significance of the stamps is made clear here. His father's act leaves an indelible mark on Pieter, who, despite his impressive physical form and demeanor is increasingly demonstrated to possess a frail soul. For his part, Pieter hurts and humbles his father who, in returning the stamps, expects a measure of gratitude or display of affection from his son. Each of their actions in this matter serves to drive a further wedge into an already strained relationship, as both men never forgive one another.

Jakob is unable to comprehend that it is his authoritarian behavior that is the root cause of his son's actions. Although Pieter desires to please those around him, something in him compels him also to rebel. Pieter fought in the Second World War, having taken the red oath, that is, to fight as one of the British, an act many regarded as traitorous to the Afrikaner nation. Jakob too, is disgusted by this, and is disdainful of the medals his son earned during the war calling them 'foreign trash'. For a time, until Holland fell, he would not bear mention of his son's name.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Smith, it is told, had a child by his black servant girl. His wife, on hearing the news, and fearing the repercussions of his actions, conspires with her husband to kill the girl. They drown her in a river, then cut off and bury her head so that the body cannot be identified, before finally weighing the body down and then disposing of it in the river. The girl's father, not believing the Smiths' story that she had run away, sees to it that the police are called. Over the course of a few days, they discover blood on a hummock of grass, then the girl's head is unearthed and then at last her body, which reveals that she had been pregnant.

Pieter, sitting in his office, receives a call from his mother asking about the incident at the store. He tells her that his father saw the stamps and treated him like a child. His mother then hands the phone off to her sister-in-law who asks Pieter what he has bought for his father's birthday. He says a book, but she does not believe him because all know that Jakob van Vlaanderen reads only the one Book. He jests that it is a book about the life of General Smuts, who his father detests.

His foul mood persists and his wife comments on it when he returns home that evening. A small argument ensues and he tells her that he gives when he is given. She ends up in tears.

Chapter 6 Analysis

The irony of Smith's actions is that the people hold him in contempt, not so much for the murder of the black servant girl as for the fact that he slept with her. It is their fear of the Immorality Act and the scandal it will bring upon them that causes Smith and his wife to murder the girl. Essentially, his infidelity is not the greater issue, but rather that he chose to sleep with a black woman.

The population's ignorance is also brought to light, as many prefer not to even acknowledge the incident, as though in doing so they would have to admit that there was something inherently wrong with the manner in which they lived their lives under the Apartheid regime.

This event foreshadows the fate in store for Pieter should he stray too far from the accepted norm.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

The following day, the lieutenant, the young constable Vorster and Maseko, a black constable, set off in search of Stephanie. They drive through the country, and it is clear from his demeanor and his speech that Pieter loves the area, being the kind of country in which he was raised. They stop at a police post in Bremerspan and then continue along the road for some distance before moving off it and onto the rough track that will take them to the low country. Here they come across a small rural community of black subsistence farmers, where Stephanie is reported to keep her child. They interview an elderly black man, who tells them where to find the girl.

At the old man's request, they perform a perfunctory search of the nearby grass huts, before setting off up the kloof where the girl ran when she heard the police were coming for her. They split up: Vorster and Maseko go up a small kloof, while Pieter waits below. The plan is that once they reach the top, he will set off up the larger kloof. He sits for a moment, smoking his pipe and a group of small black children watches him. He sees the two constables reach the top of the kloof and so sets off.

He finds Stephanie, alone, under a small waterfall. Their exchange is short, she flees, but there is nowhere to go and he catches up to her without even running. Seeing her, his mind is filled with lascivious thoughts. The other two policemen approach from the top and she is cornered. They take her back to the vehicle. When they are gone, Pieter stays behind for a moment to gather his thoughts and compose his self.

Chapter 7 Analysis

This is the first manifestation of the temptation that resides within him. Having thus far been portrayed as a singularly great man, we see that beneath that veneer, he possesses also great weakness.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Japie Grobler, a childhood friend of Pieter's, returns to Venterspan as an emissary of the Social Welfare Department. While out shopping, Sophie sees him at the bus terminus. He sees her too and comes rushing over. He is clearly glad to be back in the area, and is visibly elated at the thought of seeing his old friend, Pieter. He is momentarily dismayed on hearing that the Social Welfare office has been place in the old butchery. They chat, and then she leaves, heading to the court for the Women's Welfare Society where Stephanie's trial is to be held.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The joker of the piece, Japie Grobler is the very antithesis of Pieter. He is held in little regard by those around him, is quick to laugh, and has a loud, obnoxious laugh that calls attention to himself and embarrasses others. People think him a fool. Throughout the story he is used as an instrument for comic relief, but he plays a more important role as well in that he and Pieter share a bond, both being outcasts of a sort.

That the Social Welfare office is situated in the old butcher shop is an indictment by Paton of the government's lack of concern for the well-being of its citizenry, especially the black people.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Pieter is already there when she arrives and he refuses to let her sit in the public seats, instead leading her to a seat next to his own. She tells him that she has just met the new Social Welfare Officer and makes him guess who it is. She is disappointed that, after a small hint from herself, he is able to guess who it is so easily. The trial begins.

Stephanie is found guilty of the liquor charge, and in fact pleads as much, but the judge rules that there is no proof that she meant to run away from Venterspan and not return and so hands down only the two-week sentence for the liquor infraction, a crime she has been found guilty of repeatedly. At the mention of her child, however, her demeanor changes: she is alert and wary, even suspicious. If she does not find work, the magistrate tells her, the child will be taken away.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Though Paton seldom openly speaks of the racist attitudes of the townspeople, the magistrate's scornful mocking of the girl Stephanie's testimony reveals the lack of regard for black people in the town. Her reaction when the child is mentioned also displays that Stephanie is made of stronger mettle than her submissive mannerisms would indicate.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

It is Sunday morning, and the entire white town, save for a handful of people, are at the Church in van Onselen Street. Dominee Vos, a new preacher and assistant to Dominee Stander, has arrived in Venterspan and today is the first that he will be giving a sermon, an occurrence of some importance for this devoutly religious community.

Before the sermon, Dominee Stander offers a brief introduction, telling the congregation about the new dominee, not forgetting, of course to mention his rugby talent. His sermon leaves a lasting impression on the congregation who, at the end of the sermon, sing more deeply and loudly because of it.

Chapter 10 Analysis

If it were not clear before, then this chapter certainly displays the significance religion plays in the lives of these people. Venterspan is the archetypal South African Afrikaner community of the time in which God and country are everything and to commit an act against either is unforgivable. Yet, in spite of these fervent religious beliefs, the nation is characterized by hate and bigotry.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

After church, many members of the congregation meet outside to chat; families and friends huddle together. Pieter's mother suggests that he take Nella to the coast on holiday. Jakob, his church duties concluded, joins the family. The dominee, seeing Pieter, comes over to the van Vlaanderen family and introduces himself. He recognizes Pieter, having heard of him because of his rugby prowess. He mentions that Pieter is known as the Lion of the North.

He also recognizes the women and they are all in awe of his presence. When asked about his rugby, the dominee jokes that it is almost his religion. Pieter, during the sermon believes that he can confide in Dominee Vos, but after talking with him outside the church, where Pieter is called the Lion of the North he decides he cannot tell him.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Pieter's foolish pride is what prevents him from telling the dominee of his 'sickness.' Because the dominee holds him in such regard, and later still in much higher esteem, he feels he cannot speak to him of his troubles.

Pieter will try repeatedly throughout the story to confide in those around him and always will decide against it at the last possible moment.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

That night, Pieter, his Tante Sophie and a few others (Nella remains at home) again attended the dominee's church service. Pieter returns home and kisses Nella who bursts into tears. She tells Pieter that she is crying because he smiled at her. He thinks of their courtship, which was long and protracted. That night they sleep together and as they chat afterwards, he wants to tell her of his temptation, of his troubles… of everything, but he cannot.

Pieter, amazed that the thought should only just now occur to him, decides that he will confide in Kappie.

Chapter 12 Analysis

The knowledge that his father has never touched, nor desired, a woman other than his mother fills Pieter with a great sense of pride and love and even envy. That Pieter is different, an outcast, and that he envies those around him is a theme that permeates the entire book. That one man, who is better than all those around him, wants nothing more than to be exactly like those people around him illustrates the oppression and pressure to conform that characterized the time.

Pieter never comes to terms with the fact that he is unlike other Afrikaner men, while his father is the very embodiment of this ideal.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

It is Jakob's, the patriarch of the van Vlaanderen family, birthday party. It is a big affair, as his parties always are, attended by throngs of people. The food too, is plentiful and people can avail themselves of various eats, drink and desserts. When Pieter, Nella and the children arrive, the whole family gives their presents to Jakob. There is considerable apprehension among those who know of Pieter's present however, for Jakob reads nothing but the Bible.

There is tangible relief when, having inspected the book, *The Birds of South Africa*, he seems not only surprised, but also pleased. After that, Pieter and Nella sit, eat, and chat with Sophie, Pieter's mother and Japie. Anna, 'a kind of cousin', comes and takes Pieter away and this disappoints Sophie somewhat. Still, Tante Sophie remembers it as an exceptionally happy time in their lives.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Pieter's present is the catalyst that begins to bring father and son closer together. It is through this book that Jakob is able to display the emotion and tenderness that has thus far been absent from the boy's life without having to 'lose face' or without having to admit that his actions in the past may not have been correct.

As the stamps drove them further apart, the book is a symbolic of their coming together. The pervading tone of the chapter is one of happiness.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Tante Sophie, suddenly depressed, retreats to the pantry to be alone. Pieter comes to her there, asks her what is wrong, and she replies disconsolately that she is angry that she was born. For a moment, he says nothing, then answers that it is he that should never have been born. She asks him what he means but he dismisses it off-hand. She tries to see his face, but he will not let her. She is determined to know what is wrong, but the moment has passed and she can do nothing more. Pieter asks her to get coffee for them.

She remembers the time when, as a child, he climbed a tree on the family farm, Buitenverwagting, which means, Beyond Expectation. His parents had gone out visiting and left him, sick in bed, in her care. By the time the servants had come running to tell her, the boy had already made his way to the very top of a cypress tree and there he stood, arms flung out above his head, knees gripping the small branches. Sophie screams and cries for him to come down, afraid that he will fall to his death and in her state runs into the house, unable to bear watching his theatrics any longer. Realizing his mistake, he comes down from the tree and apologizes. She holds him and kisses him but he withdraws and goes back to bed.

Returning with the coffee, she sees Japie, who has come to ask Pieter's opinion of what should be done about Stephanie's child. They decide to wait, to give her a chance. The party finishes promptly at ten-thirty, the family, however, stays behind long enough for Jakob to read a passage from the Bible. His choice of passage is unusual, and Sophie wonders if it is not because of the book Pieter has given him.

Chapter 14 Analysis

This is the closest Pieter comes to a confession. Though it is clear to those around him that something disturbs him, before now he has never made any mention of it. That he is uncomfortable with the affection his aunt lavishes upon him after the tree incident shows that even as a child he began distancing himself from those around.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Nella and the children visit her parents on the farm Vergelegen, which, true to its name is indeed far away. Nella is sad, yet also glad to leave. So too, is Pieter. They are having marital problems and both hope that the time apart will alleviate their strife.

It is autumn and the focus, as it always does, shifts to rugby. Tante Sophie goes down to the field on Koos Slabbert's farm to watch them practice. After the game, some of the players go to the Royal Hotel for drinks where their behavior is said to be coarse and rough, but Pieter does not go with. He never does. A brief soliloquy from Pieter reveals that he does not understand why people do not tell coarse jokes in front of him.

After one such practice, he comes to supper with his family. He remarks that his father looks ill. He has influenza, but is reluctant to stay in bed. Eventually, he concedes, but as he leaves the room, he asks of his son, if he has ever seen the Phalarope. Pieter says he has not.

Pieter is called to the kitchen having been told that Isak, a farm laborer, wants to see him. Isak tells him that Stephanie would like to see him, and Pieter tells him to bring her in. She has come to tell him that she has found work. This is odd, because it is Japie she should be telling, not him. Standing there with her, the 'mad sickness' overcomes him. Clearly, he wants to sleep with her. Tante Sophie walks into the kitchen, believes she sees something between the two of them and though she knows what she saw, is reluctant to trust her instincts, blinded by her love for Pieter.

Chapter 15 Analysis

In spite of the adulation and the esteem in which he is held, Pieter is in actuality, an outcast. He has no peers, for people are reluctant to behave in front of him, as they would otherwise do. It is as though they are intimidated by his presence.

That the relationship between Stephanie and Pieter is not typical of the black-white dynamic is again shown here, and with Nella and the children gone, Pieter's resolve wavers considerably.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Stephanie's work in the Willemse household is short-lived. She works hard for little pay, but they are unaware of her past, and when they discover it – a flippant comment from a woman in town embarrasses Mrs. Willemse – they fire her. Stephanie goes to Pieter for help. He gives her some money. When she has left, Pieter loses himself in thought and it is revealed that he envied a student he attended Stellenbosch University with, Moffie de Bruyn. Moffie is a racist, but Pieter envies him and wishes he could be like that too, because even though he thinks it shameful, to be like that is to be safe.

He pays a visit to Kappie, determined to tell him everything. They look at Kappie's stamp collection, they listen to music and though Kappie can sense that Pieter wants to tell him something, he does not ask. Pieter, not for the first time, says nothing.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Nowhere is Pieter's isolation more evident than in this chapter. That he envies a man, who is not only a racist, but by any measure little more than ordinary, is remarkable and speaks of his longing to belong, his desire to feel wanted and needed. He yearns to be 'normal'.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Bed-ridden because of the influenza and with an inkling of a heart problem, Jakob spends his days being doted upon by his wife and sister. He is visited by Dominee Stander, the captain and Sybrand Wessels, the latter with whom he would drink and joke and together they would look at the book of birds, at times pleased with the Englishman who wrote it and at others pitying his ignorance.

One night, during a visit from Pieter, Jakob suggests that they go to the family farm, Buitenverwagting. The women may come with to the Long Kloof, he says, but he and Pieter will go to the pan alone, and there they will search for the phalarope.

Returning home that evening, Pieter finds a letter from Nella under the door, which the captain had thought to bring around immediately upon receiving it. Her reply to his letter, which had been heart-warming and sincere and in which he had poured his heart out to her, was curt and insincere. It darkens his mood.

Chapter 17 Analysis

The phalarope is not what he is looking for. He is trying to reach out to his son, though, being the man that he is, he as no idea how to go about doing it. The search for the phalarope is an excuse to try to bond with his son; something he has never done.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

The next day, in his *swartgalligheid*, his black mood, he pays a visit to Kappie, who, noticing his mood, tries to cheer him up. He fails. However, he invites the lieutenant for coffee and to listen to music that evening at seven-thirty. Pieter vows to keep his cool and not to lose his temper or shout at Sergeant Steyn, regardless of how poorly the inspection goes. However, the first thing he sees is the prisoner Kleinbooi who is supposed to have been in the court at Sonop that same day.

Mistakenly, the Sergeant believed that the order needed only to be carried out the following day. Pieter, enraged, screams at him in English, which he knows Steyn does not like, asking him if he can read. Steyn begins to reply in Afrikaans, but Pieter admonishes him, because it is a rule in the police that you need reply in the language in which you are addressed. After the fracas, Pieter returns to his office, feeling weak and drained.

Japie comes to see him and informs him that he has found another job for Stephanie. Pieter smiles for the first time that day. The captain, having received a complaint about the late arrival of the prisoner, asks Pieter for an explanation, reprimands him and then tells him that someone would have to pay for the car used to deliver the prisoner and that he and the Sergeant should divide the cost equally.

A little while later, his rage now stoked beyond measure, he marches to the captain's office with the intent to tell him that he will not pay for the car, but Dominee Stander is with the captain so he does not go in. In his molten rage, Pieter bites his pipe in two. He tries again later, but the Dominee is still with the captain so he returns to his office and pens a letter stating that if he is forced to pay half the cost of the car service, then he will instead tender his resignation.

Vorster comes into his office, and noticing the state of the pipe is truly sad. He offers to fetch another from Pieter's house. This touches Pieter and lifts his spirits and so he cancels the letter of resignation.

Chapter 18 Analysis

Pieter's actions this day sow the seed for his own demise. In making a fool of Steyn, he ignites in him a hatred that will see to his downfall. The resignation letter is symbolic of Pieter's inability to communicate his true feelings because just as he is unable to open his heart and confess his fears and troubles to friends and family, he is incapable of handing the letter in. He is on the brink of doing so but then lacks the conviction to follow through.

He will try many times to tell his wife, the captain, his friend Kappie and others about his thoughts and deeds, but always, on the brink, withdraws once more into himself.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

After work, as he leaves the station, Pieter meets Anna outside in the street and together they go for a drink at the Royal Hotel. They unburden themselves on one another: he tells her of his day and she tells him of her life. She adores him and tells him as much. They drink a succession of brandies and both are drunk when she realizes that it is seven o'clock and that she should have been home by six-thirty. Pieter escorts her home.

Returning to his own home, Pieter eats little, drinks more, telephones Kappie and tells him that he cannot come tonight but will do so the next evening. Then he leaves the house and walks away from van Onselen Street, towards the location and there, in a vacant lot, amidst the *kakiebos* weed has sex with Stephanie.

Chapter 19 Analysis

His resolve weakened by the alcohol, his lascivious thoughts are carried out. Instead of the peace he longs for, this act brings him only more pain. The alcohol is only an excuse however, because eventually, the weakness in his character will drive him to act of his own accord.

This chapter is a turning point in the book, for it signals the beginning of his fall from grace.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

When they are finished and she has left, he kneels at the foot of a tree and prays to God asking for forgiveness. He hears a twig crack and he is paralyzed with fear. Seized with paranoia he believes there to be eyes everywhere. Then he returns to his prayer and promises to reform his life: never drink again, to be kind to his wife and to give up rugby and his great fame and honor. Eventually, he gets up and walks away from town, into the grasslands.

A mile outside of town he sees a car moving along the road and dives into the grass embankment. He is not seen. Then he climbs through a fence and into the farmland called Verdriet, which means Sorrow and there he sits among the oxen. He removes his jacket and places it in the dew before lying down in it himself, hoping to cleanse himself and remove the stink of the *kakiebos*. Later, he hurries home and there fastened to his door is a note. It reads I Saw You.

Chapter 20 Analysis

For the first time, the inner turmoil that has thus far dogged him bubbles to the surface. His is appalled at what he has done: ashamed, fearful, repentant. His guilt manifests as extreme paranoia and is convinced that he will be caught. Lying in the dew-laden grass is symbolic of his attempt to cleanse himself. His envy of other human beings spills over, and here he is envious of animals for they are not restrained by the ironclad laws of an inhumane regime or strict social code. They are all equals, none better than any other is.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Terrified, Pieter enters the house and goes to the study where, with the curtains drawn, he reads the note again and prays again, doubling the penance he offered before. His paranoia is uncontrollable; he hears a car in the street and thinks it the one that passed him on the farm road earlier in the evening; he hides the note in a book yet fears that people entering the room will be drawn unerringly to it. He tries to read the book of South Africans, but cannot. He retrieves the note from the book and studies it once again, and prays yet another time and thinks of his family and friends and his children and what it is that he has done to them all.

In the kitchen, he builds a fire and places the tins of water on, and before it, he places his clothes and some scent that Nella had left to get rid of the *kakiebos* stink. He goes outside to the servant's quarters and imagines that the 'watcher' is now at this moment with the captain, and maybe there with Stephanie too or even at someone else's house, relating the story of Venterspan's fallen star. Pieter wakes Johannes, the servant, and asks if anyone had been to the house that night. Johannes says that no, no one had been.

Pieter returns to the house, bathes, and washes himself clean from head to toe. He vows and prays throughout the night, unable to sleep, the sound of the church clock ticking off the hours until at last, after four o'clock, he falls asleep. He dreams that he is lying naked in a hollow tower of knives and forks that cut his flesh and draw blood. He wakes up and stays awake long enough to hear the five and six o'clock strikes as well before falling once more into sleep.

He wakes again and resolves to go to work because to do otherwise would make him look guilty, or so he thinks. He prays once again and thinks of his salvation, and would then willingly have the world destroyed if only he could be saved. He bathes and asks Johannes again if anyone had been to the house in the night, who again replies in the negative.

Chapter 21 Analysis

Parallels can be drawn between Pieter's act of bathing himself and that of Lady Macbeth, who, after the murder of the king washes her hands repeatedly and yet to her eyes cannot seem to get rid of the blood that stains them. So too, Pieter will never be clean, because the stain is not of his body, but rather of the mind. One important distinction, however, is that Pieter's is not an act of contrition, but rather one of fear. Though he is dismayed at his actions, it is the fear of being caught that drives him to distraction.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Pieter goes to work and later returns home for lunch, but does not eat in the garden as per usual; instead, he takes his meal in the house. He does not eat though, and instead drinks coffee and smokes cigarettes, inhaling the smoke, which he does not usually do. In the study the note is again pulled from the book in which it is hidden, and in the corner of the room, away from the windows he prays and vows again. Then he places the note back into the book and the book back on the shelf and leaves the house.

The afternoon is spent in his office, his fear gnawing at him until it is time to leave and go to the rugby. At the rugby, he sees his Tante Sophie and his sister Martha (who comes to watch Dominee Vos play), they ask if he is coming to the house that night, but he says no, he is going to visit Kappie. The young boy Vorster seems troubled, and he does not walk with the lieutenant as he always does. Pieter is certain that he knows.

At home, Pieter bathes, but does not eat. He asks Johannes what the talk is amongst the black people, but he can tell Pieter nothing of importance. He smokes. He goes to Kappie's, but is aloof, distant. He returns home but does not fall asleep until after three o'clock.

Chapter 22 Analysis

Pieter's behavior is increasingly reclusive. He no longer takes his meals outside, as there he feels vulnerable. That he will no longer eat and smokes consistently speaks of a benign death wish. Secretly, if all else fails, he would rather die than be discovered.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

The second day of his terror is as awful as the first. Vorster is still unhappy, and the captain remains in his silent, contemplative mood. Pieter goes to the Garage and Service Station to warn Labuschagne, the owner, to curb his habit of leaving cars parked in the street day and night. En route back to the police station he sees Herman Geyer standing at his gate and greets him cheerfully. Geyer spits on the ground before turning around and going inside. This only serves to escalate Pieter's fears.

Feeling pale and weak, Pieter rests for a moment in the town's small park and calls on God for mercy before then returning to the police station. At lunchtime, he walks home, careful to avoid Herman Geyer's home. Again, he refuses to eat outside, drinks coffee and smokes. Again, he questions Johannes about the talk amongst the black people. In his study, he vows and prays for any number of catastrophes to befall the world, the watcher, Stephanie or even himself.

In the evening, he goes to supper with his family, but his somber mood is readily apparent. His mother and Tante Sophie are both worried about him. He returns home and prays, but does not sleep.

Chapter 23 Analysis

As his fear grows and recedes in turn, Pieter is over-sensitive to even the slightest change in attitude of this around him. The blatant disgust displayed by Herman Geyer has an immeasurable effect on him, plunging him into despair.

The power Pieter has over those around him is once more illustrated as his melancholy affects both his mother and aunt. Both know he is suffering, yet neither has any idea of the extent of his torment.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

The lieutenant, unable to endure the torment any longer, speaks to Vorster and asks him what the matter is. At first, he believes his worst fears confirmed, but is relieved to discover that the boy owes twenty pounds, money that Vorster does not have, to a store in Johannesburg. He gives the boy a check for the amount, he himself, feeling relieved at this great mercy.

His brief consolation gives way once more to fear when, walking home for lunch, Herman Geyer again turns away from his gate at the sight of Pieter, and goes inside his house. As before, Pieter takes his lunch indoors. Back at the office, Japie brings news of Stephanie, telling Pieter that she is working well, however Tante Sophie has apparently asked Japie to have her taken away from Venterspan. They speak of Japie's burgeoning relationship with an English girl, and Japie in turn, jokingly asks about Anna, whom he saw Pieter with at the Royal Hotel. It is Japie who left the note as a joke.

Chapter 24 Analysis

This is important because after the self-imposed torment Pieter has gone through, he has been given a miraculous reprieve. In essence, he has been given a primer for the manner in which he would be ostracized should it ever be known what he did. That he has transgressed and not been held accountable for his actions is the second chance he has desperately wanted but having committed the crime and gotten away with it, Pieter is doomed to repeat it.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

Pieter is relieved. Overjoyed. He pays a visit to Kappie's store, and displays a side of himself that Kappie has never seen. He asks whether they are having coffee or tea, whereas before he had always waited first to be asked; he talks to Kappie's bird and asks it to sing; and he requests that when next they get together, Kappie play music that is cheerful, like Gilbert and Sullivan.

Then he asks if Kappie might know why Herman Geyer would spit at him. Kappie tells him that the neighbors had complained of the flies and Geyer's stables, and in turn, the captain had warned Geyer to build a new stable or send the cows back to his farm. Geyer is angry with the police and his neighbors and thus Pieter, being both a neighbor and policeman, is doubly despised by Geyer.

That night Pieter visits his family, and astonishes them with his jovial demeanor. They laugh and joke and later his Tante Sophie will remember this evening because of how happy they all had been.

Chapter 25 Analysis

As before, Pieter's emotions, having for most of his life been bottled up, betray him. His manner is so out of character that all those who are close to him immediately recognize the difference. The theme of the chapter, though, is one of redemption and forgiveness and though his behavior is puzzling to them, his family are themselves glad to see his dark mood lifted.

Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

Nella and the children return from Vergelegen. Excited, Pieter meets them as they get off the bus but his joy at seeing them is tempered by the luke-warm reception his wife gives him. She does not seem glad to be back at all. Later that evening, however, she comes to him, apologizes for the letter and truly seems to want to be with him. They bathe the children and put them to bed, and then she makes for them a bed in front of the fire, something that they had not done since the early days of their relationship.

They kiss and make love. They return to their room only at midnight; Pieter is amazed to realize that it is the first striking of the church clock he hears that night. His morning is filled with joy and he is light-hearted, but by midday, he begins to realize that once more his wife is retreating, returning to the manner in which she and he had been before the trip to her parents. Once more, the *swartgalligheid*, the black mood, returns and they quarrel. Pieter storms out of the house, and in the night, in darkness, returns to the vacant lot where he sleeps once more with Stephanie.

Chapter 26 Analysis

Whereas before Pieter committed the act while drunk, now he does so of his own free will and accord. His desperate need to love and be loved in return, consumes him, and when his wife withholds sex, which Pieter mistakes for love, his self-loathing compels him to seek out Stephanie.

This is a damning condemnation of Pieter's flawed character. A momentary weakness is understandable, and having been given a reprieve, a second chance, he could continue with his life but he knowingly, willingly commits the act and in doing so seals his fate.

Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

Japie comes to see Pieter, and mentions that Tante Sophie is still pestering him to have Stephanie sent away. Pieter replies that perhaps he should have her sent away. Japie is annoyed at this, says that the girl is working well and that he does not understand why she should be sent away.

That same night, Dominee Vos pays a visit to Pieter to confess his feelings for Pieter's sister, Martha, and to ask if he has any chance with her. In addition to asking his advice, the dominee asks if Pieter will not consider being a diaken in the church. Pieter is reluctant to do so, and in thinking it over, renews his vow to not commit again the 'unspeakable offence'.

Dominee Vos pays a visit to the van Vlaanderen home and there asks Jakob if he may marry Martha. Jakob permits the engagement.

Chapter 27 Analysis

The about-face of both Pieter and Sophie disturbs Japie, who is portrayed as a man who, despite his flaws, does try to do the right thing by people regardless of their color. He cannot understand why it is they want Stephanie taken away. Ironically, the dominee takes Pieter's reluctance for humility, furthering his admiration of the man. However, it is Pieter's guilt and his belief that he is unworthy that prevents him from accepting the dominee's offer.

Under normal circumstances, Dominee Vos would probably have noticed Pieter's strained manner, but blinded by his love for Martha he is not aware of Pieter's misery.

Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

A black woman dies of smallpox in the Maduna area, and fear of an outbreak mobilizes the police, doctors and nurses who work day and night to vaccinate all the people in the area, white and black. Pieter throws himself into the task, working tirelessly to see to it that the medicine is procured, then delivered and that those involved adhere to all the necessary places and times.

On the third night, he sits alone in his office, weary, thinking of his own 'sickness' and waiting for a call from Pretoria. The captain calls him by his name and puts his hand on his shoulder, things he has never before done. Pieter is moved and he wishes to confide in the captain what he has done. The captain however, thinking he is doing Pieter a favor by sending him home to rest, says that if it does not have anything to do with the call then it can wait until tomorrow.

Therefore, once more Pieter's confession goes unspoken.

Chapter 28 Analysis

In spite of his problems, Pieter's inherent caring nature shines through in this chapter, as it is he who organizes the vast majority of aid in the region. In addition, it provides a convenient distraction preventing him from reflecting too deeply about his own troubles. Here, his final chance at redemption is thwarted when he does not confide in the captain. Another opportunity will not present itself.

Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

It is the day of the picnic. Pieter, his wife and their children, his parents and Tante Sophie go to Buitenverwagting. The family stays behind at the Long Kloof, while Pieter and his father head away to the pan. For more than an hour, they hide and watch for birds, until at last Jakob points and tells Pieter to look at something. Pieter, however, cannot see what his father is pointing at, and so Jakob moves behind him, places his hand on Pieter's shoulder and points once more. Pieter is struggling to contain his emotions and no matter how hard he tries, still cannot see the bird.

Jakob moves away, weary from the ravages of his illness. Pieter wipes his eyes and at last says that, yes, he can see the phalarope. They return to the Long Kloof for lunch and afterwards, Pieter goes wandering about. Later, Tante Sophie goes to find him to call him for tea. She finds him praying, but he speaks harshly to her, hurting her deeply.

Chapter 29 Analysis

The title of the book is here lent gravity. The emotion shared between the two men, however slight, is the first such display between them, but it has come too late. This gesture is exceedingly powerful, because although slight, it is the first such thing the two have ever shared but it cannot undo the damage already wrought by a lifetime of neglect and indifference. It is, in a manner of speaking, too late for the phalarope. Pieter is beyond redemption.

With a simple hand on the shoulder, Jakob has demonstrated that despite their differences, he loves his son. This knowledge, coming at this time, only serves to further Pieter's anxiety over his actions.

Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

The captain goes on leave to Cape Town, and his temporary replacement, Captain Jooste, arrives. Around the same time, Pa Griesel dies, and his wife is taken away by their children, leaving Stephanie once more without work. She comes to Pieter in the street and tells him that she has no job and little money left. He says he will help her, but that he cannot give her the money in the street in broad daylight, instead, he will bring it to her in the evening.

Sergeant Steyn, back from his holiday in Natal, sees them in the street and because of his hatred and dislike for Pieter, sees what no one else does: a connection between the two. Where everyone would see only an innocent encounter, he sees more and is suspicious. In the evening, Pieter meets Stephanie in the vacant lot and gives her three pounds; he does not sleep with her, though.

Chapter 30 Analysis

The true breadth and depth of Steyn's hate is here displayed. Because it his through his utter contempt for Pieter, and that his perception of the man is not clouded by sentiment or love that he is the only person able to see the exchange between Pieter and Stephanie for what it is; that is, something more than innocent.

Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

Stephanie remains without a job and resorts once more to making and selling liquor. She is caught, brought before the magistrate and for the twelfth time is sentenced to two weeks in prison. The magistrate, however, requests a meeting with Japie and Pieter's mother and Tante Sophie (the latter two because they are involved in the Women's Welfare Society). They decide that it is time to take away Stephanie's child.

Around the same time, Tante Sophie discovers that Jakob has bought stamps for his son's upcoming birthday--no ordinary stamps, but the set of four Cape triangulars costing thirty-two pounds.

Returning from prison, Stephanie is told that her child is to be taken away. While in the location, the lieutenant is called to the old woman Esther's house, but it is Stephanie who is waiting there. She tells him that her child has been taken away, not by the magistrate but by the white women whom Pieter knows. She threatens to make a case, and says that the lawyer needs money. She is blackmailing him. He says he will bring the five pounds to the vacant lot the following evening.

Despite his numerous prayers and vows that he will keep the law, he takes the five pounds to the lot, and there he sleeps with Stephanie.

Chapter 31 Analysis

A subtle shift is occurring in Jakob for here he displays an acceptance of Pieter. He has never liked nor agreed with his son's stamp collecting, but here, for the first time, in spite of his beliefs he does something for no other reason than that he knows it will bring his son happiness.

Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

His ritual now well established, Pieter returns home and, filled with self-loathing, bathes himself. He considers going to Johannesburg to see a psychiatrist for his own willpower and religious belief are seemingly useless. Having finished bathing, he tells his wife that he intends to work in his study. He reads about other criminals and identifies with them, feeling pity for them and himself, who should now be among their number.

He is filled with a new humility and is helpful and courteous to Nella and others. He meets and talks with Abraham Kaplan in the street and compliments his daughter on her violin playing ability.

Chapter 32 Analysis

Reading his books, Pieter questions the acts of other criminals, wondering if they are sinning or if, like him, they simply sought and asked for something they could never obtain. His despair has metamorphosed into pity and he now wallows in it. Having been humbled in this manner, he is helpful to his wife and compassionate to other and he asks forgiveness of Sophie.

He thinks that perhaps at last he has found a modicum of peace but in reality, he is merely running away from his problems. He is even afraid his wife will come to him, whereas before he craved her.

Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary

Dominee Vos phones Pieter to tell him that Hippo du Toit, a famous Stellenbosch rugby coach had sent him a letter that says both Pieter and Dominee Vos look a certainty to become Springbok players (that is, to be selected to play for the national team). Pieter asks after his sister, but Dominee Vos will not tell him over the phone, and says instead that he will tell Pieter at that afternoon's rugby practice.

Next, Japie pays Pieter a visit. They speak again of Japie's love for the English woman, and of Stephanie, whom Japie believes he can find a job for and thereby have her child returned to her. After lunch, which he took at home in the garden with his wife, Pieter goes to the police station. While walking there he sees two men coming from Pretorius Street, where the vacant lot is located. It is Captain Jooste and his own captain who should, at that moment, still have been in Cape Town.

Chapter 33 Analysis

Pieter's newfound humility is short-lived. At the mention of the chance that he will play for South Africa, his ego is stoked once more. In contrast to first appearances, Japie is not so different from Pieter after all. His relationship with the English woman and his social conscience set him apart from others in town. He is, in effect, Pieter, just without the fame and reverence and thus without the fundamental flaw that will destroy him

Chapter 34

Chapter 34 Summary

Pieter returns to his office and after a time he is summoned to the captain's office. The captain tells him that he received a call the previous night and he had been summoned to Johannesburg that very morning in order to deal with a matter of utmost importance. He then tells Pieter that a charge has been laid against him under Act 5 of 1927, the Immorality Act.

The lieutenant denies the charge and is then questioned by the captain. Later the two captains have the clothes allegedly worn on the night in question brought to the station. The shoes are compared to an imprint taken at the scene but do not match. Then the jacket is inspected and in it, a small colored seashell is found. Ostensibly, Stephanie put this there on the night in question. Pieter attempts to lie, saying that he wore that jacket when spending his own leave down at the coast, but the shell had been filled with candle grease which Sergeant Steyn himself had placed in it. So too, Steyn admits to preparing the earth in the vacant lot in which the print was found and provides an eye-witness account of Pieter going to the lot.

Still, Pieter protests his innocence. Captain Jooste leaves the room, and then his own captain asks if Pieter will have his other pair of shoes brought down to the station. Hearing that, he breaks down, cries and admits to everything. The captain promises to stand by him and then leaves, for he still has duties to do. On leaving the station, the captain says to Steyn, "may God forgive you for an evil deed."

Chapter 34 Analysis

Steyn is representative of the white Afrikaner mindset of the time. His initial animosity towards Pieter is because of Pieter's differences: Pieter having fought in the war with the English among other things. He resents being lower in the hierarchy (socially and in terms of his career) to someone whom he deems beneath him

He hates everything Pieter represents and stands for and when the opportunity to destroy him presents itself he is only too eager to take it. Captain Massingham, for his part displays an enviable sense of loyalty and a considerable capacity for forgiveness.

Chapter 35

Chapter 35 Summary

The captain pays a visit to the van Vlaanderen family and tells them of the charge against their son. Jakob tells his sister to bring the Book, where at the front the names of the van Vlaanderens have been recorded for more than a hundred and fifty years. He crosses out Pieter's name. The captain leaves and Jakob orders the front door of the house to be locked, bolted and the key brought to him. He orders Tante Sophie to telephone Frans, Pieter's brother, and to tell him to come at once and when that is done to take everything Pieter has ever given them, every likeness and anything to do with him from the house and burn it.

Then he writes to Dominee Stander, to the Nationalist Party and the Farmer's Society and to every other club and society to which he belonged, giving up all his offices and honors. Frans arrives and he is ordered to fetch Nella and the children and take them to the farm Buitenverwagting and inform her parents of the news. The lawyer de Villiers is called and Jakob's will changed. Frans is given Pieter's portion and the second portion to Nella and the children on the condition that she or the children never have anything to do with Pieter again.

Pieter's mother wishes to go to him. Jakob tells her that she may go, but once she leaves the house she may never return. Tante Sophie, who had lived with the family for thirty years, goes in her stead. Tante Sophie had kept two items: a photograph for her sister-in-law and the book of birds for herself. She leaves the house and goes to the Police Station, but is told by the captain that Pieter has already gone home. The captain had taken all Pieter's guns, but until Sophie arrives, he does not know he possesses a personal revolver. They rush to his house.

Chapter 35 Analysis

So rigid is the belief system of Jakob van Vlaanderen that despite his love for his son he is willing to erase everything about him, as though he had never existed in the first place. It never occurs to him to forgive Pieter. For all his goodness and kindness, Pieter, through this one action, is condemned and in the eyes of his father, sentenced to death. He is dead to Jakob.

The crossing out of Pieter's name in the Bible is symbolic of this, but is then displayed clearly when he orders everything relating to Pieter to be burned. Though the blame is placed squarely on Pieter, Jakob destroys the family. It is he that shuts them off from the outside world and he that forbids his sister to return. He is even willing to disown his wife, by his own admission the one woman he has ever loved, should she go to her son.

Jakob is representative of the Nationalist government of the time, who, because of their fierce rigidity would rather see themselves destroyed than have their laws or belief

systems contravened. It is this blind yet unwavering belief that, ironically, is the instrument of their destruction.

Chapter 36

Chapter 36 Summary

Pieter returns home to find that Nella and the children are gone. A letter has been left for him. In it are eighteen pounds, the remainder of the money he had given to young constable Vorster. He fetches his revolver and walks out into the night. Arriving after Pieter had already left, the captain and Tante Sophie, seeing that he is no longer there, go running to the vacant lot in search of him and along the way see Kappie, who goes to Slabbert's Field.

He finds Pieter there, sitting on the lowest row of seats. He calls him lieutenant, but Pieter says that he is no longer a lieutenant and for the first time, Kappie calls him 'Pieter'. He tells Pieter to put the gun down, then goes to him and puts his arm around him. Together they return to Pieter's house.

Chapter 36 Analysis

The realization of what he has done and the full extent of the repercussions of his actions are made evident to Pieter here. If Vorster, a boy who admired and worshipped him, could display such contempt, what hope did he have of finding forgiveness in others? His life as he knows it is over.

Chapter 37

Chapter 37 Summary

Tante Sophie goes to him, consoles him and tells him that Pieter's mother sends her love. He hands her a parcel in which is a thick black book. In it, he tells her, he has written down everything. It is for Nella to read, and if she wishes, for his mother and Tante Sophie as well. Kappie offers to sleep in Pieter's house that night, something that Sophie had planned to do herself. Learning that she may not return to her brother's house, the captain takes her to his mother's house.

There they meet Nella's father, who tells them that he will shoot Pieter like a dog for the offense he has committed against the race. The captain speaks words of wisdom, telling him that he knows of offense against the law and against God, but not against the race.

Chapter 37 Analysis

Nella's father demonstrates the point-of-view held by many in the area. They are sentiments echoed by the manner in which the Smith case was treated by the citizenry. It is neither the law nor God whom they are concerned with, but rather that it is seen as some sort of affront to the white race.

That Pieter actually wrote down his feelings shows his desperate need to confide in someone. The black book represents the maligned soul of this broken man.

Chapter 38

Chapter 38 Summary

Martha gives her ring back to Dominee Vos, and he does not know whether to accept or reject it. She has decided, of her own will and not her father's, never to leave the house again. Dominee Vos leaves Venterspan never to return. Later, he is chosen to play rugby for South Africa. Schoolchildren walk past Jakob's and Pieter's houses, whispering, until at last they are forbidden to do so by the school principal.

Frans visits Tante Sophie. He tells her that her brother is dead.

Chapter 38 Analysis

Martha, having over the years been indoctrinated by her father's strict, obtuse manner is in essence not making her own decision, though she believes she is. The true tragedy of the Immorality Act is demonstrated here as the fallout of Pieter's disgrace will follow not only himself but also his entire family for the rest of their lives, and as a result, Martha and the dominee, both of whom are very much in love, are torn apart.

Although the news of Jakob's death should be the culmination of a chapter that is undeniably downbeat, it is a ray of hope, because without his death, Sophie would never again see the rest of her family.

Chapter 39

Chapter 39 Summary

Now, eight days after the incident, Jakob van Vlaanderen is dead. His wife returns to Buitenverwagting to organize the funeral, and with her, she takes the book that Pieter left for Nella. The funeral, which would have otherwise been attended by the whole town, and people from Johannesburg and Pretoria and the Members of Parliament, is a small, private affair.

Therefore, on her and Nella's return, the door of the house in van Onselen Street is opened and the blinds rolled up, for it is Pieter's mother's will that they go on living. They attend the court hearing when Pieter is sentenced.

Chapter 39 Analysis

In the act of her returning, Nella, has no doubt forgiven Pieter; an act of considerable magnitude given her reluctance to forgive Dick at the beginning of the book when he had simply contemplated the act and not actually followed through with it as Pieter had done. That the house is once again opened is symbolic of the forgiveness and love inherent in the van Vlaanderen women. They too have been subjugated (to an extent) throughout the book, and with Jakob gone, it is their will that life go on and that they will no longer be contrite.

Moreover, it is a display of solidarity with Pieter, for whom their love is now greater than ever. The tone is one of hope for the future.

Characters

Anna

Anna is Pieter's cousin. She claims that she is not married because the only man she would have married was Pieter, and he married someone else. Anna is a modern woman who smokes and wears "yellow trousers" that Sophie detests.

Esther

Esther is the elderly woman with whom Stephanie and her child live. Esther is reportedly the oldest woman in the village□more than a hundred years old□and claims to remember when the Boers first came to the area although Sophie doubts this.

Japie Grobler

Japie is a childhood friend of Pieter's who grows up and becomes a social worker. He and Pieter attended school and college together before their careers took them in different directions. When the new Social Welfare Department opens in Venterspan, his hometown, Japie is sent to run it. This delights him, as he holds fond memories of Pieter, Frans, and Tante Sophie (Aunt Sophie), who still live there. Japie is always joking, so Jakob does not take him seriously.

Japie works hard to try to help Stephanie find a job when she is threatened with losing her child. While Pieter pushes him to find work for her, Sophie (suspecting trouble for Pieter, her nephew) encourages Japie to send her away, which he cannot do because there is no law for it.

Matthew Kaplan

Kappie is a good friend of Pieter's, with whom he shares an interest in stamp collecting. A friendly Jewish man, Kappie respects Pieter and enjoys having him for coffee and to listen to music.

When Pieter considers telling someone about his strong attraction to Stephanie, he chooses Kappie as his potential confidant because he knows that instead of being judgmental, Kappie will be sympathetic and supportive. Pieter cannot bring himself to talk about his problem, however, although Kappie is sensitive enough to see that something is troubling his friend. At the end of the story, Kappie is one of the few people who stays by Pieter's side.

Captain Massingham

The only man of higher authority than Pieter, the captain is a respectable and wise man who thinks highly of Pieter. He is a serious man who respects duty above all else. He does not joke or laugh, having lost his son in gunfire and his wife soon afterwards. He lives with his mother, and although he is English, he speaks Afrikaans like a Boer.

When the captain behaves toward Pieter almost as a loving father, Pieter comes close to telling him about his crime. Pieter eventually learns that Stephanie's illegitimate child was fathered by the captain, who would have helped Pieter if he had known what Pieter was experiencing.

Mr. Smith

Smith is introduced as an example of how seriously the Immorality Act of 1927 is taken in Venterspan. Having impregnated one of his servant girls, he panics because he knows that it will be obvious that he is the child's father. To avoid punishment and shame, he and his wife murder the girl, cutting off her head so the body cannot be identified if discovered. The crime is found out, however, and Smith is tried and sentenced to hang.

Stephanie

Stephanie is a black woman in her mid-twenties who becomes the object of Pieter's sexual obsession. On three different occasions, she has sexual relations with him. Stephanie is a mysterious woman whose constantly alternating smiles and frowns do not seem to reflect her true feelings in any given situation. In chapter 2, Sophie remarks, "She took her sentences smiling and frowning, and would go smiling and frowning out of the court to the prison, and would come out from the prison smiling and frowning, . . ." She seems completely unaffected by anything except the threat of losing her illegitimate child.

Stephanie lives with Esther and brews and sells illegal liquor to support herself. As a result of her lifestyle, she is well-known by the police, who have arrested her often. When she is threatened with having her child taken away from her, she seeks out legal work, but is unable to hold onto such a position, so she returns to earning money illegally. Faced with the reality of losing her child, she goes along with Sergeant Steyn's plan to destroy Pieter, and betrays him.

Sergeant Steyn

Because Pieter is given the high-ranking position of lieutenant in the police force, Sergeant Steyn is resentful at being made subordinate to a man who is younger than he is. Steyn's resentment is made worse by a few incidents in which Pieter is harsh to him,

and he resolves to destroy Pieter. He conspires with Stephanie to trap Pieter into sleeping with Stephanie a third time so that evidence can be collected, including a shoe print and a seashell placed in Pieter's pocket by Stephanie.

Emily van Vlaanderen

Emily is one of Pieter's three sisters. She is the middle sister and is married to a man from Johannesburg.

Frans van Vlaanderen

Frans is Pieter's younger brother.

Henrietta van Vlaanderen

Henrietta is the eldest of Pieter's three sisters. She is married to a quiet man who is afraid of Jakob.

Jakob van Vlaanderen

Jakob is Pieter's harsh and distant father, whose physical stature matches his strong personality despite his limp. He is cold, intimidating, and intolerant, and is unable to understand Pieter, who is equally comfortable riding and shooting with the neighborhood boys, or admiring flowers or collecting stamps alone. He is the chairman of his political party although he rarely appears for meetings, feeling that the members of the party are his "oxen." His prized possession is the family Bible brought over by his ancestors from Holland, and he often reads from "the Book." In fact, until Pieter gives him a book of pictures of South African birds, the only book Jakob ever reads is the Bible. When he learns of his son's crime, the first thing he does is cross Pieter's name out of the family Bible.

Jakob is depicted as a rigid and religious man who demands control in his home. Many critics claim that his sudden death at the end of the story is the result of his shame and hurt over his son's act.

Koos van Vlaanderen

Koos is Frans's ten-year-old son, who idolizes his uncle Pieter and hopes to become a police officer. When Pieter is shamed by his crime, Koos loses all affection for Pieter and becomes withdrawn.

Martha van Vlaanderen

Martha is Pieter's youngest sister. She and the new minister fall in love, and she anticipates great joy in married life. Because of Pieter's crime, however, she coldly breaks off the engagement, hiding her pain from the world as she resigns herself to life as a spinster.

Mrs. van Vlaanderen

Pieter's mother's first name is never revealed in the story although her personality is described on several occasions. She is a warm and compassionate woman who loves her family unconditionally. In chapter 1, Sophie notes, "If ever a woman was all love, it was she, all love and care." Sophie believes that Pieter inherited his father's masculinity and his mother's sweet temperament. Even when Mrs. van Vlaanderen learns of her son's crime, her first instinct is to run and see him, but Jakob forbids it. As a widow, however, she is free to see her son, whom she tries to comfort as best she can.

Nella van Vlaanderen

Pieter's wife, Nella, is a sweet, shy woman who is afraid of the roughness present in the world. Not only does she fear the big city of Johannesburg, she also fears such things as the coarse laughter of men in bars. She is a loving mother and a dutiful wife although she and her husband are sexually incompatible. After her husband's crime is revealed, her response is unknown because Jakob sends Nella and the children away from Pieter.

Pieter van Vlaanderen

The novel's main character, Pieter, is the lieutenant of the police. He breaks the law forbidding sexual contact between whites and blacks. Depicted as a divided personality from childhood, he suffers an internal struggle between what he knows to be moral and legal, and what he finds himself uncontrollably compelled to do. The strife within Pieter manifests itself as "black moods" that are described as falling upon him, almost as if they are separate from his true self.

Pieter is a charming, virtuous, and athletic man who is a pillar in his community of Venterspan. He is respected for being tender and understanding toward blacks as well as whites, an attitude he developed at a young age. Pieter enjoys reading on a variety of subjects, even though his father only reads the Bible. Like his father, he is tall and radiates an imposing presence. Pieter regularly attends church and is a well-known rugby player who is admired by many. He has a wife, Nella, and children, and lives near his parents, aunt, and siblings. His relationship with his father has always been strained, a situation that temporarily lightens just before Pieter's crime is discovered.

Sophie van Vlaanderen

Sophie is the narrator of the story. She is Pieter's aunt, who, because of her facial disfigurement, lives with her brother and his family although she remains a bit of an outsider. Having never married, she regards Pieter as the son she never had, and dotes on him shamelessly. Her position in the family is subordinate to that of both Jakob and Pieter; she loves both, but feels overpowered by them. She is a religious woman who attends church regularly and reads the Bible often.

A keen observer of those around her, Sophie notices that something is wrong with her nephew early in the novel and, based on a look that passes between Stephanie and Pieter, she becomes very anxious for him. Even before this, she realizes that Pieter is a deeply divided person in many respects. Throughout the book she remarks that if she had only been more assertive with her nephew, she might have prevented the tragedy that befell the family.

Mr. Vorster

Vorster is a young man who works in the police station. He admires Pieter greatly until Pieter falls from grace after which Vorster completely turns on him.

Dominee Vos

Vos is the young minister who arrives in town amidst great anticipation. The townspeople have heard that he is a wonderful speaker, and he upholds this reputation with his first sermon. Also an avid rugby player, he is thrilled to meet Pieter, whose reputation as an athlete is well-known. Before long, the minister and Martha fall in love and plan to marry. He leaves the town, however, after Martha breaks their engagement.

Themes

Morality

In *Too Late the Phalarope,* Paton depicts morality as something that resides within and also as something that is imposed by external forces, such as church and government. Pieter's fall suggests that morality, when imposed on individuals by outside forces, is merely a façade. Despite Pieter's position in law enforcement, the external morality imposed by the law is inadequate to prevent him from breaking the very law he is sworn to uphold and enforce.

In contrast, Stephanie's sense of morality is wholly internal, directed only by her maternal drive to keep her child. To this end, she is comfortable brewing and selling illegal liquor, seducing Pieter, and later betraying him. She has no difficulty breaking the law forbidding sexual relations between white men and black women because she sees it as an opportunity to gain the favor of a powerful man. Her duty is to herself and her child, so she is easily recruited by Sergeant Steyn to deceive Pieter to better her chances of keeping her child.

Justice and Consequences

Paton is very clear in his message that breaking political and moral laws brings severe consequences, just or not. Even before Pieter meets privately with Stephanie, he understands the ramifications of acting against the Immorality Act of 1927. Not only has he seen the terror of men who violate it (like Smith), but in chapter 16, his diary reveals his thoughts when Stephanie visits him briefly at his home:

> I should have said to her, let them take your child,
> and send you to prison, let them throw you into the
> street, let them hang you by the neck until you are
> dead, but do not come to my home, nor smile at me,
> nor think there can be anything between you and me.
> For this law is the greatest and holiest of laws, and
> if you break it and are discovered, for you it is nothing
> but another breaking of the law. But if I break it
> and am discovered, the whole world will be broken.

Pieter indeed suffers greatly when his crime is discovered: He loses his position as lieutenant of the police; he loses the respect of many of his friends; his father, Jakob, disowns him and forbids the very mention of his name; and his wife and children are sent away. He endures shame, humiliation, and imprisonment. Additionally, his family suffers for Pieter's actions. His young sister, Martha, must break her engagement to the minister, after which she resigns herself to life as a spinster. His mother is forbidden to see him. His aunt, by choosing to see him again, is permanently cast out of Jakob's

home. Jakob lives in a state of rage and sorrow after his son's crime is revealed, and he dies shortly thereafter.

The case of Smith portrays the seemingly inescapable nature of justice. Smith tries to cover up his crime of impregnating a servant girl by murdering her. The crime is found out, however, and Smith is sentenced to hang for his actions. His attempt to sidestep justice only brings it upon him more harshly as he faces a charge of murder, along with the contempt of the townspeople who know him as a man who has murdered a young girl and an unborn baby to avoid just punishment.

The Divided Self

Sophie frequently refers to Pieter's divided self. At the beginning, she describes him as a child who could out-ride and out-shoot other boys, and at the same time enjoy delicate things like flowers and stamps. She considers him both a boy and a girl for this reason, and explains how disturbed Jakob is about his son's softer side.

Later in the story, when Pieter is a man, Sophie describes the battle raging within him as a struggle between what he knows is good and right and what he finds repulsive. She adds that his struggle is intensified because he cannot control his attraction to that which repels (or should repel) him. Ultimately, he gives in to his "evil" side and indulges his attraction to Stephanie on three different occasions. Sophie remarks in chapter 4, "Darkness and light, how they fought for his soul, and the darkness destroyed him, the gentlest and bravest of men." Much later, after having sex with Stephanie the third time, Pieter bathes while

> trembling with the secret knowledge of the abject creature that was himself, that vowed and could not keep his vows, that was called to the high duty of the law and broke the law, that was moved in his soul by that which was holy and went reaching for that which was vile, that was held in respect by men and was baser than them all.

Sophie is not alone in her view of Pieter as divided; he sees himself that way, too. He refers to his attraction to Stephanie as the "mad sickness," and views it as something that comes to him of its own will. He sees it as a force separate from him, and yet one he cannot cast out of himself. Pieter's "black moods" are portrayed the same way□each one is a separate entity that shrouds him and refuses to be wished away.

Guilt

Once Pieter has broken the law, he is overwhelmed with guilt. He perceives his whole world differently, imagining that everyone around him knows what he has done. Immediately following his first offense, he prays with deep humility, hoping not to offend God by being presumptuous in thinking He will hear his prayer. Pieter imagines:

> that a trumpet had been blown in Heaven, and that the Lord Most High had ordered the closing of the doors, that no prayer might enter in from such a man, who knowing the laws and the commandments, had, of his own choice and will, defied them. As he makes his way home, he is covered with the smell of the kakiebos (a weed with a pungent smell) he had lain down in, and he feels that he is stinking with corruption, with a smell that will travel through the entire town, notifying everyone of his deed. Watching a group of oxen, he envies them because they are "holy and obedient" animals.

Reflecting on how other men his age tell raunchy jokes, Pieter writes in his diary in chapter 15 (when he is only thinking of committing the crime but has not yet done so), "Yet they were all cleaner and sweeter than I. That is a thing I never understood." When Vorster, the young man who works at the police station, is in low spirits, Pieter suspects it is because he has found out what Pieter has done and no longer admires him. The captain's distant mood makes Pieter wonder if he has heard of the crime. When a neighbor sees Pieter and spits and turns away, Pieter can think of no other reason for such behavior than that he, too, knows what Pieter has done. In his relationship with his wife, Pieter becomes more helpful and thoughtful, speaking kind words because of his desire to be with his loving family. At the same time, he is less physically affectionate to his wife because even a kiss on the lips tears him apart. In chapter 21, Pieter's diary reads:

> And what madness made a man pursue something so unspeakable, deaf to the cries of wife and children and mother and friends and blind to their danger, to grasp one unspeakable pleasure that brought no joy, ten thousand of which pleasures were not worth one of the hairs of their heads?

Readers are less sympathetic to Pieter when, after his first offense goes unnoticed, he repeats it. The first time, his guilt is fueled by terror that the note on his door ("I saw you") was from someone who had seen him with Stephanie. The second time, his guilt is fueled completely by his own shame and feelings of weakness.

Style

First-Person Narrator

Paton's use of Sophie as the story's narrator is unusual because she is a secondary character yet has special knowledge of Pieter's thoughts and feelings by virtue of having Pieter's diary as a resource. Consequently, she is in a position to tell the reader about events and conversations that happened outside her personal experience.

Although she is a secondary character, Sophie is a reliable narrator for three reasons. First, she includes excerpts from Pieter's diary to support what she is saying. Second, she explains early in the novel that because of her facial disfigurement, she has always been slightly apart from everyone else, even in her own family. This unique position has enabled her to become an especially keen observer of those around her. It is Sophie, after all, who suspects something is happening between Pieter and Stephanie simply because of a look she notices that Stephanie gives to Pieter. Third, Sophie is honest and never claims to fully understand everything in the story. She readily admits it when there is something she does not understand, as in chapter 4 when she tells about the stamps that Kappie shows Pieter. She says that they are particularly expensive, but since she is not a stamp collector, she cannot say why: "If you cannot understand it, I cannot explain it, never having understood it myself." Rather than omit this passage from the story, she includes it, despite her admittedly limited knowledge in the area.

Biblical Allusions

Paton's father was a very religious man who conducted his own church service every Sunday in the Paton home. From the early age of five, Alan Paton preached on biblical subjects to his family, as he was assigned to do by his father. In *Too Late the Phalarope,* the author's familiarity with the Bible is evident in various passages that draw on biblical language or passages. His application of biblical ideas indicates an ability to draw from the Bible excerpts applicable to a variety of situations.

Chapter 26 contains a paraphrase of Ecclesiastes 3:1-5; Sophie remarks

For I know there is a time to weep and a time to
laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance; a time
to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from
embracing.

At the end of the same paragraph, she adds that "to have a feast is good, and to eat and drink and be merry, but one cannot live on feasting." This is a clear reference to Matthew 4:4 and Luke 4:4 in which Jesus says that man cannot live by bread alone. At the end of the novel, Jakob is found dead, "bowed over the Book of Job." This is significant because in the Bible, Job is a righteous man who suffers and endures much.

Simile

Sophie frequently uses similes to illustrate her points. This may be a result of her observational skills, which would enable her to see similarities between images or experiences that may not occur to those around her. Sophie regards Stephanie, for example, as being like a tigress in protecting her child. In chapter 26, Nella's sexual distance from her husband is offered as a partial explanation for Pieter's seeking out Stephanie's company. Pieter is compared to a man who loses a jewel and then seeks it out among filth and garbage. After Pieter confesses to his transgression, Sophie says in chapter 35 that she expects the dreadful news to "go like fire from every house to every house, and from every farm to every farm in the grass country."

In chapter 23, Pieter notices that Vorster seems withdrawn. Because Pieter imagines that the boy knows about the crime, the narrator describes Vorster as having "a drawn and unhappy face, like a man who has taken great steps for God and has publicly given his life and his possessions, and then finds that he no more believes in Him." As Kappie tries to make sense of Pieter's changing moods, Sophie notes in chapter 25, "Kappie sat there like a man with a puzzle with a hundred pieces, with a picture all but complete, with six or seven pieces that would not fit at all." In the same chapter, she recalls the family's momentary return to happiness as she comments, "And I remember that time, for our happiness came back again, like a moment of sunshine from a heavy sky."

Foreshadowing

Because she is telling the story in past tense, Sophie occasionally holds the reader's interest by the use of foreshadowing. By interspersing intriguing "teasers" throughout he novel, she keeps the reader engaged in the action of the plot. At the end of chapter 6, for example, Sophie describes Nella as sweet and innocent, adding, "Then the hard hand of Fate struck her across the face, and shocked her into knowledge, but only after we had been destroyed." The destruction to which Sophie refers occurs much later in the book, when the family is torn apart by Pieter's crime. Similarly, in chapter 15, Sophie comments on sudden changes in weather, concluding, "So did my summer turn, not into quietness and peace, but to the dark black storm that swept us all away."

Hinting at how Pieter's crime would eventually be discovered, Sophie notes in chapter 25 that Sergeant Steyn went on vacation with his family, and his daughter picked up bits of seashell. Sophie concludes that the girl "collected them in her innocence, and put them in a box, and brought them back to Venterspan; and by one of them collected in innocence, the house of van Vlaanderen was destroyed."

Historical Context

Jan Christiian Smuts

A statesman and philosopher, Jan Christiian Smuts was a well-known military leader in South Africa during the early twentieth century. He was a Dutch-speaking Boer whose family originally arrived in South Africa in 1692 as farmers. Smuts grew up in the hostile political climate in which the British and the Dutch were fighting for control of South African land. Educated in law, Smuts adhered to the idea that to cultivate the continent, compromise and peace were necessary between the warring European nations. After the Jameson Raid (an effort by the British to provoke a war), however, Smuts sided with the Boers and proclaimed his loyalty to Afrikaner nationalism.

When the Boer War erupted in 1899, Smuts was still hoping to achieve peace between the British and the Dutch, but was consistently disappointed by efforts to negotiate. Smuts distinguished himself as a military leader during the war, and he and General J. H. de la Rey organized resistance against opposing forces in western Transvaal (one of the two Afrikaner republics).

When the war was over, Smuts returned to law and was the principal designer of the constitution of the Union of South Africa. As he delved deeper into politics, he made enemies of miners and politicians on the far right. Chief among his opponents were members of the National Party. In both world wars, Smuts led South Africa against Germany; in World War I, he led troops as a military leader; during World War II, he was prime minister, and under his leadership South Africa entered the war.

Segregation in South Africa

As British and Dutch forces fought for control of South African land, the native populations were subject to new laws governing their social and political separation from the white citizens. In the early twentieth century, both Jan Christiian Smuts and his political opponent, J. B. M. Herzog, supported racial segregation in South Africa, although Smuts did not favor abolishing all rights for blacks.

The first parliament was established in South Africa in 1910, and one of the first decisions made was to restrict blacks to purchasing land within designated reserves. The reserves, however, accounted for only seven percent of the total land. This extreme limitation ensured that migratory labor would continue to be available for white landowners and that blacks would be forced to work for low wages in mines and other industries. When World War II ended in 1945, political leaders realized that South Africa was rapidly becoming an industrialized nation, which meant that the black population was gaining freedom and importance. To address this, the Boers (white South Africans of Dutch descent) adopted a policy of apartheid, the aftereffects of which continue to be a dominant political issue in South Africa.

Even before apartheid, there were laws governing the social interactions of blacks and whites. An example of this is the Immorality Act of 1927, which is at the center of *Too Late the Phalarope.* This Act outlawed sexual relationships between blacks and whites, and later the Act would be expanded to forbid sexual relationships between whites and any other race. Toward the end of the twentieth century, as apartheid began to crumble, so did these laws.

Modernist Period in Literature (1914-1965)

World War I ushered in the literary movement known as Modernism. While the term is primarily applied to British literature, critics generally consider Paton to have been a modernist author at the time *Too Late the Phalarope* was published. Some of his later work is considered postmodernist.

The Modernist Period is characterized by lost optimism following the horrors of the war and the beginnings of experimentation as writers intentionally broke with tradition and conventions regarding literary form and content. Literature written during this time often focuses on social issues, attempting to raise the consciousness of readers and introduce them to new realities. Much modernist work emphasizes the individual experience over the larger social context and contains psychological, philosophical, or political elements. Many works, such as T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land,* reflect a sense of fragmentation and despair. *Too Late the Phalarope* is an example of a modernist work that depicts self-awareness and the dark side of human nature.

Critical Overview

Critics generally agree that *Too Late the Phalarope,* while often overshadowed by *Cry, the Beloved Country,* is Paton's best work. At the time of publication, reviewers were already recognizing it as superior to its predecessor.

In his 1953 review, Harold C. Gardiner wrote that the novel is a "much more tautly drawn tale" than the first. He added that it is compassionate, while remaining "strong and manly, and manifests . . . a deeply felt realization of the moral plight, of the agony of soul of others." Nicholas H. Z. Watts of *Durham University Journal* commented that *Too Late the Phalarope* "matches the elegiac beauty and power of the earlier novel and the intensity of Paton's most recent one [*Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful*] and deserves greater recognition than it has yet received." Similarly, Kirsten Holst Petersen observed in *Reference Guide to English Literature,* "Paton is . . . at his very best when he explores the Calvinist Boer mind as he does in *Too Late the Phalarope,* an excellent but much ignored book."

Stylistically, Paton's novel is scrutinized both favorably and unfavorably. Sheridan Baker of *English Studies in Africa* found the use of Sophie as a narrator to be a too-obvious and old-fashioned literary device. Further, he regarded her as ineffective, commenting, "Paton brings Sophie a long way into reality, but he cannot make her narrative mechanics natural." Baker suggested that Paton uses Sophie as a narrator to avoid dealing with the blackwhite sexual relationship head-on. He remarked, "Sophie enables him to stop short." In contrast, other critics have commended Paton's stylistic ability in the novel, with special praise for the character of Sophie. In *International Review,* Irma Ned Stevens named the point of view in *Too Late the Phalarope* as one of the novel's notable strengths, adding that Sophie's telling of the story is carried out in wisdom and love. F. Charles Rooney wrote in *Catholic World* that Paton skillfully uses the narrator to express his own beliefs, adding that Sophie "becomes such a real person to the reader that there is never a question of sermonizing. In her, Paton has created his only really well-defined woman; this portrait is a work of technical mastery and avoids a potential sore spot."

Numerous critics point to the biblical elements present in *Too Late the Phalarope,* as well as to the novel's similarities to a Greek tragedy. In his *Books with Men behind Them,* author Edmund Fuller refers to Sergeant Steyn as a Judas figure, who betrays Pieter and then disappears from the story. Commenting on the novel's religious language and content, Rose Moss of *World Literature Today* remarked:

> Paton's liturgical style and its clear connections with the Bible and Christian practice offer a way to connect individual virtue with the virtue and sufferings of others, with the history and hopes of devout people in other times and places and, finally, with the story of Christ, whose suffering and death demonstrate that the end of the story is not despair but hope.

Along with many other critics, Fuller commented on Paton's use of the classical tragedy form. In *Too Late the Phalarope,* he explained, the author creates a relatively simple story featuring a virtuous protagonist whose tragic flaw destroys his life. The hero ultimately grasps what has happened and understands his responsibility for the outcome. Watts described four classical elements in *Too Late the Phalarope:* well-known themes, such as the inevitable fall; unity of time, place, and action; the presence of an almost sexless, detached narrator; and a heroic central figure. Generally speaking, critics admire Paton's use of classical techniques in a modern setting, and maintain that, as in the Greek tragedies, these techniques give the story a broad-based appeal and relevance.

While some scholars find the novel lacking in universality, others counter that universal themes are the book's strength. To a small group of critics, the setting is too specific in time and place, and the culture of the community is too foreign, to be applicable to contemporary life. Because Pieter is presented as such a noble and charming man at the beginning of the book (in fact, Sophie compares him to a god), they deem him inaccessible to readers, and they are not particularly sympathetic to his guilt and weakness. On the other hand, critics such as Gardiner regard the novel as universally meaningful. He commented, "It is infinitely more than a mere tale of misguided passion. The great passion that emerges in the pages is of Mr. Paton's own hatred of racial discrimination." Commenting on Paton's fiction, Fuller wrote,

> The measure of his books is that while distilling the essence of South Africa, they speak to many aspects of the condition of the whole world. He has struck universal notes, and the world outside his own land honors him for his art, his humanity, and his integrity.

Despite disagreement over where *Too Late the Phalarope* fits in the context of world literature, most scholars commend the novel as Paton's most polished fiction. Articulating this sentiment, Watts concluded:

> This, Paton's finest novel, thus operates with great success on several levels. It is a convincing story of crime and punishment. It is a strong study of individuals who, despite their pronounced characteristics, are always more than stereotypes. As a psychological novel, it is a powerful depiction of the corrosive effect of guilt and the destructive power of a repressed subconscious. . . . And it turns out to be what we perhaps first expected: a devastating critique of apartheid and the spirit that underlies it. Paton's commitment to social justice and compassion, which rises so movingly from the pages of *Cry, the Beloved Country,* here finds such unity of composition, such austerity of expression, such integrity of faith and

such universal meaning that *Too Late the Phalarope* stands as an exceptional book.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Bussey holds a master's degree in interdisciplinary studies and a bachelor's degree in English literature. She is an independent writer specializing in literature. In the following essay, she considers the power of words in Paton's novel.

The first sentence of *Too Late the Phalarope* is, "Perhaps I could have saved him, with only a word, two words, out of my mouth." Alan Paton establishes from the onset that in this novel, the power of words will be substantial and will play an important role in the plot. Words are in some cases considered as immutable as if written in stone; in other cases they have the potential to bring about life-changing outcomes.

Pieter uses the power of the written word by writing a secret diary, which he gives to his aunt at the end of the book. Readers must remember that it is the diary that allows Sophie to know everything that has happened. Without Pieter's diary, there is no novel.

As an officer of the law, Pieter understands the authority of the written word, especially in the forms of laws and charges. Before he breaks the law, he feels drawn to Stephanie, yet he knows that acting on his impulse is very dangerous. He seems less concerned with the moral weight of his decision to break the law than he does with the legal consequences of doing so. He has sexual relations with Stephanie on three different occasions, and yet the word "adultery" never enters his mind. He feels guilt and behaves more lovingly toward his family, but what frightens him is the thought of being exposed and subjected to legal punishment. This indicates that his psyche is terrorized by the law rather than the ideology behind it; by the letter of the law, not its spirit.

In two instances, the inviolable nature of charges, once written, is emphasized. In chapter 21, Pieter fears that Sergeant Steyn has discovered his crime and will, at any moment, come forward with the charges against him. Pieter thinks:

> Then there could be no mercy, for when a charge is made, a charge is made, and once a thing is written down, it is written down; and a word can be written down that will mean the death of a man, and put the rope around his neck, and send him into the pit; and a word can be written down that will destroy a man and his house and his kindred and his friends, and there is no power, of God or Man or State, nor any Angel, nor anything present or to come, nor any height, nor depth, nor any other creature that can save them, when once the word is written down.

This passage is repeated almost verbatim at the end of chapter 35, after Pieter has confessed his crime to the captain. At this point, of course, the charge has been made and, as stated in the passage, Pieter will soon be destroyed along with his family, and will lose most of his friends.

Perhaps the most striking example of the power of written words is the note left on Pieter's door, which he discovers when he returns home after the first time he sleeps with Stephanie. The note says, "I saw you," and all Pieter can think of is the cracking sound he heard just after he and Stephanie finished making love. At the time, Pieter had feared it was a "watcher," who saw everything and would soon destroy Pieter's life by revealing his crime. The note on the door seems to confirm this, and Pieter is engulfed in panic and fear, waiting for his doom. In chapter 21, Sophie writes that he "thought only of the note, the note, with the three small words and the seven letters that could destroy a man." In the next chapter, Pieter looks at the note again, "but it told him no more than it had told him before, that he was in peril greater than any death." The note haunts him to the extent that he becomes paranoid, wondering who knows about him and who does not. He interprets his coworkers' bad moods as intentional distancing from him, and he imagines that a neighbor's unfriendly behavior is a sign of disgust at Pieter's crime. Each day is progressively worse until he learns that Japie innocently left the note after he saw Pieter having drinks with his cousin Anna. He only meant to tease his friend, and as soon as Pieter realizes that nobody saw his crime, his entire reality changes.

The book uses another case of misunderstood words to move the plot forward at a key juncture. In a bad mood, Pieter notices a prisoner while on inspection with Steyn one afternoon. Pieter knows that this prisoner is supposed to be in court, and asks Steyn why the prisoner is in the wrong place. When Steyn answers that he thought the prisoner's court date was the next week, Pieter orders him to get the written instructions that Pieter himself had made out for Steyn. Sheepishly, Steyn returns, explaining that he made a mistake and read the date wrong. Pieter is enraged, and asks Steyn if he is unable to read. Because of this incident, Steyn is humiliated and vows to destroy Pieter. Although he already disliked and resented Pieter, this episode fortifies Steyn's resolve to be rid of Pieter for good. While it may be argued that Steyn was already so close to committing himself to Pieter's ruin that any similar incident would have achieved the same outcome, Paton chose to set Pieter's fate in motion because of a few misunderstood words.

The tragedy of misunderstood words resurfaces when Sophie laments in chapter 31 that she did not act when she could have to save her nephew. She explains:

And now as I write I am like a woman whose man
is dead, because of some accident that was not foreseen,
or because of some doctor that was not called,
or because of some word that sounded like another;
and she reproaches herself, and thinks that if for years
she had not said . . . let' s go tomorrow, or if she had
said, let's go by the lower road, perhaps her man
would be alive again.

By equating a misunderstood word with an accident or the failure to call a doctor, Sophie expresses the seriousness of the power of words. Moreover, this passage

makes a point that, like the accident and the decision not to call the doctor, misunderstood words are preventable, yet often result in tragedy.

In *Too Late the Phalarope,* there is also an underlying belief in the action value of words, meaning that written or spoken words have the power to change people's feelings and opinions (and, by extension, other people's fates). Early in the story, in chapter 1, Sophie explains why she is telling the story:

> And I write it all down here, the story of our destruction.
> And if I write it with fear, then it is not so
> great a fear, I being myself destroyed. And if I write
> it down, maybe it will cease to trouble my mind. And
> if I write it down, people may know that he was two
> men, and that one was brave and gentle.

Sophie hopes that her writing will not only change her feelings about her painful experience, but that it will also change people's minds about what kind of man her nephew is.

When Pieter commits his crime, he becomes very prayerful and engages in bargaining with God. He makes vows and repeats them, hoping that his words will travel to heaven and change the consequences of his actions. He recalls a story of a man surrounded by enemies who dropped to his knees and prayed, and when the man opened his eyes, he was alone. Pieter hopes that, by praying and making promises, his imagined (at this point) enemies will also disappear.

The act of reading figures into the lives of the characters in very different ways. Pieter turns to his books in search of a way to cleanse his spirit of evil, or, at the very least, to learn some way to find peace and relief from his turmoil. Certain the answers are somewhere in his books, "He went into his study, and looked there amongst his learned books that told all the sins and weaknesses of men, hoping to find himself, though this he had already done, finding nothing." Jakob reads the cherished family Bible exclusively until his son gives him a book of South African birds as a gift. This book becomes a temporary bridge between the two men, as the father takes the son on a picnic to show him the phalarope, one of the birds misidentified in the book. After Pieter's crime is exposed, Jakob's first act is to take the family Bible and cross Pieter's name off the family list. This is a symbolic act meant to remove Pieter and his shameful ways from the family. As for Sophie, she reads very little but says at the end of the book that though she is gradually getting past the pain of the events told in the novel, when she reads of a man who has broken "the iron law" (the Immorality Act), her grief returns.

It is not surprising that Paton, a writer, would believe so strongly in the power of words. Indeed, as an activist, he relied on his words to change people's minds, inform his readers, and challenge existing ideas. Today he is still considered one of South Africa's most influential and important writers, which is a testament to the power of his own words on subjects that were so meaningful to him.

Source: Jennifer Bussey, Critical Essay on *Too Late the Phalarope,* in *Novels for Students,* The Gale Group, 2001.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Callan examines Too Late the Phalarope *by comparing and contrasting it with Paton's first novel,* Cry the Beloved Country.

Paton's second novel, *Too Late the Phalarope,* is similar in certain respects to *Cry, the Beloved Country,* but, for the most part, the novels differ strikingly. But works have similarities of style and dramatic method, and each relates a comparatively simple story. *Too Late the Phalarope* tells the story of Pieter van Vlaanderen, a young police lieutenant decorated in war and also nationally famous as a football player. He is a married man with two children, highly respected in the rural Afrikaner community and, indeed, the kind of man in whose presence other men feel constrained to subdue loud talk or off-color jokes. Yet Pieter van Vlaanderen transgresses the strict prohibitions of the South African Immorality Act which forbids sexual relations between members of different races, and thereby brings tragic destruction on himself and his family.

But the differences between the two novels are more significant than the similarities. *Too Late the Phalarope* concentrates on the inner struggles in the soul of one man in the South African social situation; for the clamor of many voices and the broad overview, it substitutes an inner dialogue between two aspects of a divided personality. Furthermore, while the theme of restoration is still fundamental in the second novel, it is approached indirectly, and its attendant note of hope is muted. This is due in part to its literary method, which resembles the method of Greek tragedy more closely than does that of the earlier novel, but it also may be due to the changes that meanwhile took place in South Africa's political climate.

The note of hope in *Cry, the Beloved Country* had some real basis in fact. There were signs in the months immediately following World War II that South African society was prepared to accept progressive change in relations among the races. In 1946 Prime Minister J. C. Smuts had appointed a commission to look into South Africa's urban conditions and the problems of migratory African labor □the very conditions and problems that impelled Paton to write *Cry, the Beloved Country.* It was generally expected that this commission, known as the Fagan Commission, would present liberal recommendations to Parliament. It was also generally anticipated that any such recommendations would be implemented by Parliament through the influence of the Deputy Prime Minister Jan Hofmeyr, who then seemed likely to succeed General Smuts as Prime Minister.

In 1948, the same year that *Cry, the Beloved Country* appeared, the typical rhythm of South African politics reasserted itself, for any suspicion that the Liberal Spirit is working among parliamentary leaders starts a ground-swell for racial intolerance among the white voters, particularly in rural areas. And in the general elections of that year, Dr. Malan's Nationalist Party received an unexpectedly large plurality for its policy of *apartheid.* This policy denies Africans the right to permanent residence in the towns, and emphasizes ineradicable cultural differences between their tribal heritage and the heritage of "Western Civilization," which is thought to be the birthright of whites only. Jan

Hofmeyr died a few months after this election, and with him went much of the hope of powerful, outspoken opposition to the new government's policies. In these respects at least, the hope of going forward in faith implicitly present in *Cry, the Beloved Country* was diminished.

By 1952, the year that Paton wrote *Too Late the Phalarope* during a three-month period in London and in an English seaside boarding house, the new Nationalist government in South Africa had begun implementing its policies of *apartheid* with little regard for opposition views. Paton did not, however, turn his new novel into an attack on *apartheid,* nor into propaganda for any political cause. His choice of the magnanimous Afrikaner woman Tante Sophie as the narrator proves to be a valuable device in this respect. He does not even set the novel with any obviousness in the post-1948 period, and he ignores the immediate social and economic manifestations of *apartheid.* Instead he probes penetratingly into its roots in the ideal of Pure Race; and makes manifest the extent to which this ideal□placed above all other considerations□ constitutes a false deity, or "heretical Christianity," as he calls it elsewhere. It is this pride in Pure Race, set up as an ideal, that the narrator, Tante Sophie, has in mind in her summing up: "I pray we shall not walk arrogant, remembering Herod whom an Angel of the Lord struck down, for that he made himself a God." Sophie's view implies that this racial arrogance has affinities with the Greek concept of *hybris*□the special manifestation of pride that incurs tragic retribution. *Hybris* is the arrogation by men of attributes proper only to the gods, and tragedy is the inevitable destruction meted out to *hybris.*

Too Late the Phalarope is a Greek tragedy in modern South African dress. It is set in a small town in the eastern Transvaal□a district populated almost wholly by Afrikaans-speaking white farmers who cherish the four fundamental and inseparable tenets of Afrikaner Nationalism: *Volk, Kerk, Taal, Land.* The *Volk* is the separate and unique Afrikaner People descended from the Voortrekkers; the *Kerk* is the Afrikaner branch of the Dutch Reformed Church to which, ideally, all the *Volk* adhere; the *Taal* is the Afrikaans language which, in place of a national boundary, identifies their nationhood; and the *Land* is the soil of South Africa, sacred to the Afrikaner *Volk* in almost the same sense that the Promised Land was sacred to the Israelites.

These fundamental ideals are summed up in the novel by the Afrikaner patriarch, old Jakob van Vlaanderen, when he rebukes the besotted Flip van Vuuren who persisted in demanding, "what's the point of living, what's the point of life?": "So Jakob van Vlaanderen stood up from his chair, and said in a voice of thunder, the point of living is to serve the Lord your God, and to uphold the honour of your church and language and people, take him home." Jakob van Vlaanderen represents the attitude of those Afrikaans-speaking South Africans who refused to accept Louis Botha's ideal of bringing all white South Africans together in a common patriotism. His wife and his sister, Tante Sophie, adhere to Louis Botha's ideal discussed in Chapter 1, above; his son Pieter, in the finer aspects of his character, might be said to personify Botha's ideal.

This difference in their estimates of where the duties of patriotism lie constitutes one of the causes of friction between Jakob and his son Pieter. At the outbreak of World War II, the South African Parliament was divided on the question of entering the war against

Hitler's Germany on Britain's side, or remaining neutral, and General Smuts carried his motion for participation by a very narrow majority. The people were similarly divided. So it was found expedient to agree that men already in the armed forces and police should be permitted either to retain their positions at home or to volunteer for service abroad. Those who so volunteered were identified by orange tabs on their shoulderstraps, which, unfortunately, sharply distinguished them from those who did not; the oath taken by these volunteers came to be known as "the red oath" from the color of the tabs. Jakob van Vlaanderen was one of those who saw the war as "an English war" in which no true Afrikaner should participate: "And when his son Pieter took the red oath and had gone to war, he would bear no mention of his name. . ." When Pieter returned, Jakob would refer to his service medals and decorations, which included the Distinguished Service Order, as "foreign trash."

Pieter's volunteering for war service was later to play a large part in his tragic downfall. Since he had attained the rank of major in the army, he returned to the local police force as an officer. He therefore outranked Sergeant Steyn, who had longer service, but who, agreeing with Jakob's Afrikaner patriotism, had refused to take "the red oath." This is the source of the enmity that makes Sergeant Steyn the instrument of Pieter's destruction. Steyn is something of an Iago, but his hatred is not motiveless.

This general climate of nationalism lying behind the conflicts of *Too Late the Phalarope* is one of the elements that makes it an authentic portrait of an important segment of South African life. As he did in *Cry, the Beloved Country,* Paton adds to this general authenticity by weaving certain actual events of the time into the action of his plot. In his hands these actual events become dramatic properties inseparable from the action of the story.

One of these "properties" is the book that Lieutenant Pieter van Vlaanderen gives as a birthday gift to his father. The non-fictional model for this fictional book was *The Birds of South Africa*□a comprehensive work with fine color illustrations like the Audubon series in the United States, published in South Africa in 1948. For Paton, one of whose hobbies is birdwatching, this would have been a memorable event, made even more memorable by the fact that its author, the respected naturalist Austin Roberts, died that year. The title of this book pleases old Jakob van Vlaanderen, to whose intense nationalism the name South Africa borders on the sacred, but the name of the author repels him. He will not even mention it, and he always refers to the author as "the Englishman." Since Paton does not reveal the author's name, readers are left to assume that old Jakob's repugnance is a measure of his hostility to Englishmen in general. But there would be good reason for Jakob's special repugnance toward the name Roberts, for the British general whose armies invaded the Transvaal across the very terrain of the novel's setting, and who for a time during the Boer War virtually ruled South Africa, was General Lord Roberts.

It may be the touch of obscurity resulting from Paton's reluctance to extend to his readers a clearer motive for Jakob's repugnance that leads some to seek symbolic significance in the book of birds and, in particular, in the elusive little bird, the phalarope. The book of birds does affect the relations between Jakob and his son, but it is not a

symbol in any exact sense. Neither is the phalarope a symbol. It is an actual bird about whose habits old Jakob, in fact, knew more than "the Englishman" who wrote the book. In *The Birds of South Africa,* Austin Roberts has some hesitation in classifying the phalarope as a South African bird, because he has only one recorded observation of each of the two species of phalarope, the "Grey" and the "Red-necked," on South African coasts. Jakob knew the phalarope as a fairly common inland bird also, and the Englishman's ignorance was a topic, therefore, that he was happy to discuss even with his son Pieter, with whom he had never before achieved rapport.

Another actual event of the period□or an account closely based on it□helps Paton to establish the atmosphere of obsession with racial purity in a society where the most unforgivable thing is to break "the iron law that no white man might touch a black woman"; and that the most terrible thing in the world is to have such a transgression discovered. This is the case of "the man Smith," modeled on an actual contemporary case of a white farmer who murdered an African servant girl who was pregnant by him. In the hope of preventing the discovery of his victim's identity, which might lead to his own discovery, "the man Smith," with his wife's complicity, cut off and hid the murdered girl's head. In Paton's account, this gruesome crime by an otherwise mild-mannered man is interpreted principally as a consequence of his fear that his illicit sexual relations across the racial line would be discovered.

This account of "the man Smith" provides a dramatic instance of the general air of intense concern with the issue of race-mixture that followed the Nationalist Party election victory of 1948. There was then a law in force against illicit sexual relations between white and non-white. This was Act 5 of 1927, under which Lieutenant Pieter van Vlaanderen is charged in the novel *Too Late the Phalarope.* In 1949 and 1950 there were further extensions of this basic law: the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, and the Immorality Act Amendment Act of 1950. The basic law may at one time have had the merit claimed for it of protecting African women from the whims of white overlords, but the extensions of the basic Act reveal the essence of the new Nationalist ideal. By prohibiting interracial marriage even at a church ceremony, and by extending the Act to cover any racial mixing, as for example, between Indian and Cape Colored communities, the emphasis is clearly focused on the ideal of Pure Race, and not on justifiable protection of vulnerable women. One may find interesting corroboration of this attitude in textbooks widely used in Transvaal schools. In the chapter "Race Relations: White and non-White" in one junior high school textbook in social studies, there is a subheading "The Sin of Race Mixture" which argues that God wills separate races. This account culminates in a long quotation from someone identified only as "one of our great statesmen," that begins with what is tantamount to a summary of *Too Late the Phalarope:* "We must all keep our people white. Great is the pain for blood-relatives and friends if anyone sins against this highest law; greater still is the scandal when a people sins against its own blood."

It is in this context of an ideal of racial purity that classified race-mixture as the ultimate sin□the sin "against this highest law" as the textbook puts it□that Paton sets the tragedy of Pieter van Vlaanderen.

Finally, one should recall in this connection Paton's own account of the times in the Public Affairs pamphlet *South Africa Today.* This pamphlet, intended for American audiences unfamiliar with the complexities of race relations in South Africa, is a scrupulously fair appraisal of the trend of events in South Africa in 1951□a year or so before he set to work on *Too Late the Phalarope.* As a contemporary account, *South Africa Today* provides a very useful background to Paton's novels. It gives a brief historical sketch of the origins and development of South Africa's racial groups, and indicates the current status of each. Its account of "Modern Industry and Tribal Life" with a subsection on "Crime and Disintegration" gives, in small space, the social record dramatized in *Cry, the Beloved Country.* Its account of "The Immediate Situation," more relevant to *Too Late the Phalarope,* points out that racial separation was not a new concept introduced by the Nationalist Party. What was new was the strengthening of the framework of laws requiring the compliance of all with the ideals of *apartheid.* At this early stage, much of this framework of laws was still only 'projected,' but among those already passed into law, Paton notes: "The present Government has amended and widened the Immorality Act of the Hertzog Government . . . It has passed a Mixed Marriages Act which now forbids marriages between whites and non-whites."

Paton makes one statement in *South Africa Today* about his own attitude to Afrikaner nationalism that has a significant bearing on the tone of *Too Late the Phalarope,* and of his other works, particularly the biography of Jan Hofmeyr. He concludes *South Africa Today* at the point where he feels he has written enough for his readers to grasp "the complexity and tragedy" of South Africa's situation, saying:

> This situation is more tragic for the Afrikaner Nationalist
> than for the English-speaking South African,
> for although both know no other home, this is true
> in a different sense of the Afrikaner. In this I feel for
> him painfully and deeply. That is why, for example,
> I never use hurtful language in giving any account of
> Nationalist policies. But the world will take no account
> of his fierce devotion . . . nor of my compassion.

It is this attitude, including its compassion, that Tante Sophie brings to *Too Late the Phalarope,* and to that extent her fictional character incorporates something of Paton himself.

Various characters in *Too Late the Phalarope* embody contrasting attitudes to this sin against the highest law. Some, representing a majority view in the town of Venterspan, uphold the law with iron determination. These include Pieter's father, old Jakob van Vlaanderen, and his father-in-law, who declares he would shoot the offender like a dog. The proponents of this kind of justice include also his fellow policeman, Sergeant Steyn, and the previously admiring young recruit, Vorster. Others view Pieter's transgression with greater compassion. But these are a minority, represented by his aunt, Tante Sophie; his mother; the English-speaking police officer, Captain Massingham; and the Jewish storekeeper, Matthew Kaplan, who is affectionately known by the Afrikaans diminutive, "Kappie." It is chiefly through the contrasting attitudes of old Jakob and Tante

Sophie that we see the opposing themes of destruction and restoration brought into confrontation; and here the sacrificial justice demanded by the iron law outweighs the compassionate justice exhorted by Christ to his followers. Ironically, this victory of vengeance over compassion is exactly what the novel propounds as the greatest of all offenses from a Christian standpoint. Pieter's superior officer, Captain Massingham, sums this up when he says: "An offender must be punished, *mejuffrou,* I don't argue about that. But to punish and not to restore, that is the greatest of all offences." And Tante Sophie, significantly, responds, "Is that the sin against the Holy Ghost?"

These contrasting attitudes, pitting what amounts to the acceptance of inexorable fate against the impulse toward forgiveness and restoration, bear significantly on the status of *Too Late the Phalarope* as a tragedy in the literary sense. It may, therefore, be useful to look more closely at Jakob and Sophie, the two chief embodiments of these attitudes.

Jakob van Vlaanderen, as his name suggests, combines some of the qualities of an Old Testament patriarch with the Afrikaner's elemental Flemish roots. Enshrined in his Transvaal home is the great family Bible in the Dutch language version, containing the names of the van Vlaanderens for 150 years. His forebears had brought it with them from the Cape Colony when they trekked inland to set up their independent Boer republics beyond the reach of British laws and their equal application to white and black. Jakob van Vlaanderen was a strong-willed giant of a man who understood the word obedience "better than he understood the word love." He was an upright man, just in accordance with his own unwavering principles. He believed that his duty to God demanded that he uphold the separateness and racial purity of the Afrikaner people. As befitted his exclusive nationalism, he was a lover of all things South African, including the birds of the veld.

Jakob understood strength and determination in a man, but not sensitivity; he treated the sensitive side of his son's character□his pleasure in such fragile beautiful things as flowers and stamps□with harshness and suspicion. Eventually, prompted by his son's gift of a book of South African birds, he took hesitant steps toward reconciliation. He arranged to show Pieter the phalarope, the little wading bird about whose habits the author of the book was mistaken; and, although perplexed by the whole thing, he even purchased some expensive stamps for him.

This thaw in the iciness of his attitude toward his son adds great poignancy to the novel by suggesting what might have been; but it is not the fact that father and son recognized a common interest too late that supplies the essential element of tragedy. An essential element of tragedy, in addition to the flaw in the hero's character, is that the fate of those enmeshed in its web is determined, like that of King Oedipus, by a power outside their control. This external determining element is present in *Too Late the Phalarope* as a form of historical determinism attendant upon the fundamental assumption that the Afrikaner people are a Pure Race set apart. Therefore, when Jakob hears that his son has "sinned against the race," he knows exactly what his duty to the race demands of him: "So he took the pen and ink, and he crossed out the name of Pieter van Vlaanderen from the book. . ." Then, referring to Pieter's gift of the book of birds: "You will take the book, he said, and the pipe, and everything that the man ever gave to me,

and every likeness of him, and everything in this house that has anything to do with him, and you will burn and destroy them all." This ritual of denial culminates in prayer to God for the destruction of his son's soul; for Jakob solemnly opened the family Bible and read "the most terrible words that man has ever written" from the Hundred and Ninth Psalm, beginning: *"When he shall be judged, let him be condemned; and let his prayer become sin."* And old Jakob read on, blind to the irony that "the most terrible words" of the Psalm are explicitly directed against the man who *"who remembered not to show mercy."*

Old Jakob's actions are predictable. The reader, in fact, accepts them as the inevitable expression of his character. But they are ultimately dictated by an impersonal force outside himself rather than by a father's response to a son's transgression. For Old Jakob could not act otherwise and still maintain the purity of race as the highest law.

The contrasting qualities of mercy and compassion are embodied in Jakob's maiden sister, Tante Sophie van Vlaanderen, who relates Pieter's story. Sophie is a watcher set apart from normal family life and love by a severe facial disfigurement. She has lived all her life in Jakob's house, and she has lavished on her young nephew, Pieter, all the affection of her own unfulfilled maternal instincts. We therefore see both father and son from her sympathetic viewpoint. Her concern for these men, and indeed for all men, is deeply Christian; her Christianity, based on love, contrasts strikingly with Jakob's narrower, puritanical Christianity that respects obedience above all. As narrator, Sophie presents the other characters in all their human frailty; but she refrains from passing judgment on them. She is at pains, for example, to show the human side of Jakob: "For some said he was a hard and love-less man, and would ride down any that stood in his way without pity or mercy. But I tell you it was not true." Yet she is not a party to Jakob's extreme devotion to exclusive Afrikaner nationalism; she prefers to retain her allegiance to Louis Botha's policy of reconciliation.

Sophie has other advantages as a narrator besides her magnanimity of outlook. Having lived all her life with the van Vlaanderen family, she can link her knowledge of Pieter's childhood relations with his father to the events of his tragedy. She recognizes that his downfall is not brought about wholly by momentary temptation, but that it is a consequence of accumulated life experience. Her ability to reveal how past events foreshadowed destruction intensifies the element of tragic inevitability in the novel.

Although Sophie is an observer set aside, with little power over events, she is emotionally involved in the fortunes of Pieter and Jakob. This appears to be one of Paton's main motives in creating her. Speaking of the vitality of the South African novel in English, particularly in the hands of writers of English or Jewish extraction, or Colored writers like Peter Abrahams, Paton has remarked that in South Africa, where the racial struggle primarily pits African against Afrikaner: "It is the Englishman, the Jew and the Coloured man, who are, even when they are drawn into the struggle, the observers. It is they who are better placed than either Afrikaner or African . . . to see the real drama that history has unfolded, even when they are deeply or emotionally involved."

In *Too Late the Phalarope,* Tante Sophie fills an analogous role. She is presented to us as being clearly aware of her own powers of observation. She knows that she developed these powers because she was set apart from the ordinary stream of life by her disfigurement: "I have learned to know the meaning of unnoticed things, of a pulse that beats suddenly, of a glance that moves from here to there. . ." It was she who rightly suspected the marital difficulties between Pieter and his wife Nella; it was she who correctly interpreted Stephanie's sensual invitation to Pieter; it was she who felt uncomfortable about the flirtatious Cousin Anna, who wore the yellow trousers. Paton's device of the secret diary as one source of her information may be an arbitrary one, but it proves useful in establishing her reliability as an observer; for, at key points, she is able to quote from the diary to confirm her original intuition.M

Whatever her technical limitations, one must admit that only a narrator of Tante Sophie's qualities of mind could provide a suitable vehicle for the religious theme of the novel: namely, that it is not the judgment of God but the judgment of men that is a stranger to compassion.

As has already been remarked, *Too Late the Phalarope* resembles *Cry, the Beloved Country* in certain aspects of its artistic method. It is similarly arranged in dramatic sequences depending largely on effective dialogue and the support of a modified chorus. Furthermore its plot has a similar double action. The plot of *Too Late the Phalarope* is divided almost exactly into two complementary movements. The first gradually unfolds the events leading to Pieter van Vlaanderen's temptation and sin; the second reveals him enmeshed in a web of tragedy and destruction. Chapters 1 through 19 may be said, therefore, to comprise The Book of Temptation; Chapters 20 through 39, The Book of Retribution. The two complementary actions of the plot imply an ironic contrast; namely, that even though Pieter's adultery transgresses the laws of God, it is not God, but an idol□the false deity of Pure Race□that exacts the terrible retribution of Pieter's destruction, and the destruction of all belonging to him.

It should perhaps be noted, too, that just as *Cry, the Beloved Country* superimposes a religious theme on a primary social one, *Too Late the Phalarope* superimposes a religious theme on a psychological one. Both novels may therefore be read on more than one level.

In what is here termed The Book of Temptation, Paton represents Pieter van Vlaanderen's temptation and sin as a consequence of several interrelated causes, no one of which is singled out as dominating him so completely that he cannot resist it. Ultimately, he deliberately chooses to seek out the black girl Stephanie; without this element of deliberate choice there would be no intentional offending against the laws of God, and therefore no sin in the Christian sense. The web of contributive causes includes elements that we may tentatively distinguish as psychological, spiritual, physical, and instinctive.

One psychological cause of Pieter's transgression is deeply rooted in the duality of his own nature. He is aware of two conflicting sides to his character: the one, brave and upright; the other possessed by an elemental urge attracting him, he says, to what he

most hated. He conceals this side of his character behind a mask of cold reserve, and when this urge takes hold of him he calls it "the mad sickness." Evidently this "mad sickness" is a strong, but unwanted, sexual attraction to women outside his marriage. His comment on his father's simple, matter-of-fact statemen that he had never touched a woman other than his wife is: "I felt . . . a feeling of envy too, and wonder that I was otherwise." Since Pieter also envies those fellow students at the university who spoke of their physical revulsion to the touch of a non-white person□a revulsion he does not share□it seems clear that by "the mad sickness" he means a sexual desire forbidden by the iron law of his people "that no black woman should be touched by a white man."

The novel suggests that the psychological conflict in Pieter's character has roots in his childhood relations with his father. Pieter, referring to his father's anger at his interest in stamp collecting, says bitterly to Matthew Kaplan: "There was trouble long before the stamps . . . I was born before the stamps." In this respect Pieter's desire for Stephanie can be explained as a psychological impulse to revolt against all his father stood for. But Paton does not rationalize Pieter's action to the extent of lifting the burden of responsibility from his shoulders and transferring it to old Jakob. Pieter was conscious of his problem, and could have sought help. Indeed, his successive attempts to reveal himself to the young clergyman, Dominee Vos, to Kappie, and to Captain Massingham, constitute one link between the theme of temptation, which he can choose to resist, and the web of tragedy manipulated by forces outside his power. There is tragic irony in his successive failures to unburden himself; on each occasion that he attempts to do so, the regard in which others hold him□their worshipful attitude towards him as their hero□intervenes. Even though he had but one thought in his mind□"to tell one human soul of the misery of my life, that I was tempted by what I hated"□a fatal flaw prevents him from doing so; and he asks, but leaves unanswered, "Was it pride that prevented me?"

Another source of Pieter's psychological conflict is the tension between him and his wife Nella, arising from her attitude to married love. However, it would be more relevant to Paton's wider purpose, embracing the problem of love at several levels, to note the possibility of spiritual, in addition to psychological, roots for Nella's attitude. In her marriage, Sophie tells us, Nella had "some idea that was good and true but twisted in some small place, that the love of the body, though good and true, was apart from the love of the soul." In so describing Nella, Paton seems to be pointing beyond such commonplace categories as prudery or Puritanism, to the classic Christian heresies of the Manicheans and the Gnostics. The extreme Manichean doctrine holds that man's body is the work of the Devil and that the soul is engaged in eternal war with it; it is akin to the Gnostic rejection of man's material nature in favor of an idealized abstraction comparable, for example, to the concept of Pure Race. Nella's attitude to married love may be, partly, a heritage from the religious Puritanism of her people; but her extreme revulsion at hearing that the boy Dick had attempted to accost the black girl, Stephanie, suggests that her other heritage, the ideal of Pure Race, is inextricably entwined with her religious outlook. Since Paton has elsewhere referred to the ideal of Pure Race as "a Christian heresy," Nella's attitude may well embody the view that the racial ideals enshrined in the theories of Pure Race constitute a modern Manichean or Gnostic outlook. The point need not be insisted upon, but it provides, like Book Three of *Cry, the*

Beloved Country, another instance of Paton's distrust of abstract utopian, or totalitarian, schemes that substitute an inhuman perfection for the flesh and blood realities of the human condition.

If Nella's part in Pieter's susceptibility to temptation is remote, the part played by Anna is immediate and physical. Anna occupies Tante Sophie's thoughts to a surprising extent□wholly out of proportion to her two brief appearances in the novel. Anna, who is described as "a kind of cousin," works in the city and has acquired city attitudes towards fashions in dress and social drinking. She says openly that Pieter was the only man she ever wanted to marry. When Sophie reveals her dislike of those city women who wear trousers of various colors, she dwells on the point that "it is the yellow trousers that anger me most of all." Later, she tells us that Anna "smokes and wears the yellow trousers that I most dislike." Not really wicked, Anna is flashy, bored by the small town, and slightly vulgar. She is, ultimately, the temptress who, partly unwittingly, is the immediate instrument of Pieter's destruction. At the critical psychological moment when his black mood is deepest as a consequence of Nella's obtuse letter, Sergeant Steyn's mistake, and the high emotional temperature that caused him to write his letter of resignation, Anna waylays him with feminine wiles and the plea "I'm dying for a drink." So, in the Royal Hotel, they have brandy after brandy, "more than he had every drunk before." Aroused by the brandies, Anna's company, and her parting kiss, he goes to meet Stephanie in the vacant ground. Paton implies, nevertheless, that Pieter's choice is deliberate; for whatever forces the underlying psychological drives, the brandies, and Anna's company may have released, his final preparations for the encounter with Stephanie are calculated.

In contrast to Pieter's agonized struggles to avoid temptation, the black girl Stephanie has a simple, uncomplicated purpose for seeking him out. Her life in and out of prison, where she has been sent for brewing illicit liquor, is devoted to the single- minded aim of retaining her sole possesson□ her illegitimate child. In her instinctive preoccupation with the safety of her child, she seizes on the only possibility she can think of for recruiting this great man's protection; it is for the same reason□ to avert danger to her child□that she later carries out Sergeant Steyn's plan to destroy him.

The second movement of the plot of *Too Late the Phalarope,* The Book of Retribution, reaches beyond the interesting psychological and moral aspects of temptation toward the pity and terror of tragedy. The opening episodes of this second movement parallel those opening chapters of the first movement that establish the social atmosphere in which transgressing the prohibitions of the Immorality Act constitutes the most terrible thing in the world. In this case Paton skillfully intensifies the atmosphere, and involves the reader's emotions in the pity and terror that Aristotle identifies as the characteristic effect of tragedy. Pity draws out our sympathy for the tragic character so that we share in his dread of impending evil; terror, in Aristotle's view, is the powerful sense of the utter destructiveness of the impending evil.

First, however, we should note the simple ease with which Paton solves a literary problem that many critics have declared to be insurmountable: the problem of reconciling a Christian viewpoint with tragedy as a literary form. These critics argue on

various grounds. One ground is that the Christian conception of free will cannot admit of determined, inescapable fate. Another is that Christianity can admit only one possible form of tragedy, namely, damnation. Paton undercuts the dilemma by building his tragedy, not on the consequences of Pieter van Vlaanderen's act understood as a sin against God (he leaves this as an inner, private matter), but on the consequences of his act understood as a "sin against the race."

Paton therefore disposes of the sin against God's law in a single paragraph, in which Pieter prays to God in Heaven, partly for forgiveness for his act, and partly for forgiveness for presuming to pray at such a moment. This short paragraph closes with a striking metaphor for the theological assertion that sin cuts man off from God's love:

> For he had a vision that a trumpet had been blown in Heaven, and that the Lord Most High had ordered the closing of the doors, that no prayer might enter in from such a man, who knowing the laws and the Commandments, had, of his own choice and will, defied them.

From this point on, Paton's literary concern is not with Pieter's guilt, but with his terror of discovery. For even while Pieter was praying he heard a twig crack, and he suspected a watcher in the dark. Thereafter he prays repeatedly, not for forgiveness, but that he might not be discovered: "but now it was another mercy that he sought, not to be saved from sin but from its consequences." In the first movement of the plot we encountered "the man Smith" driven by the same terror to a desperate act. But whereas Smith's terror is merely implied, Paton builds up Pieter's mounting terror in great detail, and skillfully involves the reader. After an account of Pieter's ritual cleansing of himself in Chapter 20, Paton devotes four chapters to his three days of terror. Chapters 21 and 22 concern the first day of terror. Chapter 23 begins: "The second day of terror was as bad as the first. . ."; Chapter 24 begins: "And the third day of terror was the worst. . . ." The significance of these episodes goes beyond their immediate value as instruments of suspense; for only by demonstrating the intensity of the tragic character's terror of the impending evil, can Paton assure the reader that the tragic blow, when it comes, is tantamount to total annihilation.

But the blow does not fall on Pieter immediately, and for a time he feels assured that his prayers to avoid discovery have been answered. Therefore when the blow does fall, it comes suddenly and from an unexpected quarter. The events he interpreted as signs that his transgression had been discovered turn out to be mere coincidence or the shallow practical jokes of the welfare worker, Japie Grobler. Pieter's endurance of terror brings a full recognition that the consequences of his act, if discovered, will involve not only himself but Nella and his children and all who bore the name van Vlaanderen. There is hope that his determination to avoid bringing destruction on them will strengthen him against the desire for Stephanie.

These glimmerings of hope seem to point toward a new dawn when old Jakob arranges the family picnic where he and Pieter watch for the phalarope together. Their discovery

of a shared in terest opens a breach in the wall of hostility between them. If it was this hostility that nourished the psychological roots of Pieter's compulsion to rebel against the iron laws his father represents, the discovery of a common interest in the phalarope could imply that unconscious motivation would no longer drive Pieter into the arms of Stephanie.

But the growing inner determination, the picnic, and the phalarope come too late. Sergeant Steyn, like Iago in his enmity, takes a hint of suspicion for surety. He sets a trap for Pieter, and Stephanie, out of fear for the security of her child, carries out Steyn's purpose. She plants the evidence on Pieter and turns witness against him, and he is convicted and sentenced to prison for contravening the Immorality Act, No. 5 of 1927.

Pieter's destruction as a public man is more complete and enduring than his prison sentence. As he had once explained to young Dick: "It's a thing that's never forgiven, never forgotten. The court may give you a year, two years. But outside it's a sentence for life." In the society that made the iron laws there is no hope of public forgiveness or restoration. The characters representing the forces of arrogant pride in race treat the transgressor with supreme contempt. Therefore, in *Too Late the Phalarope,* as in *Cry, the Beloved Country,* the theme of restoration centers around the acceptance of personal responsibility by those who, while detesting the sin, continue to love the sinner and forgive him. These characters, representing the forces of love, try in their various ways to restore Pieter. His friend Kappie, the Jewish storekeeper, suffers mutely with him, but acts with courage to dissuade him from suicide. Captain Massingham is able to put the theme of restoration into words. It is he who recognizes that to destroy and not to restore is the greatest of all offenses, and it is his words that make Sophie understand that Pieter's future rests with Nella, the injured wife: "There is a hard law, *mejouffrou,* that when a deep injury is done to us we never recover until we forgive." The most meaningful forgiveness must come from Nella, for she is the person most wronged by Pieter's action.

As Sergeant Steyn's hatred was an agent of Pieter's destruction, his mother's love is the agent of the measure of restoration possible to him. Sophie attributes Nella's return to stand by Pieter during his trial to the agency of his mother's love: "the girl came back, silent but steadfast, borne on the strong deep river of the mother's love." The love personified by Pieter's mother contrasts with the intense self-concern underlying total devotion of others to pride in Pure Race. We learn little of her in the novel beyond Sophie's estimate that "if ever a woman was all love, it was she. . . ." Her unselfish love is set as a healing spring in the desert of destructive racial pride. Significantly, in her personal relations with people and her humanitarian concern for the welfare of others, she shares the characteristic unselfishness of Arthur Jarvis in *Cry, the Beloved Country.* Thus she provides another fictional parallel for the qualities of Edith Rheinallt Jones that Paton describes in "A Deep Experience." Sophie's final summing up suggests this when she says that Pieter's story would be better told by her sister: "And I wish she could have written it, for maybe of the power of her love that never sought itself, men would have turned to the holy task of pardon, that the body of the Lord might not be wounded twice, and virtue come of our offences."

Source: Edward Callan, "The Pride of Pure Race: *Too Late the Phalarope,*" in *Alan Paton,* Twayne, 1999.

Adaptations

Too Late the Phalarope was adapted as a play by Robert Yale Libott, first produced on Broadway at the Belasco Theater on October 11, 1956.

An audio adaptation was made by Books on Tape in 1982.

Topics for Further Study

In *Too Late the Phalarope* Alan Paton depicts a racially divided society in which laws govern relationships between individuals of different races. Can you think of other historical instances of racism supported or encouraged by laws or government leaders? Prepare a chart that compares and contrasts such situations with the one Paton describes.

Throughout the novel, Sophie refers to "the door." How does Paton use the door as a symbol, and what does it symbolize? Prepare a brief lecture as if you were explaining symbolism to young students unfamiliar with the concept. As an illustration, refer to Paton's use of door imagery.

Read Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Tell- Tale Heart." How does Poe's depiction of guilt compare to Paton's depiction of Pieter's guilt after the first time he meets with Stephanie? How can you account for the different outcomes?

Research the life of Nelson Mandela and his fight against apartheid in South Africa. What do you think are the three most important things he has done for the cause? Then speculate on how the course of history might have been different without his efforts.

Review the climate, resources, and population of South Africa, along with its history since the arrival of the Dutch. Now look at a map and consider what geographical factors are significant to the tumultuous past of this country.

Pieter's awkward relationship with his father is typical of many families. Take into account psychological, sociological, and personality factors, and provide an explanation for the distant relationship of the father and son in the novel. Can your conclusions be generalized to other people's situations? Why or why not?

Compare and Contrast

1920s: Among the laws governing social behavior in South Africa is the Immorality Act of 1927, forbidding sexual relations between blacks and whites. While originally designed to protect helpless servant women from being exploited by powerful bosses, the law eventually comes to represent the pursuit of racial purity by European settlers. The punishments for violating this Act are severe, and the social consequences are staggering.

Today: In 1991, 74 percent of Americans say they view interracial marriage as acceptable. In 1994, the number of black-white interracial marriages in America has risen to 1.2 million, compared to only 651,000 in 1980.

1920s: Education for native South Africans is lacking, and illiteracy is the norm. In a culture with a strong oral tradition, little emphasis is placed on learning to read, despite efforts by missionaries. This is reflected in *Too Late the Phalarope,* in which the black children marvel at Pieter's ability to read any book he picks up.

Today: According to the *United Nations Statistical Yearbook,* the literacy rate in the United States is 99.5 percent.

1920s: Because political power is held by whites, segregation is a way of life throughout South Africa. As a result, blacks have little control over their social, political, or financial lives until the latter part of the century, when apartheid begins to crumble.

Today: Effects of the racial segregation that once dominated U.S. society still linger. Because of a strong civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, American laws supporting segregation are no longer in effect, but racial tension persists in social interactions, art, film, music, and other elements of culture.

1920s: Smallpox is an often-deadly disease feared by people in South African villages. Even into the 1960s there are ten to fifteen million cases reported every year.

Today: Thanks to the discovery by Edward Jenner of a vaccination against smallpox, and a worldwide vaccination effort in 1967, smallpox is nonexistent today. As of 1979, the disease was declared extinct, with only controlled samples of the virus kept in a few laboratories.

What Do I Read Next?

Athol Fugard's play *Master Harold . . . and the Boys* (1983) examines the extremes of racial tension in South Africa. Written by a South-African playwright, it is a story that addresses the human capacity for hate and fear in a drama that is emotionally wrenching.

Nobel Prize-winning author Nadine Gordimer's *July's People* (1981) tells the story of a liberal white family in South Africa who are rescued by July, their servant, and taken to his village. The story reveals the profound differences and similarities between July's people and the white family.

The Scarlet Letter (1850) is Nathaniel Hawthorne's classic novel of guilt, repentance, and vengeance. It tells the story of Hester Prynne, an unmarried woman whose baby is fathered by the town's young minister.

Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948) is the story of Zulu priest Stephen Kumalo, who travels to hostile Johannesburg, where his son is on trial for murdering a white man. This book is Paton's most famous work.

Robert Ross's *A Concise History of South Africa* (1999; Cambridge Concise Histories) provides an overview of the last 1500 years of development, turmoil, and triumph in South Africa.

Further Study

Gordimer, Nadine, "Unconfessed History," in *New Republic,* Vol. 186, No. 12, March 24, 1982, pp. 35-37.

South African Nobel Prize-winning author Gordimer discusses the voice in *Too Late the Phalarope* as it compares to the voice in Paton's later novel, *Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful.*

Hooper, Myrtle, "Paton and the Silence of Stephanie," in *English Studies in Africa,* Vol. 32, No. 1, 1989, pp. 53-63.

Hooper reviews the story of *Too Late the Phalarope* with special attention to the causes, purposes, and outcomes of Stephanie's silence.

Paton, Alan, *Journey Continued: An Autobiography,* Scribner, 1988.

This is the second part of Paton's autobiography, completed just before his death in 1988.

□□□, *Towards the Mountain,* Scribner, 1980.

This is the beginning of Paton's intriguing autobiography that describes the author's upbringing and political activism in his native South Africa.

Thompson, J. B., "Poetic Truth in *Too Late the Phalarope,*" in *English Studies in Africa,* Vol. 24, No. 1, 1981, pp. 37-44.

Thompson examines the novel outside of its obvious historical scope in order to reveal the contemporary relevance and universal themes.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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