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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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In addition to these McCombie publications, a number of other similar periodicals constituted Johannesburg's alternative press. Similar in style to the McCombie brand of journalism was The Critic, 'an outspoken and straightforward journal of criticism', which launched 'fearless attacks on government and capitalist abuses and the articles on social and mining scandals made The Critic a power in the land.' (23) This paper showed journalistic and advertising ingenuity by instituting the practice of awarding a weekly Critic Cake, on view at a local bakery. Each week a nominated recipient who had excelled himself through malpractice, bogus salesmanship and humbuggery, 'took the cake'. A similar paper, The Burlesque, which subsequently merged with The Critic, advertised itself in 1892 as the only South African weekly 'committed to weeding out dishonest companies and to exposing all swindlers'. (24) Other smaller papers, like The Bulletin, The Nugget, and The Moon appear to have belonged to this tradition of irreverent and iconoclastic journalism which served the market created by the digger/transitional class. (25)

In addition, The Standard and Transvaal Mining Chronicle (STMC), which ran from 1887 to 1890, committed itself to the diggers' cause, and provided an outlet for their opinion. In its first edition, it dedicates itself to 'free and unbiased criticism on all matters of public interest', and vouches it supports for the man who 'can throw off his coat and with upturned sleeves, dig and delve, and yet remain the man'. In the same edition they urge support for the Diggers' Rights Protection Association,

> a society which will enable the weaker when in the right to hold their own against the financially strong whose only plea is that they hold the power in ready cash to freeze the poor man out.... "Union is strength" is the...adage for to be effectual in every instance where common sense justice [illegible] and the object of this association is to prove to the world [illegible] we can hold our own in righteousness by that unity which is strength, against the invasions of cant, hypocrisy and the deceitfulness of unmanly self-seeking which undermines the moral structure of any community. (26)

Journalistically, the STMC had much in common with McCombie who they hailed as 'A Brother of the Quill' - 'Fearless, impartial and strong in his literary work, Mr. McCombie has done good service to the cause of the liberty of the press and contributed in no small degree to public

morality.' (27)

In addition to journalism, the sub-tradition of literature continued orally by way of narrative myth and legend during the early years of the Rand. The subject matter may have changed, but the codes remain unaltered. All of these tales, hinging upon luck, chance and gross coincidence, fit into the morphology of mining legend and are part of the early mythology of Johanneburg. For example, the accounts about the first discovery of gold deposits are all first cousins to Kimberley variants. Hedley Chilvers refers to the discovery of gold as 'How a Poor Handy-Man Stumbled upon Untold Wealth'. He also gives the story of a man whose wagon became bogged down and quite by chance the driver decided to use some curious looking stones to make a rocky wheel track. The stones, when shown to the geologist, Carl Mauch, proved to be auriferous. (28)

The lesson of perseverance is embodied in the tale of two Johannesburg diggers who worked one claim for a month without finding any reef. They decided to move on, and the next day the claim was repegged by anotner miner who immediately struck reef. (29) Structurally similar, is a short story, 'How we Discovered the Boomer'. It deals with a company of five diggers, in dire straits and on their beam ends financially, who are forced to spend the night under a tree, as they can no longer afford accommodation. Whilst collecting firewood, one of the party chops at some exposed roots and inadvertently uncovers a nugget. (30)

Dreams, too, appear as voyeuristic lessons for mining and one digger left Kimberley on the strength of a dream vision of

> a great mountain up the slope of which hundreds of diggers were hurrying with pack and pick. Presently they stopped and commenced to open prospecting trenches at many different points. Then all at once they vanished and before me yawned a great open hole like the Kimberley mine which suddenly became illuminated with a marvellous phosphorescent glow. And far below I could clearly see countless miners hard at work picking out the pebbly, golden floor of an ancient ocean bed. (31)

These beliefs were perhaps not always taken so seriously and one particular poem, 'Nat Donnel's Dhrame' gives this superstitious belief a farcical turn. In the poem, Nat relates how, in a dream, whilst on his way to a shebeen, he chanced upon St. Patrick. The saint promised to reveal to him the location of certain lucrative claims, provided Nat forsook drinking whisky, a deal which he is unable to fulfil . The poem concludes

> There's a moral Oi think to my shtory;
> The practice, Oi'd have ye to thry;
> 'Twixt fortune and us there is whisky;
> Fill up Bhoys! Let's drink the show dhry! (32)

Similar to this lighthearted approach to life, are a number of diggers' songs which stand squarely in the rousing old boys' drinking song tradition, reminiscent of the earlier Kimberley team war cries. The manifest naivety of these songs clearly stands as an indictment of the facility and fatuousness of a large proportion of the diggers' writing. And anybody, starting with a handicap of limited resources, who thought life on the early Rand was going to be a capital picnic, was self-evidently not going to survive the cut-throat reality of individual competitive capitalism. In the following songs the diggers toast their own doom.

Song - Strike it Rich!

> Come boys! fill up your glasses
> And drink, with three times three
> A hearty toast to all good friends,
> Wherever they may be.
> May they for us, within their hearts,
> Keep ever warm a niche,
> And when they strike their luck at last
> Oh! may they "strike it rich!"
>
> Then drink to the Promoter,
> And may his little games,
> Result in profit to himself,
> And the buying of our claims;
> May he his projects carry through
> Without a fault or hitch;
> And when he strikes the public mood,
> Let's hope he'll "strike it rich!" (33)

A Miner's Camp Song

Come pull up the boxes and draw round the fire,
Let each fill his pan to the brim,
Light up your pipes and cheerily drink,
Ere the embers grow ashen and dim.
The day-shift is o'er and the night is our own,
So let us be jolly and gay,
For miners, like Jack, would very soon pine,
If 'twere all work and no play.

Chorus

Then here's to the hammer, the pick and the spade!
And here's to the gold in the ore, boys!
May it ne'er raise a doubt,
The 'twill ever pinch out,
But go down to the earth's very core, boys! (34)

Semiologically then, the view of the world, ruled by Fortune remains unaltered, but in the Johannesburg tradition, gold itself is seen as the goddess of Fortune; the positivist force, external to man and the source of his experience, good or ill. In more lighthearted vein, a newspaper reported that 'the lady of the golden tresses shall be our new queen, our new goddess at whose shrine we shall worship. It is true that her charms and favours are but scarce and few...but her smiles, though difficult to obtain beam alike on all who court them honourably and perseveringly.' (35)

But others took the matter more seriously. Gold, as a deified concept, appears more malignant, callous and sinister to the predicament of the diggers, and in the poems on this particular subject, one can see an attempt to create some coherence and rationale for a way of life that was becoming ever more difficult to maintain.

To Gold

...In the mesh of thy net thou art surely, but warily gathering in
A harvest of sorrow and sighing, a whirlwind of sin;
Deeply graved on thy crystal around thee a record is laid
Of truth and uprightness prostrated, of honour betrayed.

...widespread on the tropical plain, on the hot mountain side,
Lie the bones of the brave or the greedy who for thee have died;
Around are the mounds they have raised or the pits they have riven,
The ash of thy lure; the souls that are prayed for in heaven. (36)

All in Vain

Lured by stories of the favours
Courtiers brave might gain
I, with others, sought the goddess
Gold, in vain!

...Then on couch of sickness lying,
Aching, racked with pain,
Heard the mocking echoes sighing,
"All in Vain!"

...Fair she is, but fickle ever,
Coy, and hard to gain,
Winning, may you find her never,
All in Vain. (37)

This corpus of superstition became elaborated and grew until it reached the proportions of the simple equation; mining equals death. A newspaper devoted an article to this subject and focused on the mining districts of America where the belief went that 'the discoverers of hidden treasures in the bowels of the earth are sure to meet with a violent end'. The article then lists in lurid detail the 'numbers of adventurers (who) literally die in their shoes'. (38) Now the fact of the matter was that adventurers were not literally dying in their shoes, but rather were progressively finding themselves to be redundant.

This pessimism in turn gave rise to a sinister fictive representation of Johannesburg, which is portrayed in the diggers' verse as a heartless and callous city, sullied by the evils of incipient industrialism. Already in the early years, one finds reference to an imagined previous pastoral age. By pointing to this past 'golden age', the poets wish to highlight the shortcomings of the present social relations, which are seen as defective in that the 'old digger' is being squeezed out. Typical of this kind of criticism is the poem 'Contrasts', which deals with the development of Johannesburg in three sections - 'As it Was', 'As it is in 1889', and '1892'. The first section deals with the Rand before the advent of mining and the landscape is made out to be an idyllic, prelapsarian paradise. Johannesburg, 1889 emerges as:

A straggling, dusty, unlovely town of iron and brick and wood,
...Where the germ-laden wind swirls death and disease in alley,
and street, and square;
Where the young and the old in a feverish throng, in alternate
joy and despair,
Fight, struggle and scheme, but never work, for a share of the
golden spoil
Which can only be won from its deep-seated home by genuine
labour and toil.....

Johannesburg (1892)

A forest of pit- gear, a warren of shafts, of tunnel, and stope
and drive.
With thousands of earnest and busy men at work in the golden hive;
The whirring of cages, the clamour of stamps, and the echo of
shivering blast,
And every man with a stern resolve, with earnest of purpose -
at last!
Reward for his industry, crown for his faith, the glittering
golden spoil.
Will it ever be thus? Will the rook caw in vain, to find that
the pigeon has flown?
Will the spider in shimmering, glistening web sit waiting and
watching alone?... (39)

Allied to this theme of dark Johannesburg, are a number of ballads dwelling on death and destruction in the Johannesburg mines which create a self-image of the digger as a doomed species. 'The Lament of the Gold Hunter' complains about the paucity of gold deposits and the difficulty of living conditions.

...For though they says you've only got
To take your pan and pick
A pocket full of gold you'll find -
It is not quite so thick!

...For here it is so awful hot
I'm always in a sweat!
For there is neither tree nor shade,
And I find but little "gold";
And so upon the whole I think
I'm regularly sold! (40)

Ballads like 'Pegging Out', 'Struck it', and 'In the Morning', (41) all deal with the death of diggers, who although they might have battled against acutely uneven odds, eventually are annihilated, and finally, they die selfless, touching deaths, always thinking of their families and companions first. 'That Scar' is a similar poem, but is narrated from the survivor's point of view.

> That Scar? well 'twas like this 'ere Sir;
> Me and two other men
> Was sinking a prospecting shaft,
> Out beyond Doornfontein:
> There was James, and poor old Simpson
> And two Kafirs, - five all told -
> And I reckon we'd sunk some forty feet
> On a shoot of payable gold.

The gist of the narrative is that the narrator accidentally falls back into the shaft, after having laid the dynamite. Simpson, in true selfless digger style goes back to rescue him.

> He sent me up in a jiffy
> And told 'em to lower again -
> Knowin' if both went together,
> The rope couldn't bear the strain,-
> They had landed me and had lowered
> As speedy as they could go,
> When just as the rope touch the bottom
> The shots blew off below!
>
> Folk don't reckon much on miners,
> But if ever there be the need,
> A miner is always ready
> To do an heroic deed,
> If there's harps and crowns up in heaven,
> Of gold, as they say there are,
> Well Simpson has pegged a claim Sir, -
> And I've only got this Scar. (42)

Finally the digger is shorn of even the support of his fellows and is portrayed as a social recluse out of touch with reality, continuing only in the hope of illusory riches.

The Rand Digger

The digger's tent is set on the bare, bleak mountain side -
With ne'er a tree, or crag to shield it, or him hide...
From fierce rays of sun, bitter mountain blast...
...The man himself a solitaire - to few he tells
His inmost communings...
...About wondrous reefs, in naked beauty meretricious
To leaders glorious...
To preposterous pannings...
...he retains
The bouyant hope, that he will wrest from Nature's breast
Her secret hordes of gold there stored
- then blessed rest. (43)

Taken in its totality, the ideological worldview of the diggers, as exemplified in their literature, made not an inconsiderable contribution to their subsequent demise as a class. Their oral tradition with its small reiterative grammar, was essentially inflexible and severely limited the ways in which they could see the world. Their ontological and epistemological possibilities were one-dimensional and circumscribed, since if one posits a human life, ruled by an inscrutable and unfathomable force, removed from man and unknowable to him, collective action and organisation become nugatory. So ultimately, their ideology contributed to their social, political and economic reactionism and quite possibly hastened their inevitable demise as a group.

3. Transitional Writers

In assessing this writing, it is important to remember that it arose with the small claimholders and disappeared with them. As a form of popular poetry the fictive universe of these verses emerges as a mediated construct arising out of the social fabric of the diggers' community and the struggles in which they were involved. Now certain critics would have us believe that 'South African poetry is not, and never has been, a poetry with popular roots. We have no popular songs...we have no anonymous ballad literature either, no folk songs, although our noisy history is packed with suitable incident'. (44)

This type of judgement clearly arises out of a preconceived notion of what literature is. Furthermore, this prepackaged definition leads to the vicious circle whereby an interrogation of a text must give back certain preconceived ideological aesthetic categories like 'felt life', density of characterisation, sincerity, irony, subtlety, sensitivity and so on. If this definition with its built-in blind spots, is to be used, then huge chunks of South African literature will be obscured. And this diggers' poetry, doggerel though it may be, goes some way to fill the supposed hiatus in white South African popular poetry.

Another contribution which the diggers made came about through their journalism which emerges as a forerunner to a later style and tradition of iconoclastic news writing that survived in pockets into the twentieth century. Take, for example, Douglas Blackburn with his Krugersdorp Sentinel and his later Life: A Subtropical Journal, in which he warned the editor of The Star, in a style, by now familiar

> You will be required to voice the unholy sentiments and aspirations of a class whose motto is "Eat, drink and acquire, for tomorrow we catch the next boat". Public spirit and public life as you and I have known it does not exist on the Rand. To show any signs of broadmindedness or care for your fellow is to be damned as a fool... above all never forget that you are the champion of a selfish, unpatriotic and utterly insincere detritus of cosmopolita. (45)

Similar journalists were Stephen Black and his Sjambok and Louis Cohen, a Johannesburg writer and jounalist, who was well-nigh destroyed by J.B. Robinson in a libel case in 1911, involving Cohen's Reminiscences of Kimberley, which first appeared in serialised form in a London paper The Winning Post. Cohen had to pay £1,000 damages and subsequently spent eighteen months in prison for perjury. (46)

Although the diggers' literature was largely an anonymous one, there were a few writers who, whilst having their beginnings in digger society, subsequently rose to prominence. One such writer was Louis Cohen, who stands as the strongest link between early mine writing and subsequent developments.

A prolific writer, he produced two novels, one five-act drama, a dozen dramatic sketches, three verse dramas, various short stories, two sets of reminiscences and an assortment of sketches, columns, memoirs, satires and poems. He emigrated to Kimberley in 1872 with his cousin Barnato and together they started out as 'kopje wallopers' (small time diamond buyers). Cohen subsequently moved to the Rand and then on to London, but already in Kimberley, he had turned his hand to journalism and produced a column 'Gay Young Creatures' for the Du Toit's Pan Herald. This column, a humorous typological satire, was rooted in the diggers' sub-tradition of early Kimberley journalism and this particular style continued to be the hallmark of all Cohen's subsequent writings. Superficially, too, he appears to have identified with the digger/transitional class insofar as he constantly lampooned mining magnates and the interests they represented. In a characteristic passage he tirades against

> the scum of Germany and Whitechapel - they have crystallised into 'magnates' since...These last stole from their simple-minded victims by intrigue and theft their claims and ground, and then, when they were in full possession, if anybody touched a glittering gem belonging to them, they howled like dervishes...they 'bought' the very foundations of their wealth, with the money amassed by their initial thefts from the original claimholders...(these) South African 'financiers'... are the greatest rascals that Nature ever spawned and...would sell their souls if a purchaser could be found for such vile trash. (47)

In his satirical verse drama, The Chamber of Horrors - a parody on the Chamber of Mines, he portrays Rhodes as follows

> A Duke I've wanted much to be and, like the Dukes of old,
> I'm not very particular if the title's bought or sold;
> Most Dukes of old were mercenaries, and blood their titles' price,
> The crest of my near Dukedom will be "Its naughty but it's nice."
> That I have been a mercenary the Dupreez Reef will show,
> And as for blood I've had a glut - the Matabeles know.
> High finance did mate with battle and gave my fortune birth,
> And now I'm allowed to be the greatest man on earth. (48)

But in many respects these sentiments were a negation of Cohen's true aspirations, and throughout he remained a millionaire manque with his heart in the Rand Club, despite any sour grapes protestations to the contrary. The range of professions which he tried - diamond buying, prospecting, stockbroking, acting, journalism and boxing promotion - all seem to indicate his desire for an entree to the big time.

Despite the fact that during his day he enjoyed great popularity - some of his sketches ran for six years in America - he, like so many other South African writers, sank into obscurity, mainly because his work was not considered as High Art, and hence did not qualify for the South African Great Tradition. Nonetheless, he deserves to be resuscitated and reassessed as a major South African humorist. As he himself said, with his characteristic self-satirisation

> In time to come, when South Africa shall have produced (as she assuredly will) her Barrie, Hardy, Keats, Macaulay, Constable, Balfe...when the exploiters, say, of the Jolly Roger Gold Mining Company or the Diamond Nest proposition are completely forgotten...then I shall perhaps be rescued from deserved oblivion by some inquisitive bookworm. (49)

The literature of the small claimholder not only lived on through individual authors, but was to be taken up by many subsequent novelists who dealt with mining, and the diggers' literature with its coherently structured worldview of interconnecting motifs, provided the narrative fodder on which these novels could feed. In addition, this mythology of mining that arose out of the position of the diggers, has survived to become the empirical fact of the Rosenthal/Cartwright fraternity and one still finds it popping up occasionally in the television serial The Villagers.

The form of the diggers' writing was also to influence later novels, and the early literary forms of the small claimholders' newspaper sketches, typological satires and memoirs were to eventuate in the social chronicle/ fictive autobiography which forms such an important part of South African literature. The number of journalists who doubled up as

novelists reinforces this point. Some of these writer/journalists were W.T. Eady, Anna de Bremont, Louis Cohen, F.R. Statham, Ernest Glanville, Stephen Black, Leonard Merrick, Douglas Blackburn, Bertram Mitford, Perceval Gibbon, and J.R. Cooper, who although not a journalist himself, was friendly with both Cohen and Merrick. And it is to these writers that we now turn to examine the way in which they were to use the images of mining.

Section II : Re-Interpretations : The Beginnings of the Mining Novel.

Introduction

Given the fact that the advent of the mining industry exercised an extensive influence on South African society, it is not surprising to find a substantial body of formal literature dealing with the subject. As pointed out above, this literature tended to draw on the earlier lore of the diggers, altering and restructuring the motifs and images of early mining in specific ways, always contingent upon the point of view of the writer and his/her structural position in South African society.

On one level, this preponderance of the mining novel, prior to the turn of the century is understandable. Mining, both in Kimberley and Johannesburg was attracting much attention overseas and concomitantly there existed a substantial literary market for books dealing with the industry. However, over and above the influence of the overseas literary market, one has to account for the social conditions within which the South African writers functioned.

The period during which the majority of mining novels were written - the 1880's and 1890's - was one characterised by conflicts and obstacles for the nascent mining industry. In one direction it was faced by a marked degree of social instability and crime occasioned by the rapid monopolisation that the industry had undergone. In another, the gold mining industry found itself functioning under the aegis of the Transvaal State which proved to be anything but sympathetic to the revolutionary aspirations of mining capital - a conflict that was subsequently to lead to the Anglo-Boer War. In short, this period leading up to the war can be seen as a time when the social effects of mining were most marked and the struggle for its dominance equally pronounced.

Yet despite this background of incipient conflict, the majority of the novels tended to produce a favourable and often sentimental portrait

of the mining industry. With the exception of a handful of novels that questioned the effects and social implications of mining, most novels dealing with the subject set about creating a peculiar and sentimental history for mining - a history that was to use as its central object the image of the digger.

However, by the time that novelists were embarking on this fictive historiography, the diggers were a marginalised and spent social force. Notwithstanding their demise as a social group, novelists again and again resuscitated and revamped the small claimholder as a symbol of ratification for monopoly, a factor which the original digger had vehemently opposed. It was not the first time that writers were to make of their former disreputable enemies, respectable allies.

In order to accomplish this metamorphosis, the writers utilised two major strategies in their reinterpretation of the digger. The first was to portray him as a 'gentleman', the second related strategy involved characterising him as a 'pioneer'. These two symbols could provide writers with the necessary free enterprise orthodoxy of individual endeavour and equality of opportunity. In addition, the world-view of the diggers predicated on beliefs in luck, fate and chance, could come to replace history, by positing in its stead an arbitrary social process that favoured some and not others on a purely whimsical decree of Fortune.

Furthermore, the digger in the guise of 'gentleman' was a portrayal that could incorporate a wide range of suggestion and signification that implied 'Britishness', Imperialism, honour, manliness, courage, valour and so on. All of these properties could then be transferred as a corporate image onto the mining industry via the symbol of the digger who was to become its fictive incarnation. The digger in the guise of 'pioneer' could also suggest an extensive set of meanings, by drawing on a tradition of South African 'pioneer' literature. Within this tradition of 'rugged individuals', the digger could then easily become the brother of the hunter, Eastern Cape farmer, or 1820 settler who had preceded him as a 'pioneer', in 'opening South Africa up'.

Bearing in mind the 'factual' status that novels of Empire enjoyed, one can hence see that these early novels on mining succeeded in creating their own history of the industry based on rugged mystiques of power and pioneering, accompanied by a veneer of British respectability. This type of portrayal based on adventure and glamour, could obscure the role that foreign capital, military strength, violent conquest and expansion had played, in the formation of the mining industry as a dominant social force in the subcontinent. And it is still this whitewashed history of the mining industry that persists today. The genesis of mining is still imputed to a body of sentimentalised diggers who by luck or chance, rather than access to superior resources, came to triumph as magnates. And it is significant that an industry that has always functioned through monopolies should remember itself via a series of free enterprise mythologies pivoting around the self-made man rising, through fortuitous circumstances, from rags to riches often in a couple of days. Emerging as this literature did, during a period of pronounced struggle and conflict, it must undoubtedly have created a propitious atmosphere both in South Africa and overseas, for the mining industry in which it could further its quests for dominance.

1. The Digger as 'Gentleman'

One of the first problems that the mining industry faced was its heterogeneity. Decidedly cosmopolitan in character, the mines in addition faced the prospect of attempting to contain within itself a spectrum of differing and often inimical interests. To overcome this problem, the mining industry was badly in need of an image of unity, a corporate image that could bestow on it, in the eyes of outsiders, a sense of direction and purpose, and a veneer that could give it respectability. And it was to be in the concept of 'Britishness' that it found the necessary bromide. 'Britishness' reeked of respectability as opposed to *noveau richesse*. Furthermore it encouraged an allegiance to Britain as a cultural point of reference. (1)

Of course, the mining centres were far from being homogeneously British and Olive Schreiner's description of Johannesburg, which I quote at length, provides a useful alternative emphasis to the dominant conception of 'Britishness'.

> Here are found that diverse and many-shaded body of humans, who appear wherever in the world gold is discovered. The Chinaman with his pigtail, the Indian coolie, the manly Kaffir, and the Half-Caste, all forms of dark and coloured folks are here and outnumber considerably the whites. Nor is the white population less multifarious and complex. On first walking the streets, one has a strange sense of having left South Africa, and being merely in some cosmopolitan centre, which might be anywhere where all nations and colours gather round the yellow king. Russian Jews and Poles are here by the thousands,...Cornish and Northumberland miners; working men from all parts of the earth: French German and English tradesmen; while on the Stock Exchange men of every European nationality are found, though the Jew predominates. The American strangers are not larger in numbers but are represented by perhaps the most cultured and enlightened class in the camp, the mining engineers and large importers of mining machinery being often of that race; our lawyers and doctors are of all nationalities, while in addition to all foreigners, there is a certain admixture of English and Dutch South Africans. In the course of a day one is brought into contact with men of every species. Your household servant might be a Kaffir, your washerwoman is a Half-caste, your butcher is a Hungarian, your baker English, the man who soles your boots a German, you buy your vegetables and fruit from an Indian Coolie, your coals from the Chinaman around the corner, your grocer is a Russian Jew, your dearest friend American. This is an actual, and not imaginary description. Here are found the most noted prostitutes of Chicago, and that sad sisterhood...known in Johannesburg under the name of Continental women, has thronged here in hundreds from Paris and the rest of Europe. (2)

But it was to be the concept of 'Britishness' that was subsequently to prevail as a dominant view of reality and in fact came to dictate the frontiers of existence and limits of the world, as Bozzoli has shown

> The external world was seen as those not British and not in the mining industry, these frontiers obviously excluded Blacks and Boers, who formed the frontier of mining ideology which was defined by the class and historical position of those outside of it. (3)

This ideological perception of 'Britishness' emerges unequivocally in the following passage written by a commentator on Johannesburg life in 1892.

> (Johannesburg) differs from the capital and other Transvaal towns in many respects, the chief of these being that it is, practically a British settlement. English is the general

> language spoken. The newspapers....are English, and the society is essentially English. English capital and English energy have, t[illegible], been the means of its birth and steady growth. Here, therefore, the crowd of arrivals from the old country flock in greater numbers than anywhere else in South Africa, to find in the clubs, theatres, the hotels and in the sporting arrangements, the customs, conveniences and luxuries of home repeated to a great extent in their adopted country. (4)

As regards the literature of mining, this concept of Britishness secreted itself obliquely via the strategy of the 'gentleman'. This concept, as manipulated in literature, functioned as a useful pemmican or shorthand to encompass and incorporate into itself, a vast complex of notions, ideas, attitudes and beliefs that drew substantially on attitudes to Imperialism. The fictive presence of the gentleman as a semiotic code provided instant and plural signification which included an aristocratic family background, public school and army training, noblesse oblige and values such as manliness, courage, honour and enterprise which collectively spelt Anglo-Saxon racial superiority.

This hefty ideological baggage was both readily and quickly utilised in the fictive portrayal of the mining fields and as early as 1871, Frederick Boyle, a visitor to the diamond fields, commented

> Boers do not come here, and the poorer sort take luncheon at their tents in the claims. Diamond digging is emphatically, up to this time, a gentleman's diggings. Long may it continue so. (5)

In similar vein, a short story writer, B.J. Belgrave wrote, 'So although cosmopolitan, in our material, we were more English, or rather less Colonial than any other community in South Africa.' (6)

Opposed to this concept of the mining industry, as embodying and exuding 'Britishness', can be juxtaposed the view of the small claimholders themselves. As pointed out above, they were at times vehemently opposed to the imposition of British rule and came close to rebellion against it. In addition, extant press reports satirised and repudiated

the notion of the gentleman's diggings. A report from a correspondent at Hebron, an alluvial digging on the Vaal River, related the tale of a 'gentleman digger', 'who decided to try mining, he thought it was great fun, but could not stand it for even one day, declaring that this was work for diggers and left'. The correspondent ends by saying that he has seen 'many more cases like that'. (7) In addition, the gentlemanly character of the fields was not always as honourable and chivalrous as later fiction writers would have us believe and although many commentators have maintained that the Kimberley fields were relatively law abiding and 'well-behaved', (8) there were numerous incidents of lynch law, tent-burning, and flogging whilst brutal methods of labour control were accepted practice. However, in later fiction, these factors are ignored and suppressed, indeed a necessary silence if one wished to portray the diggers as 'gentlemen', a portrayal that necessitated ideological underemphasis of certain factors and overemphasis of others.

This particular portrayal of the digger in fiction began at an early date (1871) with a short story "The Wrong Boat or Dropped Among the Diamonds", (9) published in a British journal. Aimed largely at an English audience, the story follows the fate of an aristocrat and 'gentleman', Lawrence Trelawney, and expands a theme that was to become familiar in later years: the dispossessed aristocracy regaining their wealth in South Africa. Trelawney discovers on his father's death that the expected family fortune has come to nought, and so thrown on his own resources he ends up in South Africa, doing manual labour. Eventually, having saved an ailing digger from death by vultures, the protagonist is rewarded for this act of manly valour with the now dead digger's claim on the Vaal. Our imperial harbinger himself assumes the guise of a digger and exploits the claim to great advantage, to become chairman and chief shareholder of a mining company.

Hence the gentleman is one who can prove himself in adverse circumstances and can rise above his condition. The diamond and gold fields with their supposed possibility of sudden riches lent themselves in



A sentimentalised photograph of a 'pioneer gold digger', (W. Auret Pritchard), in characteristic uniform.

fiction to the theme of the aristocracy revitalised and regenerated, as writer after writer capitalised on the fictive possibilities of resuscitating financially ailing 'gentlemen' by packing them off to the mining fields. Here they could expiate their 'pasts' at leisure, whilst at the same time proving their inherent gentility and worth. So as the colonised countries were revitalising and fortifying the British economy through expatriated profits, so too in fiction could the ailing aristocrats find new wealth in the colonies, that enabled them to 'go home'.

With regard to this theme of revitalisation, one finds a recurrent and stereotyped portrayal of the small claimholder, and it is a portrayal that always signifies that these men are and remain 'gentlemen', whatever their present position. The first aspect of this portrayal is physical appearance, and the digger invariably has blonde hair with blue eyes or if not that, is at least physically imposing. Just in case we should miss the point, these 'gentlemen' often have typological names as in the case of Jim Brawnston, whose description provides a good example of the prototype 'gentleman digger'.

> (he)...was a good specimen as one might wish to meet with of the Anglo-Saxon - a brawny giant of about twenty-eight, with a bushy beard, and a pleasant honest look in his light blue eyes, and a laugh like a lion's roar. In his time he had followed most of the callings open to a Cape colonist who has a disposition to rove than to settle down any where. (10)

The second strategy of characterisation involves the characteristic uniform that the digger wears, consisting of cord or moleskin trousers, a flannel shirt, boots and a broad-brimmed felt hat. Besides the picturesqueness of the outfit, the poor quality of the clothing is generally used as a foil to highlight the innate gentility of the character. No matter to what depths a gentleman may have sunk, no matter what his clothes are like, nothing can hide the inherent gentility of aristocratic 'blood'.

Allied to the physical protrayal of the digger, is the third characteristic of the gentleman digger: his ability to do the physically

exacting labour required in mining, a task which he fulfils surprisingly well, despite the fact that his hands have never touched manual labour before. But this physical endurance is yet another hallmark of 'Britishness' and superiority. If aristocrats could prove themselves under physically trying circumstances of the colonies, this endurance attested to the therapeutic effects of colonisation on British manhood and in addition, physical prowess offered an invigorating challenge to a nation, in danger of becoming, as one writer so graphically put it, 'a filthy set of washed out human dish rags, ...vegetables, soft and sappy, like sodden turnips'. (11) One sure way of combating this creeping turnip syndrome was to prove oneself in the colony, where it was believed that even the scenery and landscape could exercise a beneficial effect on manliness. As one commentator has said

> It is a commonly held view in the writing of the period that underdeveloped countries provide scope for character training and physical toughness, an idea of which the modern 'outward' bound' courses are perhaps a survival. (12)

A novel which provides an exemplification of these ideas is The Milners: or the River Diggings. The novel structures itself around a double plot, concerning two 'aristocratic' landowning families - the Milners from England and the Browns from the Eastern Cape. Both families run into financial difficulties and go into 'exile' on the diamond and gold fields respectively. But all along we are left in no doubt that despite their adversity, they will triumph because of their 'Britishness' and good breeding. The novel is at great pains to point out the poverty-stricken condition of the alluvial diggings and attempts to debunk the myth that digging is a 'romantic, gipsy life'.

> I don't think there's any place in the whole of South Africa where there is so much poverty as there is here. People come here,... and work and toil and make nothing, and by the time they've found out that there's nothing to be gained by staying they've used up what little money they brought with them, and can't get away...It is little wonder that men take to drink here, whilst women become sickly, worn-out and degraded when they are placed in circumstances without hope of getting out of them. Yes, it may seem romantic, to live by a river side in a ragged tent and eat dry bread and mealie meal porridge month in and

> month out and go about in rags and see your children sick and starving, but I can tell them it's a land of romance that soon wears off. (13)

Despite, or rather because of, the abject poverty of the diggings which destroys all the other diggers, the gentlemen survive, contrary to all social probability. But then their survival is attributed to an ahistorical 'natural superiority' or aristocratic 'blood' that is stressed throughout the novel. Gerald Milner, the son 'with a past', is predictably 'very handsome with clear-cut features which bore the unmistakable stamp of good birth and refined breeding' (14) and even 'his clumsy and ill-fitting digger's clothing could not conceal (his) easy grace'. (15) So too his younger brother, 'so shabbily dressed, whose face...so unusually handsome and whose unmistakable good birth and breeding was so strikingly in contrast with all around him'. (16)

In addition to their 'gentlemanliness',their'Britishness' also sees them through. A servant in England at one stage on meeting a New Zealander, expresses disbelief that he is so 'English', or as he puts it, 'he ain't a bit foreign'. Kathy Milner, the protagonist, has to enlighten the foolish dolt and insists that he is an 'Englishman'. The servant however persists in his ignorance. 'A young fellow born and bred where he's been - in one of them dark corners of the earth that the parson prays for now and then - I can't think of him as an out and out Englishman...a man as hasn't had the advantages of being born in England, can't have a real bold English heart in him I am sure.' (17)

One of the novel's projects is to rectify this misapprehension. Even if one is born in the colonies, one can have a 'true bold English heart' if one adheres strongly enough to 'Britishness'. Furthermore that is what colonisation is all about - in every Anglo-Saxon beats a heart, true and bold, it merely needs sufficient adverse conditions to emphasise it all the more.

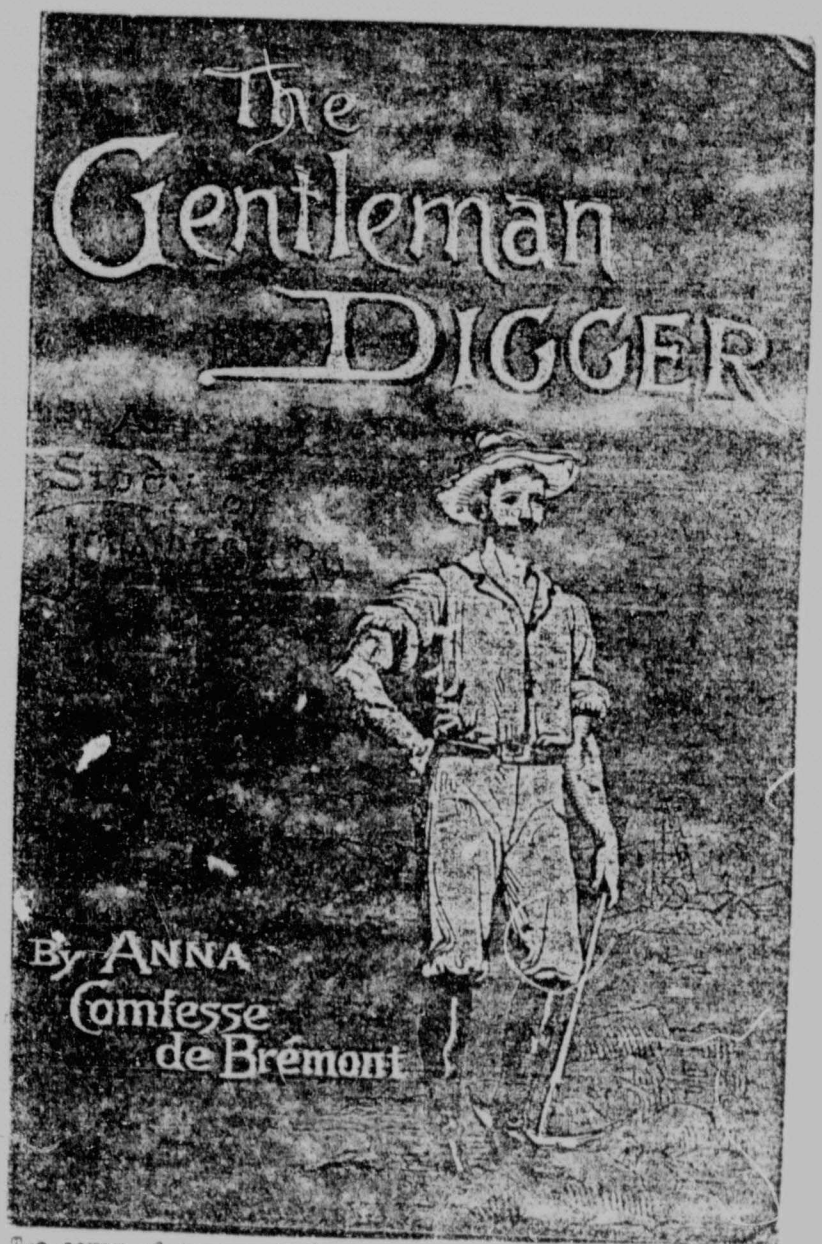
The treatment of the small claimholder as gentleman gets its fullest exemplification in a novel, The Gentleman Digger, by Anna de Bremont. In this novel, the miners, as any self-respecting diggers should be,



Anna de Brémont

have the requisite Anglo-Saxon blonde hair and blue eyes, complete with digger uniform topped by a broad-brimmed hat. Lest we miss the point these gentlemen have classical names - Hector and Achilles, the latter beings as 'blonde as a Norse god...(with) deep-set blue eyes'. (18) And it is these demi-gods who represent the 'honest men who if left in peace to work for the ultimate good of all concerned' will unearth 'gold enough in the Transvaal for the whole of Britain'. (19) In order to underline the superhuman characteristics of these men, deBremont uses the motif of rising from the dead. Hence Hector at one stage contracts a fever and is left for dead, but, as we all know, 'gentlemen diggers' never die, and he comes to life again, in a messianic feat, that makes of him nothing short of a saviour, a guise enjoyed by most of her protagonists in her other novel A Son of Africa, and her short story collection, The Ragged Edge. In these books she manipulates her heroes, whether diggers, missionaries or philanthropists to become the all-imperial saviours of foreign investment in South Africa, whilst de Bremont herself emerges as one of the most vehement upholders of Imperialism, and a most articulate spokesperson for the mining industry and all that it represented.

She began her career in South Africa as an assistant to a conjurer and subsequently worked in the theatre in Kimberley and Johannesburg where she became social editor of The Star. Objectively, she was in a position inimical to ruling interests insofar as she was professionally threatened. Peripheral theatre and music hall entertainment in which she was involved, were to be outdated and redundant by the end of the century. In addition, her views on feminism could have placed her in an oppositional position to dominant attitudes. As regards the latter, she was an early adherent to bourgeois feminism and in her novels constantly pleaded for equal job opportunities and recognition. But a rabid imperial jingoism appears to have got the better of her and acted as an over-determining factor to render her work and world view subordinate to dominant ideas.



The cover of Anna de Brémont's novel represents visually the contemporary perception of the digger as 'gentleman'.

On the face of it, she was an outspoken critic of the goldmining industry and its concomitant brutality, 'enforced' drunkenness and wretchedness. Her writings are good examples of what I would call the 'condition-of-Johannesburg' novel. Her ideological geography of the city is a vision of a parched, drought-stricken world, with 'one half starving while the other half feasts', and with 'champagne for the rich and Cape-smoke for the poor'. (20) Unlike many other chroniclers of Johanneburg, she had an acute perception of the violence inherent in the structure of the mining industry, a view which she presents allegorically in the following passage.

> Gold was everywhere. The people fought for it, some gleefully, some sullenly. The women dug it from the road with their slender fingers, and thrust it into their bosoms. The men tore it madly from the women. Their breasts were crushed and bleeding thereby. Others snatched up the gleaming filth - swallowed it, choked to death in voracious haste...Riding a monster chariot of gold, appeared a gigantic figure, half god, half man...In one hand he carried a sceptre, fashioned like unto a lash of a hundred tongues. And every tongue dripped blood. In the other hand he held the many reins of golden ribbons, guiding the steeds of his chariot. The steeds that drew him were - Men! ... One fell in the traces. The great wheels of the chariot crushed his fallen body. In an instant a hundred of the shouting crowd rushed forward, fighting, killing one another, in their struggle to take the place of the vanquished one. Meanwhile the Rider laughed long and furiously, cutting and blinding his human steeds with the hundred tongues of his golden lash...(21)

However, her condemnation of violence was by no means consistent and she never transcended, tied as she was so closely to mining interests, the suppositions of a worldview based on coercive control. Directed towards labourers, violence becomes for de Bremont something beautiful

> Meanwhile the Zulus watched with breathless admiration the prowess of the Baas, as he sent well-directed blows on the prostrate Kafir. Strength and courage was in their eyes, the highest type of manliness, and the splendid young Englishman seemed to them a perfect Hercules. They felt the utmost respect for a Baas who could do his own flogging and this Baas never failed in that yet. (22)

During her time in Johannesburg, de Bremont earned herself a reputation as a somewhat sultry and sensational writer who attracted violent reactions from critics, one of whom dubbed her work as a 'literary and artistic monstrosity, doomed to extinction at its birth'. (23) However, despite this opinion, she does, in retrospect, emerge as a useful and often original chronicler of early Johannesburg life, and the violence endemic to a mining society.

2. The Digger as 'Pioneer'

Allied to the digger as 'gentleman', is a portrayal of the digger as 'pioneer' or 'frontiersman'. In terms of this portrayal, the small claimholders are remembered as a fraternity, redolent of 'democracy'; a utopian brotherhood of (white) men whose efforts, endeavour and sacrifice supposedly paved the way for development and progress. These are also the men who putatively fought tyranny and corruption single-handedly and informed through their honourable endeavour their society with a spirit of egalitarianism and equality.

This sentimentalisation of the 'pioneer', whether he be digger, transport rider, hunter or 'frontiersman', was inevitably tied up with the attitudes of the dominant classes, who perceived their history through mystiques of 'great men' and 'rugged individualism', those supposedly positive qualities, developed in the insecurity and threatening nature of 'frontier' life, which 'made-South-Africa-great'. A statement from Caudwell, commenting on literature and primitive accumulation is apposite here.

> In this period of primitive accumulation, the conditions for the growth of the bourgeois class are created lawlessly. To every bourgeois it seems as if his instincts - his 'freedom' - are intolerably restricted by laws, rights and restraints, and that beauty and life can only be obtained by the violent expansion of his desires. (24)

So too, with the literature of South Africa's bourgeoisie at the turn of the century which is filled with the ideal of aggressive individualism, a perception that also informs the ruling classes' ideas of its



James Percy Fitzpatrick

'pioneers' and forebears on the mines. In terms of this perception, the diggers, acting out bourgeois aspirations in fiction, are filled with a 'roving spirit' of extreme individualism that submits to no restrictions in its quest for 'freedom'. Furthermore, these diggers like all good frontiersmen, fight against Nature, and with a deft sleight of hand the historical and specific conflicts of the period are bleached away to be replaced by a transhistorical and eternal epic battle against the forces of the natural world.

The writer who gives us the fullest exemplification of the digger as 'pioneer' is Percy Fitzpatrick, who has, I think, been rightly likened to Bret Harte, who out of the California goldrushes, created a code of sentimentalised frontiersmen. (25) Like Harte, Fitzpatrick, creates an all-male white world peopled by typological pioneers, usually small claim-holders or transport riders. The stories are usually set on some alluvial mining field in Kimberley, or Johannesburg or the Eastern Transvaal. But this geographical specificity is not nearly so important as the creation of an ideological space or 'pioneering/frontier' area, which the diggers inhabit. Significantly the black inhabitants of these areas are never mentioned and this fortuitous oversight then creates the impression that the area is uninhabited, so that all the pioneers have to fight is Nature. If the African inhabitants are mentioned, then they are seen as part of the wildlife, and hence are justifiably conquerable, being part of Nature. In a story, 'The Outspan', one character remarks: 'We were out shooting about five miles downstream, and on one of the shady pits of the river we saw fresh footprints. Nigger, we though, as it was barefoot.' (26)

Fitzpatrick's pioneers, are as all good pioneers should be, rough diamonds. Hence they pride themselves on their rugged lifestyles that as one of them puts it, 'develop the sterling good qualities of one's nature'. (27) In addition to this rough exterior, the individualism that the pioneer signifies is transported into the stories via the myth of 'trek fever'.

> When a man has spent some years of his life - the years of young manhood they generally are - in the veld, in the wagon, or tent, or Bush, it is an almost invariable rule that something which you can't define germinates within him and never entirely dies until he does. When this thing - this instinct, feeling, craving, call it what you will - awakens, as it periodically does, it becomes a madness, and they call it trek-fever, and then, as an old friend used to say, 'You must trek or burst!' (28)

This restless spirit is matched by the unfettered individualism of the pioneers who like American cowboys and frontiersmen, make their own laws, and '(choose) to settle their grievances in their own way'. (29) Consequently they rush any mining ground on the basis of ' "findings is keepings"...the first law of the prospector'. (30)

This individualism reaches its fullest expression in the hermit-like figures or 'white niggers' that inhabit Fitzpatrick's stories in such profusion. These figues with their presence of self-reliance and extreme individualism, actually out-pioneer the pioneers, as they are driven further and further inland as 'civilisation' snaps at their heels. One such character known as Induna Nairn says

> '...I sought out this spot and I chose this life because here there is no nineteenth century, no struggle, no ambition, no unrest. Here is absolute peace and content for me because I need not take thought of the morrow. You spend your lives and energies on the outside edge of civilisation paving a way for others' feet - you are beglamoured by your 'life of freedom, adventure and romance'. My dear sirs, that is a view that I cannot pretend even to understand, much less sympathise with. I may appear unnatural to you, but it is a fact that I dislike society of civilised men, and most of all that of the pioneers - the sappers and miners of civilisation - who think a white skin a warrant for anything. Odd as it may seem to you, I do not regard each white man as a friend or brother. On the contrary, I see in him a possible enemy and a certain nuisance'. (31)

And it is figures like Induna Nairn that embody the major contradictions in Fitzpatrick's fiction. On the one hand, he is admired for his extreme individualism that becomes imbued with a nostalgia for

the arcadian simplicity of a 'golden age' when 'men were just men', untouched by the ravages of industry and 'civilisation'. But on the other hand, Nairn and his like sometimes stray too far from 'civilisation', particularly when they fraternise with local black women. And it is at this point that Fitzpatrick, tied as he was to 'civilisation' and its more revolutionary counterpart the Reform Committee and the Jameson Raid, comes down on the side of that 'civilisation'. Consequently, Nairn and his like are not permitted to survive. Their fate is set out as follows,

> 'The Kaffir ambition may be a temporary one, or it may be that the return to white ways is a passing mania. Who knows, any way, from my own experience of them, I can say that the return to their own colour almost invariably means their doom and ruin. I don't know why, but I've noticed it, and it seems like - like a sort of judgement, if you believe in those things.
> And you know...there's a sense of justice in that too. Civilisation, scorned and flouted, being the instrument of its own revenge! If one could vest the abstract with personal feelings what an ample revenge would be hers at the sight of the renegade - sick-hearted, weary, shame-faced - coming back to the ways of his youth and race, and succumbing to some one part of that which he despised and rejected <u>in toto</u>.' (32)

So 'civilisation' can dialectically dissolve its own renegades.

Similar to Fitzpatrick's work, in tone, style and content, is a collection of short stories, <u>Luck at the Diamond Fields</u> by D.J. Belgrave. Written at a period of crucial historical change, when, in the author's own words, 'the system of individual diggers (was) replaced by companies', the stories all reproduce an orthodoxy of individualism. (33) The diggers became the central image of each story and are all men who 'liked the free and easy life...and were restless and unable to take kindly to any work which entailed obedience'. (34) In addition, Belgrave draws on another pioneer myth of 'equality' and in his stories he celebrates the 'noble army of diggers, recruited from all classes of society'. (35) This band of men, all enjoying absolute equality of opportunity, are in turn held up as a microcosm of contemporary mining society.

Another writer to draw extensively on this myth of equality, was William Westrup, who produced thirteen novels between 1911 and 1937. He arrived in South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War and ended up as a mining company secretary in Johannesburg. Many of his novels deal with different aspects of mining, and in River of Dreams, he turned his attention to a sentimentalised portrayal of the Vaal River diggings. On these diggings, Westrup creates a world, tinged by a mystique of pioneering and frontiers where whites are drawn together in one large family. So, too, on the mining frontier.

> all classes are represented on the diggings, where all men are equal and you will find the retired army officer living in a tent with a dissolute engine driver for his mate. All are equals, and the healthy conditions and hard work seem to bring out the best qualities of the cosmopolitan population. (36)

This feeling of family (and race) exclusiveness is accompanied by a male exclusiveness, similar to that of the club or public school. Hence the diggers are characterised as 'mischievous schoolboys', on an expedition akin to an outward-bound venture where 'the free and healthy life cleansed them...they were as jovial and open-hearted a crowd as you could wish to meet.' (37)

Finally, mention must be made of the 'rags to riches' orthodoxy that characterises a large proportion of the digger/pioneer's portrayal. In this portrayal, the original diggers' ideology, based on beliefs of luck, fate and chance, come to be used as an explanation and ratification of class distinction. Hence an ahistorical and arbitrary process where some are favoured and others not, comes to stand for a singularly unarbitrary social process that favours some, not because they have a lucky streak, but because they have access to power, capital and technological resources.

A good example of this type of portrayal comes from a collection of short stories by J. Griffiths, Knaves of Diamonds, a work squarely predicated on a view of life as a gamble against fate, that becomes



A graphic, from The Sunday Times, Sept. 20, 1936, celebrating Johannesburg's fiftieth anniversary. The picture clearly reflects the dominant and enduring ideology of the digger as 'pioneer'.

nothing short of ontological. And predictably enough, those that come to a triumph are the 'honest diggers', as in the case of Tom Burrows in a story, "The Finding of Diamond Pan". In this story, Griffiths has grafted the motif of the individual fighting corruption onto the idea of hidden treasures, two strands that combine in a sanctification of free enterprise and competition.

Tom Burrows, 'an honest digger', is being jeopardised by amalgamation and the formation of companies, a social development that is threatening to squeeze him out. The solution comes in the form of his 'Hottentot'servant, Shirty, who leads him to an extensive diamondiferous area in the Thirstland. The diamonds are so plentiful here that Burrows could flood the market, a fact which he relates to the managers of de Beers

> Diamonds shall be so cheap that every servant girl shall be able to blaze with them if she likes when they are as cheap, or cheaper than their imitations. I fancy you will find the monopoly of de Beers as unsaleable a commodity as the diamonds which it won't pay to produce. (38)

Ultimately, Burrows strikes a deal with de Beers, whose amalgamationist policies had been the original source of his misfortune. The 'honest digger' consequently becomes the magnate, and so the story tells us, all that is required is individual enterprise. The myth of equal opportunity remains unassailable.

In conclusion, mention must be made of Douglas Blackburn's contribution to the mining saga, a novel Richard Hartley, Prospector... , one of the few novels that attempted to parody the dominant ideals of the digger as 'gentleman' and 'pioneer'. In collecting material for writing this novel, Blackburn evidently had a lot to work from, for as an editor of newspapers on the Rand, he was well-acquainted with the myths and fancies of a mining centre.

Significantly, the protagonist is a prospector. And here Blackburn was no doubt drawing on a well-recognised Johannesburg type, not with-

out its detractors, who tended to look upon the practitioners of prospecting as a fraternity of hoaxers. The profession of prospecting had arisen with the mine fields and when the Johannesburg goldfields were proclaimed, there were an estimated 3 000 of these prospectors around. (39). This body of men earned their money advising, for a fee, individual claimholders and small syndicates on the likely profitability of their claims. These claimholders would then dispose of their ground to a wealthy syndicate who would in turn float companies for amounts that bore no relation to the quantity of auriferous ground in the claim. As these prospectors tended to function on areas of ground which had not been bought up by large companies, they tended to persist as a somewhat anachronistic and peripheral profession, soon to be superseded by company geologists.

And it would appear that Blackburn attempts to exploit this trait of anachronism in the creation of his prospector, Richard Hartley, who emerges as a somewhat farcical mixture of pretentious gentility and misplaced notions of being a 'pioneer'. He gives his credentials with a certain amount of unwarranted snobbery as 'surveyor, prospector and mining engineer' with the titles,'M.E., F.C.S., M.R.Geo.S., Manager of the Golden Star Gold-Mining Co. Ltd.' (40). As a pioneer he exists as a living anachronism neither recognising nor recognised by that which he is purported to have 'pioneered'. He lives in a world of artificially constructed history exemplified by 'a modern replica of a once famous canteen where he had seen hundreds squandered over the counter in a single night's debauch'. (41)

As a relic from the past, Hartley sets out on the traditional odyssey of the colonial protagonist - a gun-running adventure to the hinterland. He teams up with a certain Wilmot, a British drop-out, who unlike other teenagers fails to respond to the beneficient effects that colonies were reputed to exercise on British manhood. This mixture of the British drop-out and mining 'pioneer', both parodically characterised by anachronistic conceit, combine to form a novel

that undercuts the assumptions and worldview of the majority of euphoric romances that glamourised the mining industry.

In creating this tale of adventure, Blackburn drew extensively on information and popular lore that he had documented in works like Secret Service in South Africa, dealing with aspects of South African life and crime like gun-running, IDB, the quest for hidden treasures, all of which he incorporated into Richard Hartley. Hence the basis for his parody romance differs substantially from the majority of practitioners of that genre who created their plots from fabulous and fantastic material. (42) In keeping with this basis of romance based on 'facts' rather then 'fiction', Blackburn has two of his characters speak of the book as follows

> "Yes, but I fear my story is not particularly new - at any rate the material is old; but the changes rung on it are, I think, different to the usual." "Which is another way of saying your experience, whatever it may have been, is of the common South African type. Shall we say a story of phantom fortune; of greed and - and the consequences of greed?" (43)

However, Blackburn's satire and parody were not always appreciated and one contemporary critic missed the point when he analysed Blackburn's work as 'a victim of the adventure craze, whose fascination seems irresistible to the colonial authors.' (44) Blackburn's intention was to write an adventure story, but he by no means intended to become its victim, rather he wished to satirise contemporary writers who took the form and its implications seriously.

3. Overseas Writers

Alongside this early literature on the mining industry, there also existed a body of literature that emanated from overseas writers, who turned their attention to the nascent mining fields in South Africa. Often largely similar in orientation and attitude to the popular literature being produced in South Africa, this overseas writing, if it proves anything, attests to the potency and efficacy of the

ideologies of Empires, that could unite the attitudes, social habits and ideas of the ruling class in the metropolis and the entire colonised world.

This unity of outlook emerges most clearly in a novel like Pigs in Clover by Julia Frankau, (pseud. Frank Derby), who never set foot outside England. This however, did not deter her from producing a novel dealing with the gold mines, and the Jameson Raid, set in a framework of international politics and finance. Not surprisingly, the work emerges as an unequivocal apology for Empire and Empire-makers. (45)

Unlike Frankau, other writers did at least take the trouble to come to South Africa. This band of literary visitors was to be legion, and included certain notables such as Mark Twain and Anthony Trollope. Yet others, like Rudyard Kipling, Leonard Merrick, Edgar Wallace, Winston Churchill, and H. Rider Haggard, came to the colony for only a few years, leaving with a potent ideological baggage out of which they later made great fictive capital. (46) These 'literary birds of passage' as they were known, did not always meet with the approval of white settlers, who often accused them of the age-old colonial cry of misrepresentation. It was alleged by one colonial reviewer, for example, that these travellers, in their literary portrayal of South Africa, '(evolved) surprising incidents...out of their inner consciences'. (47) One such traveller to the diamond fields was Frederick Boyle, whose work annoyed a local reviewer by its dandyism

> In the earliest chapters there is much superfine and supercilious writing in kid gloves, very suggestive of a special correspondent to a penny newspaper; with an air of Bond-street dandyism that is rather apt to annoy the general reader when glancing at a record of travel...(48)

But more often than not, colonists and visitors found that they hit it off exceptionally well, sharing, as they often did, common attitudes, outlooks and social habits. This concord is probably nowhere more apparent than in the work of Anthony Trollope, the cajoler and ideologue of the Tory landed gentry.

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