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Mining, social change and literature: an analysis of South African literature with particular reference to the mining novel, 1870-1920

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When he came to South Africa in 1877, he found that he could easily transpose dominant Victorian ideologies onto the South African situation. Hence in talking of the working class in Kimberley, he could, with a few minor alterations, just as well have been haranguing the English working class.

> Who can doubt but that work is the great civilizer of the world - work and the growing desire for those good things which work only will bring? If there be one who does he should come here to see how those dusky troops of labourers, who ten years since were living in the wildest state of unalloyed savagery, whose only occupation was the slaughter of each other in tribal wars, each of whom was the slave of his chief, who were subject to the dominion of most brutalising and cruel superstitions, have already put themselves on the path towards civilisation. (49)

However, the most remarkable of the overseas novels to emerge about South Africa in general and the mines in particular, came from a Frenchman, Jules Verne. His novel that deals with Kimberley, The Vanished Diamond, forms part of his prolific output of travel literature, informed with a spirit of progress and scientific rationalism. Or as Roland Barthes puts it in his semiological study of Verne

> Verne belongs to the progressive lineage of the bourgeoisie: his work proclaims that nothing can escape man, that the world, even its most distant part, is like an object in his hand, and that, all told, property is but a dialectical moment in the general enslavement of Nature. Verne in no way sought to enlarge the world by romantic ways of escape or mystical plans to reach the infinite: he constantly sought to shrink it, to populate it, to reduce it to a known and enclosed space, where man could subsequently live in comfort: the world can draw everything from itself; it needs, in order to exist, no one else but man. (50)

Unlike the standard representation of Africa at the turn of the century, which stresses its mystery, 'otherness' and romance, Verne creates a view of the continent easily accessible to European man. Consequently the geography of the novel is, above all, one that can be recognised, located and understood.

> The scene is at Watkins farm in Lat. 29°S, Long.25°E on the Western border of the Orange Free State, and nearly five hundred miles from Cape Town. (51)

Compare this description with one from Edgar Wallace's Sanders of the River.

> There are many things that happen in the heart of Africa that no man can explain; that is why those who know Africa best hesitate to write stories about it. Because a story about Africa must be a mysterious story and your reader of fiction requires that his mystery story be in the end x-rayed, so that the bones of it are visible. You can no more explain many happenings which are the merest commonplace in Lat. 2°N Long. (say) 46°W., than you can explain the miracle of faith or the wonder of telepathy. (52)

Yet Verne, who knew Africa least, did not hesitate to write about it.

The Vanished Diamond centres around the exploits of an engineer Cyprien, who goes to Griqualand to experiment with the production of facsimile diamonds. He thinks he has achieved his object, but the supposedly manufactured diamond is in fact a real one, having been placed in Cyprien's machine by Mataki, the 'faithful servant'. The diamond subsequently disappears, and a chase/quest to the hinterland for this 'genuine' facsimile ensues. And here again Verne deviates from the traditional portrayal of the quest to the hinterland. Whereas most other writers treated this quest with deadly earnestness, Verne treats it with a whimsical blitheness, where people ride amenable giraffes. Furthermore, he undercuts the whole notion of the treasure quest to the interior, for all the while the diamond has been lodged in the maw of a pet ostrich, Dada.

Verne, too, exploits the traditional morphology pertaining to the tales of diamonds, and in keeping with this lore, the diamond in the story brings bad luck by occasioning the death of the rapacious farmer Watkins. But this superstition is something that Verne's rationalism will not countenance and he proceeds to undercut the structure on which his story is based, by sloughing off these superstitious accretions in favour of a rational and material explanation.



Sarah Gertrude Millin

> Such an ending could not but confirm the superstition afloat in Griqualand. More than ever the Kaffirs and diggers felt assured that large diamonds brought nothing but ill luck...And in truth there seemed to be some intimate connection between the fate of the farmer and that of the wonderful gem, though the coincidences admitted of reasonable explanations without recourse to the superstitious notions current in Griqualand. The Star of the South had "brought-ill-luck" to its owner in the sense that its arrival had marked the beginnings of his declining prosperity...If Johan Watkins had been less attached to lucre, and had not assigned exaggerated and almost criminal importance to the little carbon crystals known amongst men as diamonds, the discovery and disappearance of the Star of the South which had affected him as little as it did Cyprien, and his health, physical and moral, would never have succumbed to a mere attack on his pocket. But his whole heart was in diamonds, and through a diamond, he died. (53).

4. Sarah Gertrude Millin

> When one discovers a novel about South Africa which opens on the Diggings one expects a little IDB, a robbery or two, and at least a dozen revolver shots. In The Dark River, by Miss Sarah Gertrude Millin... one doesn't get it. I must own that I was relieved. The wild and woolly colonies as material for fiction have become a trifle wearisome. In Saskatchewan and Queensland, even in Lost Hope Diggings, it must be possible for people to live quiet lives unpunctuated by robbery and sudden death. (54)

In considering Millin's work in this section, we included it not because it shows any similarities with what had gone before, but rather for the differences it manifests.

For when Millin came in 1919 to publish The Dark River, her first of three novels dealing with the river diggings - the other two being Adam's Rest and The Sons of Mrs Aab - it was thirty years since the digger had been used as a major theme in South African literature.

In creating these novels, Millin turned to the world of her childhood, an alluvial digging community, Waldek's Plant near Kimberley. Born in Lithuania, Sarah Gertrude Liebson had come to South Africa with her parents as a young baby, to spend the first six years of her life in

Kimberley. After this period, her father, a trader, had moved to Waldek's Plant, a small settlement of alluvial diggers near Kimberley, where Millin was to stay until she went to school in Kimberley.

On the river diggings, the Liebson family appear to have conducted themselves as an aristocracy living amongst a bunch of lesser mortals. (55) Her parents were intent on maintaining 'standards' on the isolated diggings, and surrounded by poverty-stricken black and white diggers, they assiduously cultivated their social distance and ethnic purity. Millin frequently referred to this early experience as that of being an embattled minority surrounded by thousands of threatening aliens. (56)

She was also to react strongly and disdainfully to the social patterns of the diggers surrounding her. She despised their poverty, meanness and drunkenness, and what appeared to her as total depravity. Most notable of her dislikes was that against the high incidence of black-white sex marriage that she encountered, a pathological hatred that was subsequently to eventuate in God's Stepchildren. (57) And in coming to write her fiction about the diggers, it was largely these attitudes that were to shape the perceptions, characterisations and structures of her work.

In a review of The Dark River the Rand Daily Mail said

> The picture of the river diggings given here, of John Oliver's decline and fall has been extremely well-done. It is not the first time, of course, that diamond diggings have played their part in fiction, but they have never been more effectively painted. (58)

In focusing on the river diggings, as she did, Millin did, in fact, offer an effective portrayal of the social conditions prevailing in these settlements. For writing some three decades after previous writers had dealt with the alluvial diggings, she was in a position to offer a convincing portrait of the inhabitants of these areas, rather than using them as objects in a mythological playground for the symbols of mining. Furthermore, her class prejudices against this group of people

precluded the possibility of the slightest vestige of sentimentalisation creeping into her work.

Millin was also well-read in South African literature (59) and in creating her particular portrayal of the diggers, realised both what had gone before her and consequently what she was rejecting. In characterising her literary predecessors who dealt with South Africa in general and mining in particular, she spoke of their work and plots as follows

> Heroes are sent out to war to win V.C.'s and renown. Superfluous characters are there driven to necessary deaths. Scapegoat sons are given a few pounds and told to colonise, so that at the appointed time, years hence, deserving nieces and nephews may be enriched by legacies from distant and unknown uncles. Millionaires are brought from Johannesburg - men bloated in body as in pocket, with pasts so uncertain that they amount to a certainty - to lure swooning, reluctant heroines away from the arms of their virtuous but exceedingly needy, lovers. And from Kimberley come swaggering fellows, wearing under their clothes belts of rough diamonds, who have never come into contact with the Diamond Laws...After all actualities are wearisome and the story's the thing. (60)

Instead of this type of portrayal, Millin turns her attention to the 'actualities' of the river diggings as she understood them.

Of these diggings, she creates a world of men and women in hopeless and dead-end situations, living in chronic poverty and alcoholism, unable ever to earn sufficient money to escape their predicament. She still draws on the morphology of the digger as a person predicated on a world-view of eternal hope and optimism, but undercuts the possibility of such hope ever being realised by the realistic depiction of the conditions in which they live.

However, against this strand of social specificity, there runs a counter-strand of typological and essentialist thinking that betrays her class prejudice against the diggers. In terms of this typology, many diggers

become 'weaklings', not only because they are in socially straitened circumstances, but because they have an innate propensity and 'meanness of soul' that 'submits to poverty...(and is) content to go without all the beautiful things that money can procure.' (61) Or as she puts it in an early piece of writing

> (The Diggers), and their children's children form the essence and basis of the river population. On the whole, they belong to a very inferior type of humanity. "Once a digger, always a digger", they say. And truly. For certainly nothing else is open to the man who has lived there all his life. (62)

This 'inferior type' often in turn poses a positive threat to her women protagonists. Hence in The Dark River, John Oliver, with a past of living with an 'Annie' or 'coloured' woman, brings emotional ruin to the white woman he marries. Similarly, too, in Adam's Rest, Janet Lincoln's husband is cast in a similar mould of the weakling, and he consequently sticks to a life of digging because he has not the 'character' to do anything else.

This 'degenerate taint' of the 'weakling' transposes itself easily onto the question of 'miscegenation', which is dealt with extensively in Adam's Rest. Here the asocial and supposedly innate degeneracy of the weak and inferior soul transposes itself easily onto the portrayal of the 'half-caste' as represented by the Croft family. The whole question of black-white sex relationships, in fact, comes to be seen as a disease. Miriam Lincoln, the protagonist, sets out Millin's views on the subject

> There must be something wrong at bottom. Look at their ancestry. It means a bad type of white man and a bad type of black woman to begin with. Besides, it doesn't matter what it is. I can't work it out, but I have a feeling about colour as if it were a catching disease - perhaps it is - and I don't want to be near it. (63)

If the earlier fictive portrayals of the diggers were used as symbols of dominant mining ideology, so were Millin's diggers, but for slightly differing political ends. Her diggers become subsumed under her rabid concern for 'miscegenation' while she herself emerges as a fervid ideologue of separatism.

SECTION III : Mining, 'Social Problems' and Novels.

Introduction

Mining capital had, from Kimberley days, always been highly centralised and due to its costs and marketing imperatives had undergone a process of rapid monopolisation. In addition, the mining economy perpetuated itself through a series of rigorous methods of labour control occasioned by its imperative of cost minimisation. Because of these peculiarities of the industry and its social development, the mining economy registered itself as a dislocating force, not only on traditional African and Afrikaner societies, but within the city as well, bringing in its wake a host of 'social problems' and patterns of urban control, resistance and crime that were to hallmark life in mining centres. These effects brought about by the mining industry and its labour repressive economy have been characterised as follows

> The process of rapid monopolisation and the fluctuating nature of the mining economy led to the marginalisation of independent diggers and mine workers who took to a life of highway robbery, illicit liquor and gold trading or other criminal activities in order to earn a living. Employment conditions for black workers, due to mining's cost minimisation imperative, were shocking and this prompted the excessive liquor consumption, wage compensation through the theft of gold amalgam and extensive desertion that constituted the major working class responses to exploitation on the Witwatersrand. (1)

In addition to working class resistance and organised crime, Johannesburg was also characterised by large-scale unemployment and prostitution, that would increase with the vicissitudes of the mining economy itself, its recessions, and natural disasters like drought, which aggravated poverty within the cities.

Whilst the majority of novelists ignored these 'problems' in the euphoria of the mining industry, as shown in the previous section, some writers did turn their attention to them. And the area that attracted the most literary attention from white authors was that of organised

crime - illicit diamond buying, illicit gold buying and illicit liquor selling. The interest in these criminal industries arose out of various factors, the most obvious being that it was a crime in which all classes were involved. Furthermore, these crimes were to provide the mining industry with somewhat of a headache, for their nature constituted an offence against the cornerstones of the mining economy, namely monopoly, labour control and productivity.

Not surprisingly then, these issues gained much prominence in the mine-controlled media which strove to create an outraged 'public opinion' against these crimes which were portrayed as hitting at the basis of respectability, law and order and stable government. Within this atmosphere of indignation, a number of novelists adopted these concerns in their writing and in so doing tended to alter and manipulate them to meet their own ends. As this wave of organised crime secreted itself into literature, so did the writers tend to soften or pretty it up, removing or obscuring its sociological basis by portraying it as an individually inspired and hence often titillating saga. For as Douglas Blackburn, one of the few sensible commentators on the crimes, said, 'thrilling stories, once told in camp and dorp, are becoming forgotten, or are rehearsed in a form as unlike the originals as yesterday's joint in the hands of a skilful cook.' (2) This trivialisation of the crimes also tended to obscure the extent to which the incidence of these crimes acted as an indicator of the opposition to the mining industry and its policies. For around these issues the class struggle coalesced, and in them one can trace working class, petty bourgeois and Afrikaner ruling class opposition to the mining industry. Nowhere were these conflicts more apparent than in the liquor trade, as Charles van Onselen has shown. (3)

1. Liquor and Literature

Initially the liquor industry was the creation of the Afrikaner bourgeoisie who were attempting to follow a policy of development through

small-scale industrialisation. During the early years of the 1880's, mining management also showed great interest in the liquor industry, which they saw as a useful strategy of social control in so far as liquor would hasten the proletarianisation of black workers by increasing their cash needs. But the strategy soon overreached itself and proved to be a serious hindrance to productivity as between 15-25% of workers were incapacitated by drunkenness. A change of plan was needed, and so the mining industry launched a campaign for prohibition on the sale of liquor to Africans. This campaign was carried out through newspapers, organisations and temperance groups, who attempted to enforce the prohibition which was largely being winked at by the liquor syndicates who continued to market the merchandise through a sophisticated network of outlets. In their attempts to smash these syndicates, the mining industry found it could not rely on the support of the Afrikaner state who continued to make light of the trade by refusing to implement heavy sentences, or catch those responsible. The problem continued unabated and was eventually only solved by the Anglo-Boer War. After this imperial intervention, mining capital gained the sympathetic state it desired; the liquor trade was smashed, prohibition became a reality, and the mines could claim higher productivity.

The whole liquor question registered itself strongly on white 'public opinion', as evidenced by the number of newspapers and organisations that took up the crusade against the 'menace'. This crusade was not without its literary members and many writers joined the cause to produce books that rode to success on this wave of controversy and outrage. One of these most voluble speakers was the documentor of Johannesburg life, Anna de Bremont, who dealt with the question of liquor in her novel, The Gentleman Digger and in her short story collection, The Ragged Edge, where she harangued the evils of liquor with an unsurpassed eloquence. The best example comes from a story 'The Curse of the Canteen'.

Published in 1895, the story draws on a complex nexus of white attitudes, ideologies, rhetoric and public outrage which by that date were

finding coherence, direction and active outlet, as newspapers and organisations took up the Chamber of Mines cry against the canteens, which come to be seen as the visible symbol and scapegoat for a much larger network.

The major concern of her story 'The Curse of the Canteen' relates to the loss of profitability caused by the liquor trade - a theme that is not surprising coming from one of the most articulate spokepersons for the interests of mining. This preoccupation with profit loss emerges most clearly in her stories, when one examines the way that she perceives black workers. In her other novels she portrays the African in predictable and stereotyped ways - they are lazy, deserving of violence and akin to apes. Yet when she addresses herself to the question of liquor she plumbs hitherto unheard of depths of humanitarian fellow feeling towards black workers. They are seen as

> teeming in the mines along the reef, working from morn to night at the golden treasure therein for the benefit of their millions of white brethren far over the seas; and their white brothers of the gold-fields were at last awakening to the fact that body and soul, brain, muscle, nay his very life, was being sucked out, gorged upon by the human vultures perched on the edge of every mine, the canteen keepers. (4)

From this passage, one can see that her major concern is that liquor is adversely affecting labour power, that most mythologised part of the working class, or as de Bremont puts it, 'body, brain, soul and muscle ...was being sucked out'. Hence to de Bremont, the liqor industry is perpetrating the most heinous crime in tampering with productivity and profits.

That she should, with such eloquence, attack the enemies of the mining industry and its profits, is not surprising given her intense admiration for the achievements of the gold industry which she had previously set out eulogistically in <u>The Gentleman Digger</u>

> The Gold Output has leapt from ten-thousand to half-a-million ounces a month
> Last year's value was £16,240,630.

> The present output amounts to nearly half-a-million ounces a month.
> Ten years ago the value of output was £1,490,568: this year it exceeds £20,000,000 sterling.
> The total value of the output of gold from the Transvaal up to end of last year was £70,228,603.
> All this progress in one decade of the nineteenth century! (5)

Yet there are obstacles which stand in the way of this wonderwork of capital. She continues -

> Yet, Behold!
> Johannesburg, the most amazing Miracle of Progress that the world has ever seen.
> Behold her! Boer-ridden! With the heaviest taxation in the world. A prey to the evils of Illicit Liquor Traffic.
> Behold! The men who have worked this miracle of progress.
> Behold them: gagged with the muzzle of the Uitlander! (6)

With this view of the Afrikaner as the catch-all enemy to progress, she is able to impute the entire liquor traffic to the Afrikaners, in the person of Jan Hensma who is the kingpin of the liquor industry. Against this white man, she sharpens her rhetoric into a splenetic attack which portrays him as the apotheosis of bestiality, venality and evil seldom seen since the Seven Deadly Sins reared their heads. In the story, 'The Curse of the Canteen', he becomes a 'vampire', and a 'vulture' responsible for the 'unholy trade' which is a 'curse' and a 'scourge to humanity'. The climax of her story comes with Hersma growing fat and respectable, while his subordinates are killed in a canteen fight.

Her concern with profit loss, and her self-righteous condemnation of the leaders of the illicit liquor trade combine in the following passage in which she calls for vengeance for the hanging of three mine-workers who whilst drunk, committed murder.

> Vengeance, not on the outcast being, besotted, and deranged with drink, whose unwitting hand had done the deed, but for vengeance on those who live upon the debauchery of the Black man; the men who sell him the curse of drink; who barter

> for his hard-toiled savings a few mouthfuls of liquid madness. For vengeance on the purveyors of rotten whiskey, the illicit canteen-keepers and all the many men sleeping that night, with a peaceful conscience for bed fellows, the men who fatten on the degradation of their black brothers... (7)

2. IDB and Literature

If liquor adversely affected productivity, then IDB and IGB hit directly at the rate of profit, as mine-owners continued to maintain that this illicit traffic posed a threat to the very existence of the industry. The extent of the thefts is hard to gauge exactly, as it was often exaggerated by management. Estimates of gold thefts ranged from 10-20% of total production whilst for IDB, the figure was often put as high as 50%.

The social genesis and effects of these crimes constitute a complex story, discernible at one level by the different attitudes expressed to the rackets, most apparent in the case of IDB which became all things to all people. To the mine owners, it came to be used as a pretext for instituting compounds; to white small claimholders it had been used as a scapegoat to oust black diggers, while to novelists it provided a rich stock of lore and legend out of which many novels, plays, articles and poems were to be written.

In the early days of diamond mining, IDB was not taken seriously by the authorities, as reflected in the lenient legislation, (8) and the onslaught against the trade was to begin in earnest with the amalgamation and monopoly control of de Beers. Towards the end of exterminating the racket, the mine owners managed to push the Diamond Act through the Cape Legislative Assembly in 1882. This act allowed for fifteen years' imprisonment and placed the onus for proving one's innocence on the accused. To back up the act, a sophisticated detective squad operating through an effective trapping system was instituted.

However, despite the harshness of the law and an efficient detective department to administer it, its effects proved to be transitory. Incidents of IDB continued unabated, whilst for a large proportion of the population who were involved in IDB, the law held little legitimacy.

But if the law proved transitory in this respect, it had other more enduring effects, like the institution of the compound. For in amongst all the hue and cry relating to IDB, mine owners had succeeded in using it as a pretext for starting compounds on the basis that 'free' labourers could more easily dispose of stones. By 1892, twelve compounds were operating in Kimberley.

The IGB business never existed on such a large scale as its diamond counterpart, largely because the theft of gold amalgam was a very difficult task to execute. Possibly because of the small extent of the IGB trade, its literary analogues were minimal, (10) and for the remainder of this section, I will concentrate on the literature relating to IDB.

As regards the literature dealing with IDB, Blackburn has noted that there was in fact very little.

> There are few phases of crime that have not something approaching a literature of their own, especially when the offence calls for any degree of skill and intelligence in carrying it to a successful issue.
> Compared with the magnitude of the particular crime here purposed to be dealt with (IDB) its records, both official, literary and journalistic are surprisingly meagre. (11)

Blackburn continues to say that occasionally some popular magazines or newspapers published stories based on the illicit diamond trade, 'but in these...accuracy has been sacrificed to sensation' (12) He puts this dearth of literature down to two factors. Firstly, the men on the fields 'were not the type to be given to expressing themselves in print', and secondly, 'those who could were either incompetent to tell their stories or had their pens and tongues withheld by

official and diplomatic restraint.' (13)

In saying that there was a paucity of stories dealing with IDB, Blackburn was possibly off the mark. There was, in fact, a flood of novels, stories and accounts dealing with IDB anecdote that flooded the market. (14) However, in pointing to a degree of 'censorship' surrounding the literary documentation of IDB, Blackburn was, no doubt, correct. For in writing of IDB, very few writers cared to be too specific, particularly about the extent of the crime and the number of 'wealthy and respectable' men involved in it. Furthermore, one presumably did not wish to make it known that one was in any way pre-empting the work of an efficient secret police whose job it was to track down IDB criminals. In addition, many people would no doubt have wanted to comment on the methods used by the police and detective department in trapping criminals. But again, such comment would by no means have been welcome. One such person, Dr. Matthews, attempted to oppose a flogging clause in the Diamond Act, an action that earned him such vehement condemnation from the mine-controlled press that he subsequently resigned his post in the Legislative Assembly.

However, against this fear of making allegations, must be posited the social condonation of the crime. Given the extent to which all classes were involved in the trade, the legislation, no matter how severe, held very little legitimacy for the majority of citizens. Unofficially, most people did not regard the crimes as at all heinous, but officially they were often prepared to denounce it publically at every opportunity.

Alongside this voluntary censorship, must be noted another type of 'unconscious censorship' coming from those writers who in a long tradition of crime writing, portrayed the IDB racket in psychological terms. This strategy involved trivialising the trade, by portraying IDB criminals as isolated and petty criminals, whose actions are prompted by nothing more than a gambling drive, a desire to tempt fate or a whimsical fancy to expiate their psychological fascination

with crime. Presented in these terms, IDB immediately lost its sociological genesis and complexity. The role of the bourgeoisie could be obscured as well as the position of the working class, in or outside the compounds. The often criticised methods of the detective department could also be suppressed in a deft sleight of hand that made of the detectives, pleasant and affable upholders of law and order, countering quirky IDB criminals.

Hence when turning to consider the literature that grew out of IDB, one must bear in mind this complex set of attitudes that accompanied the racket. Alongside official condemnation of IDB, there persisted unofficial acceptance of it, without, however, any willingness to make public either the extent of the trade or the methods used to capture and punish offenders.

These sets of contradictions emerge fairly clearly in one of the earliest novels to deal with the subject - I.D.B. or The Adventure of Solomon Davis, published in 1887, and written by W.T. Eady, whose life stands as a symbol of the contradictions inherent in the illicit trade. Eady spent some time in Kimberley as editor of The Independent, the newspaper owned by J.B. Robinson, mine magnate, vehement opposer of IDB and co-author of the Diamond Act. As editor of this paper Eady expended a good deal of his editorial energies denouncing the diamond racket in vitriolic terms. Nonetheless, there were, all the while he edited this paper, strong allegations that he was heavily implicated in the racket himself, allegations he never chose to deny. (15)

The major conflict in the novel revolves around two differing attitudes to IDB. The first is exemplified in the character of Solomon Davis, a card-sharp from the East End of London who makes his fortune through IDB and murder. To him IDB is a method of gaining capital for social advancement, an object he achieves by marrying a grocer's daughter and going 'home'. Opposed to this attitude are his two aristocratic confreres of crime, Burton and Cormack, who carry on the IDB trade with a flippant aplomb. Drawing on the popular conception of IDB as a

gamble against fate, Eady describes the aristocratic attitude to the trade

> (Burton) belonged to a firm who were now gambling on a much higher scale and for larger stakes and more certain winnings than any game at cards could ever bring him and he lost or won his paltry stakes with an equanimity that was really beautiful to look upon. (16)

Yet ultimately, the aristocrats are destroyed by Davis.

This ambivalent attitude to IDB characterises most books which deal with the subject, particularly a collection of short stories Knaves of Diamonds, published in 1899. The stories are all set in the early 1880's just after the passing of the Diamond Act, the amalgamation and the introduction of the compounds, a period during which the crackdown on IDB racketeers started in earnest. In the stories there are as in Eady, two types of IDB'ers. Firstly there are the Jews, seen as money-grubbing social climbers who are using IDB towards this end. These Jews are joined by Africans and Chinese in a 'vortex of cosmopolitan villainy', but, unlike Solomon Davis, they are not allowed to get away with it, and conveniently destroy each other in an affair of 'dog eat dog, cannibalism in business'. Secondly, we have the sympathetically drawn IDB villain, Seth Salter, who is given the implicit recognition of being allowed to take on the the forces of law and order, represented by the inevitable figure of IDB stories, the detective. But their meeting is no clear-cut fight between good and evil, but is rather a'three-cornered battle between underhand roguery, open violence and the forces that worked for law and order'. (17) However, the detective, Lipinski is never above censure himself, and frequently resorts to roguery and violence against Salter whom he nearly kills. This ambivalent attitude towards detectives becomes a common feature of IDB stories and probably arose out of the public censure of IDB detective methods and general unpopularity of the task they performed.

Possibly the clearest example we get of the sympathetic IDB villain



Stephen Black

comes from a story by Anna de Bremont, Diamond Trumps. The protagonist is a woman Tillie Palmer and another stock character of IDB lore, the barmaid. Mrs Palmer runs a successful racket from her bar and is aided by her lover. The story focuses on these two being caught in a tight spot, with diamonds on them and surrounded by detectives, in Mrs. Palmer's bar. In keeping with popular IDB anecdote, they manage to secrete the stones into a champagne bottle and elude detection. Mrs Palmer, as the barmaid, and likeable yet wily criminal, combines traits of maternalism with shrewd business acumen to become an early forerunner of the shebeen queen.

> A shrewd little business woman, a kind hearted, generous soul and exceedingly handsome into the bargain...Her word was as good as her cheque any day...she was an accommodating creditor. She was as good as she was shrewd and strove to serve God and Mammon by closing her bar during service hours in the little shanty which represented a chapel to the satisfaction of the good fathers and edification of the women worshippers. (18)

This figure of women as IDB criminals was one that Stephen Black was to use much later in his novel on Kimberley, The Golden Calf.

By the time Black came to write his novel, he had had an extensive tutelage in South African literature, mainly in the field of drama. In connection with the latter, he had created a series of often highly successful plays based on a vaudeville technique of satirical typologies. In using this particular technique, Black's plays often provided a radical departure from the stock colonial dramatic fare which consisted of imported shows, Shakespearian drama and titillating farces. Black however, with his particular dramatic method, questioned the assumptions underlying this dramatic dispensation and created instead plays rooted in South African society and conditions - plays like I.D.B., 'a play of intrigue, lust and vengeance in the early days of diamond buying', (19); The Flapper, a South African rendition of the French La Gamine; Love and the Hyphen, dealing with sex across the 'colour-bar'; A Boer's Honour and Helena's Hope, a play rooted in Johannesburg and touching on monopoly, magnates, poor whites, 'educated natives' and suffragettes. (20)

With these plays and the theory of art that underlay them, Black attempted to rectify the calcified ideologies of colonial culture that consistently deferred to ruling class and British norms. Black was to term this situation 'Snobbery in Art' and outlined dominant colonial culture as an affair of

> intellectual cowardice of the persons who want the hallmark of a pontifical critic's approbation stamped on the Artist and his work before they will accept it. These people correspond to the social snobs who regard with suspicion any person not labelled with a hyphen or title. (21)

In order to rebut this attitude, Black pleaded for a critical and artistic approach that did not unctuously genuflect to dominant ideas.

> We want (the critic) to be one who has an innate critical faculty and the courage to dispraise, if need be, what is generally praised, and to praise what is generally neglected. (22)

But in trying to repudiate the prevailing colonial artistic mentality, Black was, of course, fighting a losing battle in the legacy of which his work became forgotten and obscured, while colonial snobbery prevailed. However, what concerns us here is Black's popular and democratic notion of art as it informs his novel, The Golden Calf. And it was to be largely because of Black's aesthetic theories that he was able to produce one of the few novels that dealt extensively with the quirks, contradictions and social conflicts implicit in IDB.

Published in 1925 when the hue and cry regarding IDB had long since subsided, Black could give a frank exposure of the extent and methods used by IDB'ers. Set shortly after amalgamation, the novel centres around an unmarried mother, Lily White, who is forced to work as a barmaid in Kimberley to support her child. The father of her child, Julius Herman, unbeknown to Lily has become a magnate in Kimberley, and although involved in the IDB racket, is at the same time actively supporting the Diamond Act in the Cape Parliament. Lily, too, becomes caught up in the trade partly out of financial necessity and partly, in the best tradition of the IDB criminal, out of a compulsive drive to

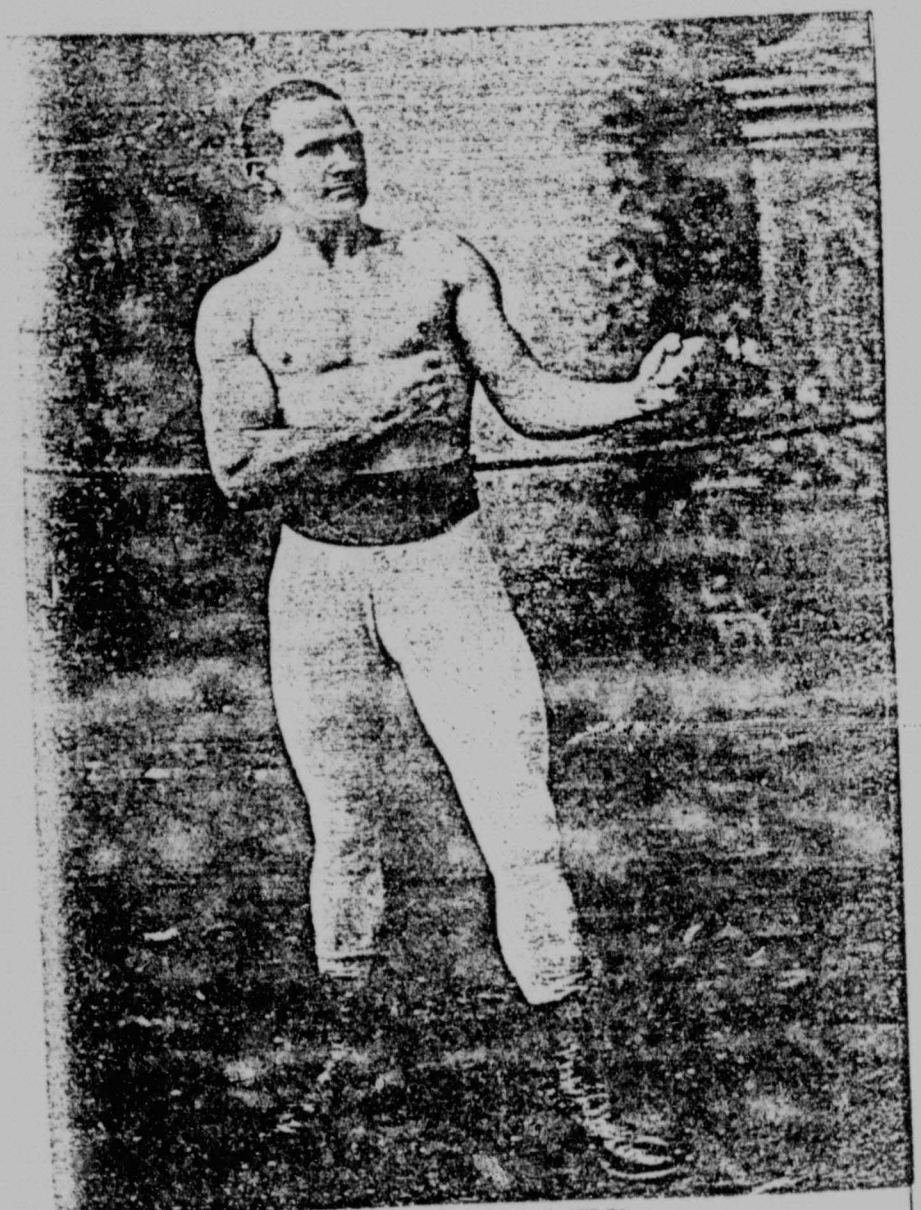
gamble. In her exploits, she is aided by her 'houseboy', Shilling, who acts as an IDB tout, with an army of workers passing stones on to him. The plot resolves itself somewhat spectacularly when Hermann kills himself, having been revealed as a bigamist, whilst Lily emerges untouched from the whole episode and forsakes her IDB trade. The novel is set against a background of rapacious competitiveness

> She was caught up in the maelstrom of infectious cupidity that swirled off their feet nearly all the men and women of the Diamond Fields. Some gave expression to the lust for gain by gambling with cards, others speculated in insubstantial diamond shares; dice rattled on every bar counter, billiard balls clicked continuously; those who could, bought and sold diamonds legally, those who could not, or would not, plunged into the dirty waters of IDB. Kimberley held out no prospect of permanent life; treeless, waterless with blazing sun and blinding dust; corrugated iron that intensified the heat and caricatured the cold. The spirit of the place was hurry up and get out, purge the soil clean of its bowels, pick its eyes, suck its blood. (23)

In terms of this atmosphere, Black also launches an attack on the basis of the diamond industry. Using a popular line of argument, (24) he has Lily condemn the entire industry on the basis that its end product is used only to seduce and corrupt women. On this basis, IDB becomes acceptable on the grounds that 'the laws against IDB serve no moral purpose; they merely protect something that is immoral in effect'. Lily continues to say that the government 'would be better employed in protecting girls than in safeguarding diamonds to turn their heads with'.

> What would you say if the Government allowed the publication and sale of books written to deprave women and children, and passed laws to protect them? Or aided and abetted the distribution of love philtres and charms? No...the IDB laws are a disgrace to humanity. (25)

According to Blackburn, the most comprehensive portrayal of the Diamond Fields in general and IDB in particular, come from J.R. Couper's novel



J. R. COUPER,

AS HE APPEARED ON THE DAY OF THE BATTLE WITH BENDOFF,

FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP OF SOUTH AFRICA AND £1,500.

Johannesburg, July 26, 1892.

Mixed Humanity.

> Only one serious attempt has been made to present the romance of the South African Diamond Fields in more than ephemeral form. James Couper, who combines literary tastes with successful pugilism wrote a book which with the title "Mixed Humanity", gave the best, in fact the only large and full description of life in Kimberley in its early days.
> Unfortunately, being cast in the form of an autobiographical novel, the necessity for introducing plot, passion and the other stock interests of the regulation romance, detracted from the value of the work as a picture of a set of conditions having no parallel in any other land. (26)

Blackburn's admiration for Couper's work obviously arises from a similarity in outlook. As Blackburn favoured a type of writing that was completely rooted in South African social conditions, so too did Couper write an unpretentious novel, dealing with conditions in Kimberley and largely free from the spectacular plot constructions that characterised the bulk of colonial writing which glorified a romantic as opposed to a socially realistic view of the subcontinent.

The 'local' style of Couper is not merely a fortuitous aberration, but emerges as a logical concomitant of his class position. As a petty bourgeois entrepreneur - boxing teacher and canteen-keeper - he would hardly have supported Free Trade Imperialism, its ideologies and the advent of foreign capital which was to spell the death of small traders of Couper's type. Indeed his death early in the twentieth century has something of the symbolic about it. At a time when the canteen-keeper was being made redundant by the smashing of the liquor trade and his clientele were being shut up in compounds, Couper committed suicide in the belief that he was bankrupt.

He started his life in England and subsequently served in the navy and police force in New Zealand and South Africa, where he settled in Cape Town and opened a boxing school. At the invitation of one of his pupils, Leonard Merrick, he went to Kimberley to fight a

'coloured' boxer, Coverwell, who was greatly alarming Kimberley's white population by appearing to be invincible. When Couper defeated him, he became something of a local hero and increased his boxing prowess by beating the English boxer Bendoff in Johannesburg in 1889 to become South African boxing champion.

The novel, whilst drawing extensively on Couper's experiences in both Johannesburg and Kimberley, is set in the latter city, and bases itself in a complex opposition between the IDB fraternity, the mining industry and Jack Senior, the 'gentlemanly' protagonist and pugilist who upholds the 'manly art of boxing'. Senior's attitude to IDB is characteristically ambivalent. On the one hand, it is seen as a nefarious crime that spells ruin for the mining industry, but at the same time he is fascinated by the ramifications of the illicit racket. But on the other hand, Senior and Couper cannot side wholeheartedly with the mining industry which in the novel is portrayed as a destructive force that flogs labourers and exploits workers. The solution to this conflict lies with Jack Senior and his boxing, for his virtues of honesty and humanitarian paternalism offer an implicit critique of both IDB'ers and mine owners.

IDB plays a crucial part in the novel and Couper provides a vast amount of circumstantial evidence concerning the trade. From this evidence he creates a series of typological characters. First of these is May Leslie, femme fatale. Drawing on the standard portrayal of women in IDB, Couper can make May, as an IDB maestro, elide easily into the traditional portrayal of women as Eves and arch-deceivers. Working with her is Charlie, the tout who inveigles newly-arrived labourers at the field to work for May. May and Charlie, as typological IDB characters are joined by Foxinsky, the detective. (His name is obviously a synthesis of two famous Kimberley detectives of Couper's time, Fox and Izdebski). Like all IDB detectives, Foxinsky emerges as an ambivalent character, intent on carrying out his duties with fervour and efficiency yet all the while 'entangle(d) in the web of (May's) charms' (27) for although he was doubtless a smart detective, he was human after all'. (28)

Opposed to the IDB'ers is Jack Senior and particularly his pugilism, of which Couper creates a potent and suggestive symbol. Obviously drawing on a long tradition of pugilistic literature and lore, Couper forges from boxing a richly suggestive motif capable of incorporating into itself an extensive web of attitudes and ideas. In order to understand the attitudes and ideas surrounding boxing, and the way in which Couper used them, it is necessary to look very briefly at the way that sport had developed.

Boxing as a significant and sytematised sport, first emerged during the 18th century when it gained a veneer of respectability by having royal patronage and status by being regarded as an 'art and a science'. During the 19th century, boxing attracted immense popularity, and despite being banned from time to time, continued to grow. During the late 19th century, perceptions of the sport changed with the historical climate and became enmeshed with Imperial ideals of patriotism, courage and manliness. As one commentator said,

> And to pugilism, even more than hunting, the patriots of the day liked to point, as both proving and developing those qualities - courage, endurance, 'bottom', or unquenchable spirit - which were held to make the true Briton the equal of any three or more Frenchman. (29)

Around the sport, a host of periodicals, illustrated journals and manuals arose, perhaps the most famous being Pierce Egan's Boxiana (30) with which Couper must have undoubtedly been familiar. Indeed the book's fame was world-wide and it was quoted by The Star in Johannesburg in the publicity build-up to the Couper/Bendoff fight. This passage quoted in The Star is instructive in so far as it highlights the extent to which late nineteenth century attitudes to Imperialism were enmeshed with the ideology of sport.

> To whom we are indebted for the first principles of boxing is completely uncertain, it appears that few, if any, of our learned antiquaries took any interest in the science. The only precedent to which we can refer is nature itself. Wounded feelings brought manly resentment to their aid,

> and coolness, checking fiery passion and rage, reduced boxing (otherwise prize-fighting) to a perfect science. And at a time when prize-fighting seems to be coming again into vogue, it may be worth mentioning that it has been eloquently defended on the grounds that it adds generosity to the disposition of men, humanity to their conduct and courage to their national character.. ..it is boxing, together with other manly sports, which has infused true heroic courage, blended with humanity, into the hearts of Britons, and has made them so renowned, terrific and triumphant in all parts of the world. It should therefore be viewed as a national propensity, independent of any other consideration. Distinction of rank is of little importance when an offence has been given...Even from an early date prize-fighting received severe censure, on the ground that the feelings of the people might become callous, and acts of brutality be viewed with indifference from witnessing these combats; but the reply was that the English character might get too refined, and the thorough-bred bulldog degenerate into the whining puppy. (31)

In his novel, one finds Couper consistently drawing on these ideas - courage, manliness, humanity, and stout-heartedness. In addition, Couper could also draw on his own reputation and legend that arose from his having beaten Coverwell and Bendoff, both of which contests appear in the book. In order to understand his portrayal of these fights in the novel, it is necessary to look at this tradition that grew up around Couper.

The beginnings of the Couper legend began when he defeated Coverwell, 'the coloured bully whose brute force led to the white population being insulted with impunity by off-coloured people'. (32) This fight automatically translated itself into a class and racial conflict with Couper insisting that he was defending 'white honour' by altruistically refusing to take money for the match. However, he ultimately and reluctantly overcame these professional scruples, 'the professor was not at all anxious to come out as a prize-fighter but his desire to 'take down' such a bully overcame his scruples. Couper said so long as he was in the country, no coloured person should ride the high horse unchecked'. (33) In his fight with Bendoff, Couper was also seen as defending an 'embattled honour', this time his own, for in

weight and height Bendoff had a clear advantage. The papers likened the contest to one between a 'Hercules' (Bendoff) and a 'nimble Springbok' (Couper). (34) When Couper ultimately won the battle, he was remembered largely as a 'gentleman' and in this guise his previous fights overseas took on a new light. He was said to have 'defended British honour...against a Canadian bully.' (35)

And it was largely his own legend of 'gentlemanly pugilism' and 'honour' plus the wider ideological appurtenances of boxing as an Imperial sport that Couper drew on and parodied in the creation of Jack Senior, Senior first establishes his reputation by thrashing a white bully in Kimberley, and the book then builds up to his climactic fight with the American boxing champion, Donell. The descriptions of this latter fight are obviously based on Couper's original meeting with Bendoff, and to this information Couper adds a further level of significance drawing into the Senior/Donell fight all the conflicts within the novel.

Firstly the match provides a solution to the conflict between Senior and the IDB fraternity, who have backed Donell with every penny they own. Should Senior win, as he does, they would be destroyed for their 'criminal vocation ... required capital. (Hence)...ruin stared them in the face with Senior's victory.' (36) In keeping with Couper's legend, this fight to uphold 'honour' against the scurrilous practices of the IDB'ers had to be an embattled one. Hence Senior is considered to be the underdog, and unlike Couper in the original match, fights into the sun.

Couper's concept of 'honour' is carried a step further in the fight by the different styles that the two candidates use. Donell fights 'unscientifically', and divests pugilism of its nobility and art by fighting 'recklessly as a drunken navvy in a street brawl...a bully and a woman beater'. (37) In contradiction to this 'cowardly style' Senior fights 'artfully and scientifically', to uphold the flagging name of boxing, that has been debased by Donell, the IDB representative.

Finally the fight becomes extended to include certain ideals of Imperialism, and 'Britishness', which emerge when the terms of the conflict are set out

> The prospect of the coming struggle had brought something of that pleasureable excitement which a schoolboy experiences when he is about to play his first cricket match in the first eleven. He neither thought of winning or losing. (38)

If boxing can become cricket, then the framework of the game has been exemplified - it becomes a match for honour and British fairplay. Couper takes up this connection in his final comment on the match, which becomes in turn a comment on Imperialism itself

> Truly prize-fighting is a brutal sport; and yet there is something noble, something heart-stirring in it, and only those who possess a curious mixture of the noble and the brute can excel in this ferocious pastime, so emblematic of the Anglo-Saxon race, who originated it; whose sturdy brutishness and noble courage have made them push all over the globe, conquering the nations and robbing them. (39)

The book enjoyed tremendous popularity and the first edition of 10 000 copies sold out. However, the ultimate irony came when the book was used against Couper in a court case. Prize-fighting had been outlawed by the Transvaal authorities and Couper was charged and fined £20 for attending a fight. In giving sentence, the magistrate added that 'his recent perusal of Mr. Couper's book 'Mixed Humanity' had more than ever convinced him of (boxing's) low brutality'. (40)

3. 'A Blighting and Desolating Monopoly'

Whilst the majority of white writers continued to write novels that either ignored or dealt only partially with the social effects of the mining industry, a handful of authors took a more holistic look at what Cronwright-Schreiner had called the 'blighting and desolating power of monopoly'. (41) These writers, most notably Statham, Blackburn and Scully, attempted to document the toll of this monopoly on the



F.R. Statham



Douglas Blackburn

working classes, by looking in their fiction at conditions of employment, social patterns of the working class, living conditions and the structures that underlay these social developments.

F. R. Statham

And of all the writers who turned their attention to the social implications of mining, none had a more thorough understanding of the mechanics of the mining economy and its social ramifications than F.R. Statham. In his novel, Mr. Magnus, published in 1896, he draws on these insights to provide an original story by focusing on the complex forces that constitute the political economy of mining and the way in which they shape the lives of men who live under them.

However, like many other opponents of the mining industry, he centred his attack on the individual magnate - in this case Rhodes - who was seen as symbolising the mining industry. Consistent with the petty bourgeois moralistic response that dominated a large portion of white political thinking, Statham portrays these individual magnates as the incarnation of the spirit of Mammon and evil, against which the 'forces of good' and upholders of justice had to pit themselves. And it is largely this spirit of outraged indignation that characterises the tone and spirit of Statham's work. As an ascetic, and somewhat eccentric 'freethinker' he reacted with self-righteous alarm against the gospel of wealth creation that dominated South African capitalism. Against this he waged a moral crusade, or as he put it 'A Fight for Justice' which is the sub-title of his autobiography, 'The Record of My Life'. In this work he outlined his mission as follows

> It has not often happened...in the course of human history that the strongest condemnation and contempt which men can feel may be justifiably entertained. There are circumstances, however, when the entertaining and the expression of such condemnation and contempt become almost a duty and when toleration and silence would be little short of a crime. (42).

His crusade in South Africa, where he lived intermittently from 1877-1895, took the form of editing various newspapers, writing for overseas publications and producing a number of books on South African politics, where he expressed opinions that were to go into the making of his novel Mr. Magnus, which he characterised as an attempt 'to give an idea of the destruction of political and personal liberty beneath unrestricted capitalist control.' (43) In one of his books on South Africa, we find a passage which in many ways stands as a summary of the book and its intentions

> The millionaire of South Africa...is anything but content with...personal amusements. He aims at seizing every possible advantage which his position can confer on him, and is not only willing, but eager, to make his influence felt in every corner of the social and political structures. He believes - and unfortunately has been given only too much ground for believing that money is the one end for which every man lives, and that there is no kind of moral principle which is not to be overridden at the ascertainable price. And while cynical as to the moral stability of his equals, the typical South African is completely careless as to the interests and feelings of his inferiors. The man to whom he pays wages must have no will of his own; the worker must feel that the only way to avoid the risk of dismissal without notice and without reason is to suppress every instinct of moral and political independence. That under such conditions as these the man who can descend to act the spy upon his fellows rises to favour, is inevitable. And thus it has come about that Kimberley, which in its early days was rowdy and dissolute enough, has in its later days, since the famous amalgamation of the diamond mines, became a place where both moral principle and personal liberty are at a discount, and where the greatest crime that could be committed is for a wage earner to believe that he may exercise his political rights as a British subject in a British colony. The intrusion of the millionaire, of the living incarnation of the spirit of Mammon, into South African politics is a factor of the situation the importance of which cannot be underestimated. It represents the accession of a strenuous and persistent desire to make use, by every possible means, of disproportionate wealth for purely selfish ends, utterly regardless of the moral principles that may be violated and the lives that may be sacrificed in the pursuance of this desire. There is no kind of machinery which the incarnation of Mammon is ashamed to employ in furthering its aims. The unguarded

> virtues of men are laid under contribution as well as their unguarded vices. If an appeal to the spirit of patriotism can send a breath into the gilded sail, the appeal will be made. If religious sentiment or enthusiasm could be induced to afford its assistance, religious sentiment and enthusiasm will be prostituted without an instant's compunction. Justice is a figment; deceit and truth are equal forces; bribery is the most natural means to the accomplishment of minor ends. (44)

Using these ideas as the basis of his book, Statham sets his novel in a thinly disguised Kimberley, called Camberton, a town controlled by Porters Ruby Company which is headed by Mr. Magnus, a 'sort of Pope or God Almighty' who supersedes all 'law and gospel.' (45) The ruling dictum of Camberton life is 'Thou shalt worship Mr. Magnus only and him shalt thou serve.' (46)

The background of the book is dominated by the industrial landscape the description of which was to become a set piece of later novels dealing with mining centres.

> Oh yes, there were hills - hills, mountains, ranges almost, of the debris spewed out of the mines, grey mounds with their sides deeply scored by the summer rains, and here and there surmounted by strange erections, looking in the distance something like distorted church towers - the washing machines that took up the dry gravel at one side and gradually dropped it, under successive streams of water on the other. These machines sometimes seemed to his fancy like the gigantic praying wheels of some form of demon worship. And there - there towering high above the debris heaps, was the spire of the central temple of that worship, the massive headgear of the shaft down the mine with its wheels and cables never at rest day or night, one skip eternally going down to be filled, as another came up to be emptied. (47)

This largely atmospheric description of the mining industry is supported by an adumbration of the complex galaxy of social forces that make of the mining sector of the economy a dominant and hegemonic force. In the novel, Statham shows how mining capital controls the State, which designs legislation to aid its development (48); the State also directs surplus towards the mining industry. (49) The judiciary

interprets the laws in the service of mining, which also controls commercial and auxiliary interests. (50) The mines are backed by foreign capital which controls a large portion of the foreign media, who give sympathetic portrayals of the industry (51) while in Camberton, the press is in the sway of Porters. (52) Porters, too, control religious and cultural institutions, who all reproduce the ideologies of mining. And in the novel we see these factors interacting to produce a dominant form of reality which like all dominant ideologies appear to be 'natural'

> If Providence had placed a majority of votes under (Mr. Magnus') control, surely providence meant him to make use of those votes, and if any employees flew in the face of Providence and ventured to use his vote independently, it was obvious that Provide intended that employee to seek for a job elsewhere - if he could get it. (53)

The novel also shows how this dominant ideology tends to colour the outlook of the white working class, and in the novel, its major representative, the phthisis-stricken miner, Edward Weare, lives by a radical pessimism. He summarises his view of life as 'one never knows what may happen, though one knows well enough what will happen. And one also knows what has happened.' (54)

In addition, the novel gives a sympathetic portrayal of the worker's position and consciousness as influenced by the labour process of mining, which the novel deals with extensively. He examines the work of the overseer sitting from six to six in the 'burning sun on an empty paraffin tin...in the early morning cold, in the crushing heat of the afternoon, in rain, or hail, or thunder or doing nothing..' (55) The novel also looks at convict labour, 'their life ...so utterly miserable and infinitely below the life accorded to the most wretched mongrel of a dog.' (56) We also take a look at the conditions of work underground, a description that is reminiscent of George Orwell's description of coal mining in The Road to Wigan Pier.

> An inrush of liquid mud would overwhelm a score or two of workers at once, tearing them from limb to limb in a manner that rendered the search for their remains a horrible and

> revolting task. Sudden falls from the roof would dash out a man's brains before he knew that he was in danger. Men would suddenly, by some slip or other, be hurled down two or three hundred feet to the lowest level, to be brought out of the mine as unutterable messes of mangled flesh. Yet still the wheels of the headgear at the mouth of the great shaft kept merrily revolving as the 'skips' moved up and down, and still the endless procession of trucks went wandering about among the 'floors', and still in the air, in the daily life of the mine and of the town, in the submission of those who lived by wages drawn from Porters to every kind of dictation and tyranny. (57)

However, into this set of convincingly drawn social conditions, Statham introduces a trite plot, which in many ways becomes a structural weakness in the book. As Blackburn lamented Couper's inclusion of romance and passion into his book on Kimberley, so too does one regret the introduction of a platitudinal plot into Mr. Magnus. The details of this plot concern two Englishmen, Philip Winter, and Ray Wolston, who come to work on the fields. Wolston is framed for URB (Unlawful Ruby Buying) on account of his outspokenness about conditions in Porters. He, however, is saved from a prison sentence of fifteen years by the arrival of his sister and her two companions, Mr. and Mrs. Clayton, who manage to get Wolston's charges dropped.

This weakness in the plot, however, is not merely an aberration but emerges as a mediation of Statham's own ideology. Like many dissenting commentators on South Africa and colonisation, he was shocked by the methods of social control used in what was, after all, a British colony. Like many commentators of the time, (58) Statham reacted with horror to what he perceived to be a weakening of the social and moral fibres of colonial society, which ultimately became a blot on the immaculate face of 'Western culture'. Unlike Hobson, who held that this erosion in the colonies would ultimately affect British society, Statham believed that could the colonies but become little models of England, reproducing her humanistic tradition, statutory models and liberal tradition of fair-play, all would be well, and colonisation could emerge as an enervating force for the 'national character'.

The characters who portray this essential English'sanity' are Mr. and

Mrs. Clayton, the former being a retired judge, and both react with amazement at the dissonance between the 'normal' British state and the colonial state. At the prospect of a coerced demonstration to welcome Magnus back to Camberton, Clayton remarks, '...well, it is something to be thankful for we have never gone so far as that in England.. ..Good Heavens! What would our own working men say if they knew of such things being done!' (59)

In keeping with Statham's optimism in the ability of British fairplay, justice and equality to triumph, the novel ends optimistically, an ending which the former course of the novel has belied with almost every word. Wolston is removed from prison, Weare, who dies in a mining accident, has a statue erected to his memory, whilst Porters decides to reopen a temporarily closed mine, 'which might be worked to the advantage of everyone'. (60) Furthermore, with an uncharacteristic act of magnanimity, they decide to abandon the 'old policy of accumulating enormous profits'. (61) However, despite this unexpected ending, the novel remains an often powerful exposition of the conditions within the mining industry.

Douglas Blackburn

Alongside Statham, the other documentor of the social toll of mining was Douglas Blackburn. In Richard Hartley, Prospector... he parodied the dominant mythologies of mining and its self-constructed history, in Leaven: A Black and White Story, published three years later in 1908, he recorded the contemporary practices of the mining industry, an area that was all but ignored by his contemporaries.

As a journalist and editor of papers on the Rand, Blackburn had gained much experience and information of life under a mining regime - information that came his way largely through his journalistic method of launching investigative campaigns into the social appurtenances of mining life, particularly the liquor trade. In addition, he had a clear grasp of the structure and peculiarities of colonial society

its classes and its 'types', information that he documented extensively in his co-authored book, Secret Service in South Africa, which contains material that was extensively used in his novels.

And it was largely because Blackburn used this method of forging literature out of carefully documented social conditions, that he could jettison the inevitable ballast of a sensational plot with romance elements staged against a shallow background of local colour - a structure that provided the backbone for the majority of his contemporaries' work. Hence Blackburn's methods of composition enabled him to address himself to social 'problems' on the Rand, problems that were only to be dealt with twenty to thirty years later in the canon of dominant class literature in South Africa. Particularly pertinent here is his relatively early treatment of the urbanisation of Africans, a movement to the cities that had begun in the 1890's. Many turn-of-the-century African and Afrikaner writers were to deal with working class urban life from an early date, yet Blackburn emerges as one of the few white English writers in the first decade of this century to deal with urbanisation, and to offer a critique of the conditions of working class life in mining centres.

However, it is not sufficient to note that Blakcburn constituted an anomaly of his time. If this is perhaps how it appears, then there are factors that can explain what would otherwise remain an inexplicable aberration. If in Leaven he could offer an uncharacteristic critique of the mining industry and its labour practices, then this view in turn relates to the ideological underpinnings of the novel. And in this particular novel, he argues largely from a perspective of radical separatism, a political point of view that was widely held in South Africa at the turn of the century.

Finding its most eminent propagator in men like F.W. Bell, total segregationism emerged as an alternative ideology to the partial segregationism which the dominant mining fraction advocated. In terms of this political dispensation, territorial and residential segregation would be implemented, whilst the flow of labour to urban centres would not be impeded. In contradistinction to this view, total segregationism

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