

**BLOOD, RACE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF  
'THE COLOURED' IN SARAH GERTRUDE MILLIN'S  
GOD'S STEPCHILDREN**



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**by**

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**ABSTRACT**

In this paper I attempt to look critically at the literary construction of one particular 'race', namely the 'Coloureds', in Sarah Gertrude Millin's God's Stepchildren. To this end, the paper draws on the historical background of Millin, and investigates the way in which Millin has consciously and strategically formed, as it were, a 'unique' Coloured Identity. Furthermore, the paper explores the proximity or tension between author and narrator in the novel. This tension, I suggest, emerges in response to various pressures in the novel which in turn are based upon the author's social, political and economic background. Evidence to this effect is derived from Millin's biography and other sources.

What emerges from the paper is that the concepts 'race' and 'Coloured', as they are employed in this novel, are equally elusive. In attempting to piece together a 'race', the novel communicates Millin's aversion to miscegenation, and discloses characteristics of her 'self'. Ironically, I conclude, she falls prey to the same kinds of prejudices that she projects onto her literary subjects.

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper aims mainly to deconstruct the concept 'Coloured' as it is employed in Sarah Gertrude Millin's God's Stepchildren (GSC). An additional goal is to discuss my claim that there exists a conflict between author and narrator in the novel, and that, in the case of Millin, this conflict emerges dialectically out of particular circumstances. In other words, I am concerned with the ironic ways in which preoccupations and/or personality traits of the author emerge via the narrator as he/she describes the characters. In this sense, I will argue that one can trace a movement of contradictions with regard to the incentives (if not inspirations) in Millin's writing of this novel. This idea, in turn, gives rise to a further area which I intend to explore: namely, Millin's paradoxical ideology of race as illustrated in her relationship to Cecil John Rhodes and later in her views on Adolf Hitler.

Underlying the novel's political agenda, I believe, are four major principles. Firstly, Millin's obsession with blood and its power within the discourse of racism stems in part from an imported scientific theory (Social Darwinism). Secondly, she found it necessary to document and to transmit her ideas on race, particularly in the impressions of her surroundings. Thirdly, God's Stepchildren marks her arrival (although not debut) on the literary scene. Lastly, the financial implications of the success of this novel served as an incentive for writing, what I would term, her 'race' novels.

Generally, the ideologies of race and race superiority in the South African context were intensified and maintained through the political and economic dominance of the one 'ethnic group' over another.

In the first decade of the Cape Colony's history almost all positions of power and wealth in colonial society had been held by persons who were both European and free; all the unfree were non-European. At that time

race and legal status coincided and reinforced each other. (Elphick and Gllomee, 1979:384)

Moreover, the impact of the ideologies of racial domination and concomitant sense of superiority was so great that certain people came to believe it their divinely or at least naturally ordained right to rule, while others were left to accept their predetermined subservience as eternal. Historically, then, this thought was carried on through the generations as being 'real', 'natural' and 'true'. In the South African context, through various processes of intense and systematic social conditioning, many came to believe in (and defend) their superiority over others who in most cases had only their labour to sell. However, this 'reality' was soon to be challenged and altered both physically and symbolically by the resistance movements of the time. These movements took the form of mobilized, anti-government organizations and counter-hegemonic forces which fed into various literary discourses. Examples of the former kinds of resistance are, The African National Congress, Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of the 1920's, the Black Conscious Movement, and the African Peoples Organisation. The latter forms of resistance assumed various intellectual, artistic and cultural configurations, and were articulated in various genres, including those that came to be known as 'protest literature'.

The myth that Western Europeans were biologically destined to rule the world formed part of the socio-political and psychological make-up of its proponents. According to Dubow,

in the middle to late nineteenth century Darwin's theory of natural selection was transferred to human groups as opposed to individuals. But towards the end of the century, the theory of eugenics, based on the idea that social and political objectives could efficiently be achieved through deliberate manipulation of genetic pools, was founded by Francis Galton. While in Britain the theories of social and biological engineering were directed at addressing poverty and moral and physical

**'decay' , the language and applications [of eugenics] were readily transferred to the colonial domain". (Dubow, 1989:30)**

**This ideology, which preceded the better known 'Nazism' of the early to mid- 1900s, had been largely imported by the "colonising peoples of the [seventeenth century who] were convinced of the superiority of their culture and religion". (Elphick and Giliomee, 1979:361) This kind of "cultural chauvinism" that formed an important feature of racism has more readily been characteristic of the English and Dutch colonies because of their development of "early capitalism". (Elphick and Giliomee, 1979:361) Several explanations have been offered in explaining the rise of a European controlled social order. These are located in the ideas of the development of a rift between Christians and non-Christians or the distinction between the "respectable burghers and the despicable poor". (Elphick and Giliomee, 1979:361) The latter, in colonial terms, was readily "transformed into a rigid two-tiered society where Europeans dominated non-Europeans". (Elphick and Giliomee, 1979:361)**

**In the South African context, the adherents of the ideology of 'race superiority', of which Millin was one, held onto a different form. It had undergone a metamorphosis from a scientific theory to a socio-religious doctrine. Moreover, through a certain political leverage, its strength was to be found in a Judeo-Christian support base, which resonated here and there with Darwinism – the belief that only the fittest, strongest and wisest will survive.**

**In South Africa, Christianity had been unfavourably perceived by many 'non-white' Christians as a divided religion, in the sense of being diverse but essentially keeping black and white 'believers' apart. Historically, Christianity had been a strong movement opposing the development of a united South Africa (Meiring et. al. 1981:186) In this sense, Christianity and nationalist politics were comfortable bed-fellows:**

The leadership of the church and [National] party [were] closely intertwined. They share[d] a common moral consciousness; while it was founded on 'unique' Christian theology, it [was] nevertheless based on Scripture and teachings they [felt] to [have been] the true 'morality' and ethical justification for avowed supremacy of the white race. (Dvorin, 1952:189)

The biological justification for race superiority found support in the idea of a 'chosen race', or a race set *apart* to rule the world, and a world in which only the fittest ('fittest' as inclusive of all spheres: economic, political and physical) would survive and thereby rule. Moreover, this race would be pure, and its purity would lie in the untainted genetic characteristics it passed onto its own kind or group. Millin subscribed to this idea which she captured in *The Son's of Mrs. Aab*. For example, her narrator outlaws miscegenation thus: the descendants of impure union "were equally the fruit of matings unsanctioned by law or Church". (Millin: 1931:1)

It is this kind of thought, characterized by its dogma, which allowed its proponents to depict the mind of the non-European in prejudicial terms. For example, as having "an absence of differentiated individual judgement", or as the "group mind ... the group conscience", characteristic of "primitive' peoples". (Brookes, 1933:143)

Although this doctrine may have been politically denounced and socially ridiculed, it nevertheless found a refuge in the minds of many a layperson. It is not difficult to imagine how easily anyone could subjectively subscribe to such ideas and generally interpret the world accordingly. In the South African context, "patterns of paternalism and prejudice have been deeply embedded in the collective mentalities of white South Africans, for whom notions of superiority, exclusivity and hierarchy exists as more or less conscious 'habits of mind". (Dubow 1990:5) J.M. Coetzee holds that such ideas are no longer publicly communicated but whether they "live on in the private realm, who is in a position to judge?". (Coetzee, 1988:137)

Obviously there are a number of factors that contribute to such processes of assimilation of doctrines or ideologies which cannot be ignored but which do not warrant detailed analyses in this essay. Suffice it to say that Millin was but one such person whose mind provided a safe haven for such racial thoughts. This is discussed in greater detail where I refer to what could probably be described as the greatest dilemma or paradox in Millin: the similarities between her race ideology and Hitler's eugenics.

This essay is not merely intended as an exposition of Millin's treatment of the Coloured people but is founded upon the premise that God's Stepchildren reflects her constitution of a narrative or literary subject. Her literary subjects are what she thought to be coloureds. She attempted to simplify a topical contemporary issue (the 'coloured issue') by articulating her 'race' prejudices with the narrative subject (the coloureds) by drawing on her experiences and dealings with people of 'colour'.

However, this process of reflection essentially shows evidence of Millin's own constitution as social and literary agent. Firstly, in expressing her race ideology she establishes her place in society as one which can never be occupied by those she regarded lower than herself. Secondly, she elected to transfer this ideology to the form of the novel with the view of making her mark on the literary scene. In this respect, I intend to elucidate the inter- and intra-textual complexities inherent in Millin. This refers to the 'positionality' of the author/narrator as narrative agent in relation to her 'race' ideologies and the characters in the novel. This aspect in the novel leads to the development of what I would call a 'dialectic of subject and author': the displacement of the personal prejudices of the author, through the narrator, on to the subjects or characters. In short, the subject (the Coloured race) cannot exist without its narrator whose voice, I argue, is occasionally subsumed by that of the author's. Because of her obsession with the coloured issue, the author consciously draws on this issue but cannot divorce herself from it. Moreover, she capitalises on the subject for political, personal and economic reasons. She had found in the coloured issue a popular fear that she could write about at length and which would be readily



consumed by the contemporary readership of the time. This will become clearer when I speak about the proximity between Millin and the narrator in the novel, where I draw largely on the literary theories of Booth (1983). This argument finds support through an analysis of Millin's autobiography which is composed of two consecutive titles written thirteen years apart: The Night is Long (TNL) and The Measure of My Days (MMD). The former title alludes to Millin's insomnia (MMD,7) while the latter which was written after her husband's death can be generally construed as the reflections of an ageing (if not maturing) writer:

'Lord make me to know mine end and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am. The words from the Thirty-ninth Psalm. *People – blood and passion apart – do not really matter to other people*'. (MMD, 7, 8)

Although Millin alludes here to the development (or transition) of her religious and racial ideologies, these do not, however, fall directly within the scope of this paper. Elements in her autobiography and in Martin Rubin's, Sarah Gertrude Millin: A South African Life will serve to inform the view that in God's Stepchildren one can trace a convergent development of theory, fiction and autobiography, particularly as it has shaped her depiction of the 'coloureds' in the novel.

Furthermore, I hope to focus also on J.M. Coetzee's critique of Millin's idea of, and preoccupation with, the 'flaw' which is 'like an inherent reminder of a fall from grace, the grace of whiteness'. (Coetzee, 1988:141) The flaw, in my opinion, is not as Millin suggests a result of miscegenation, but of colonialism, the flaw /s colonialism. The ideas of 'race' and 'race superiority/inferiority' in colonial terms were not endemic to the indigenous (colonised) people of South Africa but were imported through colonial expansionism and progressively transmitted across the country among all inhabitants. As such, it is fair to assume that colonialism remains one of the prime causes of 'miscegenation'. This is a point that is implicit throughout God's Stepchildren but one

which is unavoidably explicit as the novel culminates in its revelation of the proximity between author and narrator:

They should have been stopped hundreds of years ago ... it should never have been allowed to happen in South Africa ... that white children should come into the world with shame and sorrow in their blood. (GSC: 271)

Millin was fully aware of the historical processes and contexts that influenced her writing and here, ironically, expresses her misgivings towards colonialism.

Furthermore, I intend to show that the stereotypes which Millin employs, manipulates and propagates, and which have been historically reinforced and naturalized, are not as dated as they are made out to be. The impact of the colonial initiative was so intense that it would continue to influence, shape and determine the cultural, political and psychological reality of people in South Africa for many years hence. It would be erroneous to ignore this, counter-productive to avoid or explain or wish it away, and insufficient to simply valorize counter-hegemonic forces in literary discourse. In short, the attitude (if not the rhetoric) of this paper is that one needs to reaffirm one's commitment to exposing, in detail, some of the racial stereotypes prevalent in, for example, literary discourse. But the objective should not only be to problematise the issue of racial prejudice in a high-faluting, intellectual sort of way. The exercise should encourage the sincere unlearning of those very prejudices which thus far have served only to sow discord among South Africa's people. In God's Stepchildren Millin thrives on unpacking the stereotypes in an explicit fashion. These features, I have elected to extract from the novel and to categorise them in order to facilitate the ensuing discussions.

Although the major focus of this essay is to show how Millin constructs the 'coloured' in God's Stepchildren, I also attempt to examine how she came to the conclusions and what her assumptions about 'coloureds' were, and how these would inevitably shape

and determine her novel(s). In short, I am concerned with her concept 'coloured' in the sense that South Africans have come to know it. Rubin records Millin's sentiments in this way:

but when asked to describe her book on its jacket cover, Sarah Gertrude wrote: 'God's Stepchildren is the name I have given to the Coloured people of South Africa – those millions of dark-skinned aboriginals, those whole nations of half-castes, on whom the Divine Hand rests so heavily. (Rubin, 1977:81)

The novel's concept of the 'coloured' is a protean one because of the changing nature of its emphasis. It is firstly an exteriorized one: any suggestion or even the slightest 'speck' of 'non-whiteness' in skin pigmentation automatically becomes an indicator of a range of negative attributes. These attributes are discussed in greater detail where I discuss the novel's emphasis on Identity.



## **CHAPTER ONE-: MILLIN AND GOD'S STEPCHILDREN**

### **Millin's Historical Background**

Millin's background reflects a paradoxical 'enunciation' of race superiority, which would be similar to its later development in German National Socialism. She was raised with a strong sense of ethnic pride but as a person of Jewish origin she would suffer similar forms of race discrimination as exercised against the Jews in Europe at the turn of the century. Her father, Isalah Liebson, was a Russian-Jew, her mother, Olga Friedmann, of German descent (Rubin, 1977). The irony, though, is that if Millin was the ardent supporter of a 'herrenvolk', she would not have qualified for membership to such a group. As a white racist, she regarded herself as white in the 'purist' (political/physical) sense of the word, but as a descendant of the Jewish lineage, her 'ethnic purity' would have been questionable in the eyes of the German anti-Semites of her day. The latter group had its equal, in the South African context, in the form of the Afrikaner Nationalists who

also fear[ed] the Jew ... Nationalist anti-Semitism, though reinforced by European persecution of the thirties, has a long history which antedates Nazi racial theory and can very easily be traced, in part at least, to Boer suspicion of Uitlanders or immigrants ... who rushed to South Africa after the gold strikes on the Rand. (Dvorin, 1952:3)

This, to some extent, provides an indication of the fear of the Afrikaner for non-Afrikaner people. What constitutes the irony in Millin's case is the fact that she, while belonging to a group who had entrenched race pride and purity, would herself become victim to a similar kind of polarisation. In other words, what makes it possible for Millin to support race theories which were to emerge out of Germany in the 1930's, as a Jewish woman? Her mother "communicated a fierce pride in being Jewish to her daughter [and] constantly [told] Sarah Gertrude how lucky they were to belong to the

greatest race in the world [or God's chosen race]". (Rubin, 1977:17) But miscegenation, particularly in the South African context, was not unfamiliar to the Liebsons. Its closest parallel, as Rubin suggests, were the incidences of intermarrying between "Jew and gentile" albeit that these were looked upon with contempt. (Rubin, 1977:19)

More specifically it is her upbringing, close to the diggings of the Northern Cape that would shape her 'self' and subsequently her novels, most of which reflect an aversion to miscegenation. The diggings "made a deep wound upon her consciousness; the racial mixing that took place there". (Rubin, 1977:18) Although Millin accepted the purity of black blood ('purity' here used not in the sterile or clinical sense but in the 'original', 'pedigreed', 'flawless', 'untainted' sense of the word), it was this very kind of earthy blood which when it came into contact with another type, presumably from another earth (a superior, equally unblemished one), would (re)produce the degenerates, the half-castes, the mixed-breeds, the hybrids, the coloureds.

It is not surprising that historically the 'coloured issue' has always proved a unique dilemma when compared to the then 'Native issue'. The coloureds constituted a problem for the Nationalist government of 1948 in terms of formulating legislation based on ethnic/race difference.

The inconsistency of the dominant European ruling class which justifi[ed] repression on the grounds of nationalism, tribalism, anything except colour, proceed[ed] to discriminate against the coloured man, even when his state of civilisation is such that all grounds for discrimination, except the single ground colour, [had fallen] away. (Brookes, 1933:4)

It is therefore not difficult to understand how Millin's obsession with colour could have given rise to a novel on this very subject; a novel which perhaps served as a vent for her obsession.

Millin's ardent defense of race purity is captured in God's Stepchildren (GSC). It is in this novel (for which she is best remembered for) that she tries to trace historically the origin of a 'hybridized race', and the 'dispersion' and subsequent exposure of black and white *blood* through the generations.

Millin was a colonial writer who like many an imperialist writer and researcher-cum-anthropologist of the nineteenth century assumed the voice of the colonial 'Other'. In most of her novels 'the colonised' are depicted in anthropological terms, but are not allowed to speak for themselves. 'It' is always spoken for in the intra-textual context and beyond the text: the narrator in God's Stepchildren not only passes judgement on the characters he/she describes but may be construed as communicating a race prejudice that is directed at seeking support, if not justification, from abroad.

In addition, she depicts the South African landscape with quasi-indigenous ostentation. Though, at the same time, she attempts to transcribe her immediate environment through the eyes of a native (South) African. By doing this, she makes her claim to ownership of the landscape that she delineates. And here I will investigate and expand on Coetzee's challenge of the "classical colonial writers and settler poets of a new environment who capitalized on their novellistic depictions of new found, exotic territories and people". (Coetzee, 1988:7)

The concept 'coloured' in the novel assumes a common history and its foundation is the 'mixing' of blood. Its determinants are: economic status, social acceptance and language. Secondly, the term embraces inferior mental qualities. In either case, the term 'coloured' embodies identity. It would be a fair judgement to explain Millin's racism as a typical middle-class, white phenomenon which flourished in her time. On the surface, however, her racism emerges as one based on the premise that the 'coloureds' are or were an homogenous group who are constituted and characterized by their unfortunate biological diversity. The paradox in God's Stepchildren is symptomatic of the lack of objectivity with which Millin had construed people unlike herself. Her 'coloured' is both a single, identifiable entity and at times so diverse in

nature, appearance and behaviour that it eludes even the most discerning reader of the novel. Her notion of the 'coloured' can be summarized as including the following 'groups' (in no order of priority): mixed Hottentots, Bushmen, Griquas, Bastards, false-whites (coloured-looking whites/white-looking coloureds), poor-whites. Among those non-African people responsible for the mixing of the blood are,

the Jew [while] another offender is the foreign soldier or sailor [and] a third is the mentally retarded poor whites [which] leaves us with those whites born in South Africa, 'low-grade people'. (Coetzee, 1991:12)

In Millin's case, the 'offenders' were those white men, particularly those on the diggings, who slept with non-whites. It is perhaps fair to suggest that Millin was as appalled by these 'types' of men as she was of the subsequent results of their 'degenerate' and 'immoral' actions: coloured offspring.

### God's Stepchildren

God's Stepchildren probably emerged as a result of Millin's knowledge of 'inter-racial' marriages. This knowledge was gained from, for example, books she had read,

[about] missionaries [who] in the early part of the nineteenth century ... had married African women in order to win over their congregants ... she was reminded of it when she received an appeal for money from a former schoolmate of hers, a German who had become a missionary among the Africans. (Rubin, 1977:79)

Her knowledge and experience of miscegenation was perhaps reinforced more immediately as a result of her childhood reflections of miscegenation among the white diggers of Waldeck's Plant who fathered half-caste children. (TNL:76,77)

The novel is set in the early part of the 1800's, and is a story about an English missionary, the Reverend Andrew Flood, who ventures into a remote part of the Cape Colony, near the Vaal River. The character of Flood is reminiscent of William Burchell, a missionary-cum-botanist who once had sat in a hut "among the Bushmen as if [it] had been [his] home, and felt in the midst of this horde as if [he] had been one of them: for some moments ... forgetting that [he] was a lonely stranger in a world of wild untutored men". (Burchell 1953 II: 48)

His surname bears a remarkable resemblance to Flood's colleague, Burtwell, a missionary who preceded Flood and who eventually marries him to a 'Hottentot girl'. Flood's mission, like Burtwell's, was to convert the 'Hottentots' to Christianity. When this does not materialize, he takes one of the 'Hottentot' women, Silla, to be his wife. This is a gesture with virtuous intent but one which he subsequently regrets. The couple has two 'half-caste' children who would forever serve as a reminder of the 'sin' of miscegenation. Not only does the 'sinfulness' lie in the physical act but in Flood's betrayal of his religion and race, which leads to his 'fall from grace'.

Furthermore, the novel traces Andrew Flood's descendants up to the fourth generation and devotes a major section to each. The offspring of the first union are Isaac and Deborah and later an anonymous third sibling who dies in infancy. Isaac is not afforded the significance that his sister enjoys. She marries a white Afrikaner, Hans Kleinhans and they in turn give birth to the second generation in the form of Kleinhans; who, in turn, marries Lena Smith,

a light-coloured Cape girl ...[whose] father had been a German his name Schmidt anglicised into Smith – and her mother a coloured woman, with a little Malay blood in her and a little St. Helena blood, and the usual incursion of white blood. (GSC:127)

Kleinhans and Lena settle in a house on the homestead of the Lindsells, a wealthy white family. Here they give birth to Elmira who is initially white but whose whiteness,



like that of her predecessors, would not stand the test of time. The landlord, Mr. Lindsell, is at once enchanted by this little girl's beauty, an attraction which borders on pedophilia. What initially appears to the reader as a sympathetic landlord's admiration for his tenant's child, very quickly develops into an erotic obsession. Lindsell's wife dies and he subsequently focuses all his remaining energies on enticing the young Elmira who eventually bears him a son, Barry. The son symbolizes the final phase on the road to whiteness, but unfortunately, and despite his apparent whiteness, his irrevocable misfortune had been proclaimed some one hundred years before he was conceived.

Andrew Flood's punishment is hereditary and therefore inevitable. Social embarrassment and excommunication are consequent on the sin of miscegenation. The sin, which is an infringement on the principles of Judeo-Christianity, assumes biologized, degenerate traits which are passed on to the offspring who "have a common sense of not belonging to either of South Africa's major ethnic groups". (Rubin 1977:79) Flood's descendants form part of a distinct group of people who inherit and pass on characteristics of gradual intellectual deficiency and immorality. (GSC:84)

Millin's interest in the indigenous people is witnessed by her keen interest in the observations of the anthropologists of her day:

A number of them will sleep together in the veld, making no difference between men and women... they all smell fiercely... and they give the appearance of never having washed. (cited in Coetzee, 1988:1)

This element is explicit in God's Stepchildren, particularly when the Reverend Andrew Flood attempts to convert the Hottentots to a life of prayer. After thinking that he had convinced them to pray regularly, "he discovered afterwards that these Hottentots, whatever might have been the custom among other tribes, never bathed". (GSC:37)

And later, she repeats this idea (which was not unfamiliar to her contemporaries) at a point during which Kleinmans perceives

The native ... squatting on the floor on his haunches ... the room was heavy with the smell of him, that smell which Europeans consider peculiar to kaffirs, but which really is a matter of dirt and neglect rather than of Nature. (GSC:119)

Coetzee's "framework of categories" which is listed in his essay, "Idleness in South Africa" (1988) captures the guidelines along which the travel-writers described the indigenous South African peoples of the Cape. Millin's characters are described (anthropologically) in a way that fits into Coetzee's list. Coetzee's critique of the anthropological narrative is that, "by yielding its allegiance to chronological sequence, it yields its right to achronological, spatial, God's-eye organisation that belongs to categorical description". (Coetzee, 1988:2) This, I think, is the case in Millin's God's Stepchildren. She had transcribed the characteristics of the Indigenous people (including the Coloureds) solely on the basis of those features which she had found most striking (from personal experience, travelogues and other books) with little regard for the socio-historical and cultural framework out of which those features emerged. Secondly, she focused on those features of the Hottentots, for example, which were "meant both to define a Hottentot vice and in the same movement to distance [herself] from that vice". (Coetzee, 1988:3)

Although the terms and depictions of the coloureds always take on a pejorative tone, Millin is not altogether unsympathetic. In fact, she communicates an intense sympathy toward them as sufferers of the curse brought on by their ancestors. (Rubin, 1977) Unfortunately, like most of the 'colonial others' the Coloureds have no independent voice of their own. They are always silenced by the writer's prejudices: when they do speak, it is through her racist voice.

There is, however, one instance in God's Stepchildren in which a dissenting voice emerges from among the Hottentots. It takes the form of the old Hottentot chief with whom Flood engages in a religious debate. This particular scenario communicates three distinct messages: firstly, it suggests that the old chief becomes Millin's (and the rest of the Hottentots') vehicle for questioning non-indigenous religion and in particular, Judeo-Christianity: "they would ask him questions as why God made them evil if he wanted them to be good. To which he would return the customary answer that not God, but Satan, had made them evil". (GSC:38) Millin here alludes to the 'curse' or inevitable suffering conferred on 'non-whiteness'. But this passage also reveals her personal sentiments regarding religious beliefs, particularly in the philosophical and logically coherent way that the Hottentots (a supposedly backward and senseless race) interrogate their would-be 'convertor'.

Secondly, the characteristics of the Hottentots as depicted by the narrator, serve to inform presumably an overseas audience with an interest in South Africa, about the ways and beliefs of this particular 'group' of Africans, and about their inability to conceive of God, their laziness and indolence. Millin was quick to emphasize the colonial, stereotypical perception of the Hottentot as lazy. This, by the way, was a feature or gene which was believed to be exclusive to the Hottentot (and, of course, its offspring). So Millin would, for example, not record the "idleness of the Afrikaner farmers (Boers) which caused a scandal during the time immediately following the first Dutch settlement". (Coetzee, 1988:8) She could not conceive of a pure-blooded White person as lazy. Where whites had shown signs of, for instance, laziness (or any other negative attribute) it would be explained simply as symptomatic of a weakness in their blood: an inheritance of a cross-racial union of some sorts. This is particularly true in the case of Lindsell. However, this point is epitomized by the character of Kleinhans who enjoys initial success directly attributable to the whiteness in him but whose life sees a gradual demise because of the non-white elements inherent in his genetic make-up.

Furthermore, as was the trend at the time of anthropological/cultural transcription, Millin elected to portray the indigenous people as heathens, lacking cultural traditions and moral principles: “[the Hottentots] believe that the stars are the eyes of the people who are dead, and the moon is God, and when the new moon is in the sky they come to pray”. (GSC: 42) The anthropological theme (and its agenda) is observed in the novel’s detailed portrayal of Hottentot customs, for example, their way of worship, dance, the kind of music they create, their dress, ornaments, and cosmetics. (GSC: 42,56) With these anthropological characteristics, she evokes the audience’s interest, presumably a contemporary audience who is unfamiliar with the indigenous South African people.

Thirdly, and more importantly, the scene concerned exposes a contradiction on the part of the narrator: while on the one hand, s/he says that the Hottentots are ‘in the main stupid and indolent’ (hence the idea that Christianity failed to convert a race of idiots) and backward, on the other hand, Flood’s rhetoric is no match for the chief’s arguments against the Christian God:

All my years I have lived in the world without God. Will it help me to change now?...if God wants me to change, and if as you say, He can do everything, why does he not change me? (GSC:38);

and later as the altercation progresses,

the oldest Hottentot, who was their leading dialectician, would say, ‘if Satan were not in Hell making us wicked, would we not all be good?...Therefore would it not be more simple for God to forgive him than to let him trouble us forever? Is it just of God to do this thing to us? (GSC:40)

On the one hand, Millin’s manipulation of the character of the old chief serves as her own interrogation of the Christian God: a god whose function is based on biological

determinism rather than the intervention of grace. On the other, she satirically uses God and creation to reinforce the ideologies of difference and race superiority. Flood, for example, attempts to resolve the issue of difference when cornered by asserting his didactic position: "...but I have told them, Titus, that we are all the same in the eyes of God". (GSC:54) But Silla promptly reminds the audience that, 'it is the colour of the skin', meaning that this characteristic surely serves as a sign of God's unfairness. (GSC:58) It is Silla's mother, Cachas who suggests that the coloureds, "[the] brown people are [God's] stepchildren". (GSC:54)

Throughout Flood's mission, he sets out to prove that there is no difference between himself and the Hottentots he hopes to win over. This culminates in Flood's 'discovery' that he had "solved it...[he had] wiped away the distinction". (GSC:60) Flood realizes that in order to reconcile the Hottentots to himself, he has to make the 'ultimate sacrifice' as a White human being. He, as a member of the superior race, must take one of *them* (the Hottentot women, Silla) to be his wife and to bear his children. This marks a point in the novel at which Millin alludes to the sacrifice made by Abraham in the Bible. Flood's sacrificing of his white purity is equated to that of Abraham's sacrificing his son, Isaac: "he had sacrificed his coming child's, [Isaac's] white heritage... if not his body, then the purity of his blood". (GSC:66)

'Isaac', in fact, is the name that Flood gives to his first child. The description of Isaac and Deborah (the first generation of 'Bastards') marks a significant shift in the way in which non-white characters are portrayed throughout the novel. Physically, they are described as having "fuzzy brown hair which [stand] away from their heads in golliwog fashion...and they are almost mathematically half-bred in appearance". (GSC: 67, 68) But whenever they reveal a negative characteristic, it is because of their blackness. This is true of Isaac, for example, who in every respect cannot match his younger sister's intellect; the latter having a lighter complexion than her brother.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERARY CONSTRUCTION OF THE COLOURED

### 'Coloured': History of the Term

Up to now I have used the term 'coloured' loosely. It is necessary, at this stage, to define the term in its historical context in order to facilitate an understanding of where Millin's notion of the term stemmed from. Firstly, though I need to provide a brief description of the origin of the term 'miscegenation', before defining the term 'coloured' as it will be used in this essay.

Generally speaking, 'miscegenation' refers to 'interracial' sexual activity. The term was coined as part of an American political propaganda smear campaign:

The word "Miscegenation" was coined in an anonymous pamphlet printed in the United States of America in late 1863, entitled *"Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro"*. As the pamphlet noted, the term was coined from two words of the Latin language, *miscere* (to mix) and *genus* (race). The pamphlet argued in favor of "interbreeding" of "White" and African Americans until the races were indistinguishably mixed, and claimed that this was the goal of the United States Republican Party. (Internet URL: <http://www.knowledgerush.com/kr/encyclopedia/Miscegenation/>)

A variety of terms have been offered in an attempt to describe or define the 'unnatural' or 'anti-natural' union of the races and its related consequences. The term 'coloured' is but one such attempt through language to articulate this idea. As Derrida puts it,

there's no racism without a language...Even though it offers the excuse of blood, colour, birth – or, rather because it uses this natural and

sometimes creationist discourse – racism always betrays the pervasion of man, the 'talking animal'. (cited In Newman: 1991:80)

Other writers have emphasized that miscegenation, while having its roots in a discourse of race, is tied to producing humiliation, and that in the Apartheid context Coloured people attempted to develop an identity that would serve to deny such humiliation. (Wicomb, 1996: 6 in AUETSA '96)

Based on the travelogues of the missionaries/voyagers to the Cabo de Esperance, Gillomee (1979) raises two important factors that could account for the emergence of the term 'coloured'. In the first instance, he suggests that there were mainly two kinds of miscegenation taking place at the Cape subsequent to the arrival of the colonialists:

...black-Khoikhoi miscegenation was common on the farms throughout the Eighteenth Century [but] was less common than European-Khoikhoi miscegenation because Khoikhoi were proud to be associated with Europeans. (Gillomee, 1979:133)

But the idea of 'Coloureds' cannot be arrived at without explaining the term 'Bastaards' which seems to have been its precursor. The Bastaards or Basters were the offspring of sexual unions between Europeans; physically they had a closer resemblance to European and at times 'passed off' as white, and "practiced a largely European way of life". (Internet URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baster>) 'Bastaard' was occasionally distinguished from the term "Bastaard-Hottentots" who were descendants of black-Khoikhoi unions. (Gillomee, 1979:133) In short, what Gillomee stresses is that the colonial perception of these kinds of 'inter-racial' mixing quickly fused the Bastaards with the category of a unified 'Hottentot' working class which generally included the "mixed race of Hottentots and the white and free coloured inhabitants". (Gillomee, 1979:261)

On the other hand, Gillomee suggests that there was no real intricate system whereby persons of various racial backgrounds were categorized or distinguished. Neither was there, at the time, a clearly defined social and racial terminology. The terms "half-breed" and "free blacks" were not as common as the terms "slaaven" or "Ijfergenen" which "were used interchangeably without distinctive connotation". (Gillomee, 1979:84) Whichever way one looks at it, these two latter terms were directly applicable to persons of mixed origins and other non-white people who were in one way or the other enslaved, owned or employed otherwise.

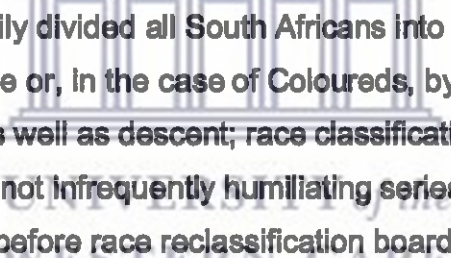
Keegan holds the view that "slave and free-black women could secure their freedom or improve their own and their children's status by marrying into groups that were accorded a higher status in society". A substantial number of 'mixed-marriages' that took place between 1688 and 1807 involved a 'non-European spouse'. Interestingly, male offspring were not as easily incorporated into the dominant class as females because of a "shortage of marriageable women, and male offspring were likely to be absorbed if they were light-skinned and possessed some education and property". (Keegan, 1996:22)

The term 'coloured' probably emerged out of these conditions of slavery, although Coetzee is of the opinion that "most Coloured people are in fact descendants not of the original colonists but of British soldiers discharged at the Cape in 1819" (Coetzee, 1991:9). Although it remains difficult (if not impossible) to date exactly the first instance of the term in South African history, there remains a general agreement among historians (Elphick and Gillomee, 1979) that it emerged around the early part of the nineteenth-century. More importantly, for our purposes, even though there emerged an apparently 'homogenous' group of people who would identify themselves as both non-white and non-black, they would subsequently not enjoy the same socio-political and therefore economic status. In other words, two geographically separate strands of 'coloureds' evolved.



The Cape Coloured achieved a status which would be more closely aligned to that of the European. The 'privileges' that they enjoyed, and from which the Natives/blacks were exempted, were subject to certain conditions, however. These prerequisites which Millin alludes to in God's Stepchildren, ranged from average levels of literacy and education to standard wage earnings. (Dvorin, 1952:62,63) By contrast, in the Northern province Coloureds were regarded as part of the greater Black population and therefore were exposed to similar socio-economic and political restrictions. With these background details of the term 'coloured' I want to show how it is used in the context of this essay.

In almost all cases I adopt Gavin Lewis's (1987) deployment of the term 'Coloured' with a capital 'C' to mean those people who have been legally classified or categorized in South Africa as 'Coloured', particularly following the Population Registration Act of 1950:



Which arbitrarily divided all South Africans into population 'groups' defined by race or, in the case of Coloureds, by appearance or general acceptance as well as descent; race classification ... required a laborious and not infrequently humiliating series of appeals to and appearances before race reclassification boards. (Lewis, 1987:261)

Thus the Coloureds constituted a distinct group of people who were perceived very differently to that of Black Africans through the eyes of the Europeans, and over whom a very different ideology was forced from Black South Africans. Where it appears otherwise, the term is meant to depict non-White (Black) people in the general sense of the word. Another important consequence of the Population Registration Act (1950) was the fact that it "almost completely closed the escape hatch of passing for white, and confronted many families and individuals with an agonizing choice of whether to try for white or not". (Lewis, 1987:265) Although Lewis thoroughly explores the term he too expresses that most historians share the "inability to define who or what the coloured people are". (Lewis, 1987:2)

The characteristics which Millin employs in her depiction of the Coloureds are symptomatic of her having generally constructed a history of a supposedly 'unique' people. I will argue that the people she describes and loathes are that 'group' about whom there is some doubt as to their racial heritage. They are apparently white, but not convincing enough to dispel the doubt.

[For] how a man arrived a lightness of skin did not matter. What mattered was simply his pigmentation ... If, as it happened often enough, there were several members in a family of different shades of brown; they were socially graded according to whether they were lighter or darker. (GSC:104)

The character of Kleinhans (whose father is 'decidedly' white), is representative of the second generation in the novel. He realizes that "there are white men with the sunburn on their faces as dark as [he is]". (GSC: 105) But, as mentioned earlier, the novel's manipulation of the concept of 'the coloured' is not static. In the preceding example, the 'marker' is colour. However, Kleinhans' contentment is short-lived as his mother soon reminds him that "it is the blood, [one] cannot hide the blood". (GSC:105)

It is blood, therefore, that will "retrospectively [reveal] all the past white generations of its carriers as frauds, false whites". (Coetzee, 1988:141) It is this latter term, 'false whites' which the novel adopts as its vehicle for communicating the 'tragedy' of a 'race' whose blood had been adversely affected. And if blood is the precursor of all human physical properties, and furthermore, as for Millin, determining the social fate of those whom it inhabits. In this regard, I intend to unpack the factors in God's Stepchildren which, according to the narrator, give rise to doubt and suspicion of racial purity.

It is also this group of people, the 'false-whites' who, in my opinion, Millin most vehemently despised for various reasons, the two most important reasons being the threat of this group embarrassing the rest of the pure-bred whites, and more seriously of the group crossing over and further depurifying the blood-proud whites. The group was made up primarily of a few persons "rich, educated and light-skinned enough [who] often did meet the aspirations by 'passing' into the white community". (Lewis, 1987:9) An additional threat posed by an emerging Coloured population, and which Millin alludes to is the fear that as the Coloureds "became better and better adapted to [their] environment a 'new race [would] come into being". (Coetzee, 1991:9) The attribute of blood-pride is what probably united White South Africans who adhered to the ideologies of race superiority. In fact, studies were undertaken which showed that at the turn of the nineteenth century the "percentage of non-White blood in the Afrikaner [was] scarcely 1% [but another] put it at around 7.2%". (Gillomee, 1987:134) The latter study, according to Gillomee was founded upon the assumption that almost all the offspring of extra-marital unions between Black and Europeans became coloured rather than Europeans.

This problem was further compounded by the 'poor white' question. In general, this 'group' was perceived as both socially and economically inferior, and was regarded by the middle-class whites and intellectuals as backward. Their 'genetic inferiority' and 'cultural backwardness' were attributed to their "reluctance to do 'kaffirwork' which in turn led to their economic deprivation". (Le Roux, 1984:9)

In addition, the novel communicates an intense sense of class identity or solidarity. What constitutes a class, in Millin, is firstly a common racial heritage and, secondly, an equal economic, social and cultural status. The novel illustrates this, as I hope to show, in its frequent utterings of the 'us and them' sub-theme. Identity and/or association, therefore, are doubtless the central themes in the novel. I later examine these in light of the complexity of the concept 'association' as it unfolds in the novel, and argue that Millin tries to over-simplify it by reducing it to a genetic problem. Coloureds inevitably reveal characteristics of 'blackness' and 'whiteness' (physically

and mentally), and will naturally (biologically) attempt to associate themselves with a group they resemble, if only superficially. Kleinmans, for example, is a vehicle for this idea because his “white blood felt a longing for its own kind”. (GSC:109)

This idea is explicit in another of Millin's novels on miscegenation and colour consciousness; namely, The Sons of Mrs. Aab:

...the hotel had two bars: a bar for white people, and a bar for natives. The half-castes went into this or that bar according to whether they were lighter or darker in colour, had fuzzy or smooth hair, were considered fit to associate with Europeans or not. No one instructed them in the matter. They *knew* their own status. (The Sons of Mrs. Aab: 4 my italics)

As Rubin suggests:

[Millin] adhered firmly to the notion that only a detribalised and demoralised African would marry or cohabit with a white, who, she believed would have to be equally degenerate. The progeny of such a union, she was firmly convinced, would combine what she saw as the two strains of evil which was their inheritance. (Rubin, 1977:20)

The subsequent attempt to form relationships will always be to the Coloureds' social detriment. The novel communicates that the 'mixed' characters would forever have to conceal and thereby suffer the trauma of their blackness. For example, Deborah tries to pass for white by enrolling at a 'whites-only' school; Kleinmans wants to be white but is physically punished for trying; Elmira too dreads the day that her schoolmates discover her true identity, while Barry, as white as he appears to be, cannot deny his ancestry and subsequently returns to it after much protest and anguish. Millin's point is that the genetic 'blemish' would in time emerge and expose itself. Such fatality or karma abounds throughout the novel, lending perhaps an overriding air of suspense and suspicion to it.

## **Construction of the Coloured**

The building blocks that Millin uses in her construction of the Coloured are: physical appearance, language(s) and speech, mental ability, behaviour, class, association, and morality. The novel depicts, in one sense, the evolution towards whiteness both physically and socially; this is particular true of those characters who display more whiteness in their appearance, conduct, and the like.

The indigenous 'coloured' groups (the Hottentots, and an off-shoot, the Korannas) are depicted in God's Stepchildren in terms of their peculiar faces, stature, hair and, of course, the colour of their skin. The description of the young Silla best serves as a model for outlining these characteristics:

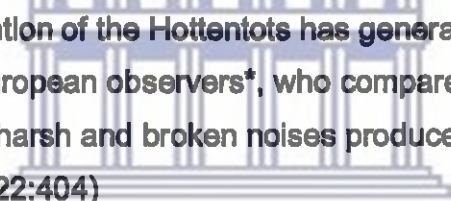
[She] did not in the least resemble her mother [with her characteristically protuberant behind]... but would no doubt achieve the grotesque development which was the Hottentot ideal of beauty...[she had] a small head whose brown scalp was clearly visible through the peppercorn hair...her face was the usual Hottentot face – triangular, with high cheek bones, bridgeless nose, little keen black eyes. (GSC:35,47)

But as the mixing of blood progresses in the novel (and the coloured emerges), "the hair loses its peppercorn texture and turns into fuzzy brown hair [which stands] away from their heads in golliwog fashion and the brown skin becomes yellow, the black eyes, brown". (GSC:67) Silla's grandson, Kleinhans, in turn assumes lighter (whiter) features than his mother and grandmother: "he had a yellowish skin; frizzy, rusty-coloured hair, and grey-brown eyes". (GSC:99) His wife, Lena "showed in her delicacy of feature and clear yellowish skin her ancestral superiority over him". (GSC:127) They subsequently produce Elmira whose skin colour is lighter than that of her ancestors; in fact, Kleinhans's landlord, Mr. Lindsell remarks that, "she is even whiter than [his] own children were...and prettier too". (GSC:131) She turns out to be "tall, erect, delicate-

featured, [with] golden-brown eyes and golden-brown hair... [she] had for years passed as a possibly white girl". (GSC:166)

Finally, Elmira's son (by Mr. Lindsell) turns out to be a far cry from his Hottentot ancestors: "he [was] a proper white child...he [did] not take after [his] family at all". (GSC: 213) Appearance is therefore the novel's primary vehicle for the idea of identification of race and its commensurate qualities. The other, less apparent characteristic is linguistic utterance (incorporating language, voice and accent). Here it appears that through Elmira's son, the novel highlights the ranking of racial identity according to skin colour, facial features, language, and so on.

The novel seems to postulate the idea that linguistic characteristics are genetically transferable as well. As one writer states:



The pronunciation of the Hottentots has generally been deemed very singular by European observers\*, who compare it to the clucking of a turkey, or the harsh and broken noises produced by some other birds". (Lawrence 1822:404)

This is evident in Flood's introduction to his would-be mother-in-law, Cachas: "[his servant] pronounced her name with an initial click, and the 'ch' too, was guttural". (GSC:35) And although this is a feature that progressively evolves, it is nevertheless traceable in Cacha's offspring. Again, it is Kleinhans who reveals this: "his wife's German blood showed in her paler skin, her voice too was light and gentle where that of Kleinhans was heavy with nearness to the African earth". (GSC:128) So initially, through making particular anthropological comments, the reference to language in the novel suggests again the grading of racial identity and the subsequent social acceptance or rejection. In other words, the closer your accent and language sound to that of a 'typical', articulate white person's, the more likely you are to pass as white.

Whereas at the outset Millin attempted to document the particular anthropological features of the Hottentots and their mixed offspring, the whiter the characters become, the more their voices and accents threaten to disclose their true 'heritage' and jeopardise their whiteness. In this regard, they consciously express themselves by attempting to resemble their white associates; accents are taken as markers of upbringing and therefore social class. (GSC:317)

The issue of association in the novel also emerges where the European way of dressing, for example, is sensed if not valorised. For instance, Cachas is the only Hottentot woman who "wore some sort of European garment" (GSC:35); Elmira, who temporarily passed as white at a convent school, had clothes made for her that were similar to those of her school mates. (GSC:144)

But the most important distinction that Millin makes between Coloureds and whites concerns mental capacity. On the one hand the Hottentots are "in the main, stupid and indolent" (GCS:39), though this idea, as we have already shown, is contradicted by the old chief who is articulate, objective and engages meaningfully with the discourse at hand; namely, religion. On the other, the Europeans are in all respects a mentally superior race. It follows logically then that the intellectual abilities of a child from a mixed union could best be judged by its physical characteristics: the whiter in appearance, the cleverer the child; the darker the child, the more likely his/her mental capacity will progressively deteriorate. The thought is personified in the character of Deborah who "seemed to learn quickly... but only to a certain extent. Inevitably the point would be reached where a solid barrier of unreceptivity would hinder all further mental progress ... and she would gaze blankly ... and shake her head". (GSC:83) And her teacher, Mr. Burtwell,

... had thought that a child with a white father might be different. He knew that the native children arrived at their full capacity very early. At the age of four or five they were in advance of white children of the same age; but at fourteen or fifteen they would begin to falter, to remain

stationery while their white competitors went ahead. It seemed to the missionary as if their minds were unlocked sooner, but also sooner locked again... he had a vague theory that it had to do with the traditional hardness of their skulls. (GSC:84)

This idea is subsequently repeated twice: the teenager, Elmira, did not resemble the clever infant she was because it was as if her brain, "running a race against the brains of white children, was very quick at starting but soon tired and lagged behind... at sixteen [she] had ceased to make any mental advance, and was really, in all essentials, a mature young woman". (GSC:152) And, during one of Barry Lindsell's moments of self-interrogation, he attempts to put "aside all questions of prejudice [but] could not hold his own against white competition... he had not the brain... he felt the minds of pure-bred white boys might... be of different fibre – of superior quality – to his own". (GSC:249-251)

It becomes obvious then that Millin strategically manipulated physical appearance in order to reinforce her idea that the stature, facial features, hair texture, skin and eye colours of the Coloureds are markers of their heritage. But, more importantly, some or all these characters resemble or at least suggest traits typical of whites or blacks, and the Coloureds are therefore socially seeded: where they bear more 'white' qualities, they are assured of some social approval and preference. This idea is epitomised in the character of Kleinhans (junior) whose

ancestry – three-quarters white and one quarter Hottentot was marked plainly on his face... he knew, of course, that his skin was a different colour from [the Hottentots], but it did not strike him as a fact of any importance. Not till many years later, in Kokstad, where he became a prosperous man and a decorous church-goer, did he reap the benefits of his paler pigmentation. (GSC:99)



With this quasi-historical (and almost prosaic) portrayal of the 'Coloured dilemma' in the novel, Millin's own political agenda surfaces. It is perhaps the character of Kleinhans (the second generation) who best communicates this. He represented the false-whites which Millin termed 'coloureds'. What she despised most about this group was their threatening economic 'ascendancy' and social recognition. Kleinhans could readily associate with whites, after all, "money... can make even black blood golden". (GSC:176) In spite of this, both his colour and wealth give rise to suspicion (GSC:114) Another fact which renders him more white than not is the fact that he is industrious, sober, frugal and religious despite having grown up in a community "where work was universally despised". (GSC:103) It is not surprising that he would want to deny his heritage and "rid himself of [his mother's] brown society" for he "could no longer bear to be surrounded by nothing except brown and yellow faces".(GSC:108)

Millin conflated these racial stereotypes and projected them on to the group she could not clearly define. Although all of the 'mixed' characters suffer physically and psychologically as a result of their heritage, Kleinhans represents the epitome of the fate of this group because he suffers the most familiar forms of race and class discrimination and abuse. But Millin wanted to do more than just express her racism, and expose her resentment of miscegenation as we shall see in the next chapters. A discussion of Millin's other motives will reveal the conflict between author and narrator or what I call the 'essential antithesis'.

## CHAPTER THREE: DIALECTICAL RELATIONSHIPS

### Author and Narrator

What I hope to have illustrated by the end of this part of the discussion on the seeming 'antithesis' between author and narrator, is that Millin's text emerged primarily as a result of her racist ideologies and was much less the result of the sort of artistic inspiration characteristic of novelists in general. God's Stepchildren is essentially Millin's ideological vehicle for her literary onslaught on the 'ideals' of social integration and harmony which flourished in her immediate surroundings, even they were not condoned by the population at large. (Rubin, 1977:18) In a nutshell, what I will argue is that Millin's racism 'wrote her', in the sense that God's Stepchildren defines and consolidates Millin's resentment against miscegenation. In other words, her ideologies found a voice in this novel in particular. However, there is nothing unsubtle in the way she has gone about communicating her views. But what does stand out, and what for me constitutes this antithesis, is that in this novel Millin capitalized on her literary subject in order to *buy* into the discourse of 'fiction'. A major incentive for writing this particular novel was a financial one. For it would appear that race and, in particular, miscegenation were issues that, at the time, attracted a great deal of interest generally. For this reason, I believe, Millin seized the opportunity to transcribe her attitude towards those issues in literary form in order to tap into popular interest.

Rubin points out that Millin's 'motives were complex: she had been writing largely in order to lead a more glamorous life "[which] shows her to [have] been more concerned with the external trappings of literary life than with the making of art". (Rubin, 1977:83) Millin confessed to this end in the letter to her parents:

I feel that with this book [God's Stepchildren] I am at the crossing of the ways. Either I am made or nothing. When I say made, I mean something big; when I say nothing, I mean I stamp myself as mediocre'. (Rubin, 1977:83)

Millin also regarded the book as her "most fortunate piece of work". (TNL:144) This again affirms Millin's dubious intentions in writing the novel. In short, it seems as if her aim was also to score academic points and recognition on the literary scale without having the slightest intentions of contributing to the transformation of the subjects and ideas she so eloquently articulates and transliterates.

Millin would fall prey to what Booth (1983) describes as "unmediated commentary" (Booth, 1983:16): in her case, the conscious and direct addressing of a particular audience for a specific purpose. This is achieved "even if we eliminate all such explicit judgements, the author's presence will be obvious on every occasion when [she] moves into or out of a character's mind". (Booth 1983:17)

Chatman (1990) argues that the narrator offers personal "judgements, opinions, generalizations; describing their own persons or habits, and the like". (Chatham, 1990:118) This is not surprising but in Millin one senses more that the sentiments conveyed by the narrator through the subjects are those of the author. She had found a subject, namely 'race' with which she obsessed, and used her fiction as a vehicle for articulating her personal prejudices regarding the subject. Her excitement of this 'discovery' is sensed in her letter to her parents referenced earlier.

I agree with Lehmann's and Reckwitz's argument regarding the motives of Millin's reproduction of what she [Millin] calls the "tragedy of colour". (TNL:145) With reference to God's Stepchildren,

Millin [strove] to convey certain messages or achieve political, ideological ends with [her] writings; and it [was] exactly by choosing the subject of love across the colour bar that [she] aim[ed] to expose and criticize the society, the laws and conventions of which [forebode] or prevented such a love. (Lehmann and Reckwitz, 1989:92)

The elements of love and romance (in the conventional sense) in the novel are marginal almost to the point of being invisible, except, and only briefly Flood's interest in Mary Keeble. Another instance of a romantic interest in the 'first generation', assumes animalistic tendencies because of the influence of the 'Hottentot' sexuality on the civilized, white Flood. Furthermore, Millin surely was not challenging the very 'colour bar' she so feverishly valorizes and institutionalises in the novel.

But if it was essential for her to write a novel like this in order to make her mark on the literary scene, she did so at the expense of a voiceless people. Moreover, the novel is riddled with obvious, autobiographical subjectivity to such an extent that in writing about race, Millin wrote *herself* and not merely an exposition on race or blood in the South African context: she exposes her deep rooted racial prejudice.

In God's Stepchildren, Millin has employed what Booth calls "a centre of consciousness" (1983:17). As author (narrator), she becomes that centre. Her artistry lies in the sense of immediacy and directness with which she writes/narrates. An example in the novel that illustrates this point is the depiction of the scene in which the Reverend Andrew visits Cape Town for the first time:

[An] enormous Dutchmen, in blue cloth jackets and trousers and tall hats, passed them in the street, each followed by a small Hottentot slave holding an umbrella over his master's head; and the Rev. Andrew looked at the curious procession with vague eyes He had never before to-day seen a Hottentot, and his life was to be spent among Hottentots in future, and yet he would discover in himself no interest in these yellow, monkey-like people, with their triangular faces (Mongolian in type), and peppercorned heads, whose little keen black eyes good-humouredly, and yet mischievously, regarded him as he passed down the street-the main street of Cape Town (GSC: 28)

One can almost sense Millin describing her own experience of her first visit to Cape Town or any other South African town. The non-white characters are described in greater detail than their white counterparts because they evoke the curiosity of a foreigner, who in this case is the narrator and/or author. The Hottentots are only left to “regard him” without being given the opportunity to express their views of the Reverend Andrew as a white person in any detail.

Also, her presence as a racist is palpable particularly during scenes in which she depicts the non- and semi-white characters. This is especially true in the frequent reminders of the ‘effect’ of the characters’ sense of their true selves. All of the ‘infected’ characters become conscious of their positions in terms of those around them. But more importantly, they are continually haunted by the fate that awaits them as a result of that infection. This is true of many of the mixed characters in the novel, particularly the ones who have as a result of their apparent whiteness progressed socially and economically. Barry is one example who after returning to South Africa from England is excited for Edith to meet his new wife. *But* he ‘needs’ to be careful “about that secret thing in him”; he vowed as a young boy not to talk about it: the fact that he is not all white. (GSC:283)

The point that I want to make is that Millin’s racist views are overtly expressed, defined and consolidated in the novel. They are, of course, not *always* explicitly present. But where they are, they are clear, direct and audience specific. She echoes the race views of her contemporaries; as Rubin puts it:

Her upbringing seems to have made it impossible for her to perceive of Coloureds or Africans as human beings. In this respect, she was not unlike the majority of her fellow white South Africans. (Rubin 1977:82)

Rubin’s biography of Millin is sufficient a reading to appreciate the fact that Millin does not transcend her narrator: the former is more audible at points in the novel in which judgement and prophecy are passed, whereas the latter serves only to engage itself in

the novelistic depictions of landscape and, here and there, cultural and anthropological detail which have already been discussed above. In The Sons of Mrs. Aab, for example, a similar pattern of anthropological descriptiveness is expressed in the narrator's portrayal of the non-whites: "no hair grew on their faces... some sardonically ask if the hairiness of the Caucasian does not prove he is nearer the ape than is this Negro". (Millin, 1931:3) In this regard, she satisfies a readership interested in matters pertaining to the anthropology, culture and landscape and which regarded the indigenous world as 'backward' but nevertheless interesting. In other words, she could have written a seemingly characterless, documentary account of her views of the Coloured people of South Africa, and that was all that it would remain. But because she elected to transcribe her *ideologies* in novelistic form, they become more telling since they are brilliantly masked by the guise of artistry. In other words, a prosaic transcription of her thoughts on non-white people and miscegenation would probably not have attracted the measure of success that the novel did, because the representation of her ideas took on a form different from simple, dull prose. Moreover, Millin could 'hide' behind her race novels while simultaneously appropriating the spoils thereof. In this sense, the proximity between author and narrator is perhaps most intensely palpable.

Booth states that "much of our scholarly and critical work of the highest seriousness has, in fact, employed [a] dialectical opposition between artful showing and inartistic, merely rhetorical telling". (1983:27) In this sense, Millin succumbs to "authorial exegesis". (Booth 1983:27) For, as author, she intrudes into the novel thereby violating artistry. This point is particularly true of instances in God's Stepchildren during which the narrator communicates certain tensions experienced by those characters who are 'victims' of miscegenation. Millin was personally alarmed at any hint of miscegenation. And this feeling is sensed throughout most of the novel. Elmira, for example, is one such victim whose son "was ashamed of [her] because he was so fair". (GSC:322) Millin cleverly manipulates the characters in such a way that the reader does not immediately sense the underlying political agenda of the novel. In fact, one can go as far as to say that she "uses the inartistic device so cleverly that at

times [she] makes a virtue out of a defect". (Booth 1983:27) Through evoking within the reader a series of mixed emotions toward the story of miscegenation, she nevertheless disguises her personal political motives and interests. In this sense, it becomes difficult to ascertain whether her artistry lies in the way she has concealed her private prejudices or the way in which these prejudices have been subsumed by the novel's ability to impinge on the reader's interest in the unfolding of the story.

Millin occupies and fills the novel's centre of consciousness with her racism. Her "methods for disguising her rhetorical uses are not as successful as the means by which she dramatises her ideologies". (Booth, 1983:24) It is fair to conclude in this sense that she conflates rhetoric with drama in the novel, and that, perhaps the latter enhances the former. This is true particularly, for example, during the scene in which Edith reflects upon her sister May's fortune and her own lack of it:

What did [Darrell] see in her? She was not attractive, she was not clever, she was not competent, she was not even amiable. Quite clearly Edith realized her sister's deficiencies. And she could not help believing that there was something in herself-something she could not define-still, something that had made her superior to May (GSC:224)

While on the one hand we sense a kind of persuasion which asks us to sympathize with Edith, on the other we cannot escape the underlying thought of one of the key themes Millin wants to communicate; namely, whiteness is 'superior'.

It would be unfair, however, to downplay the author's artistry. Her directness and unembarrassed explicitness with regard to her racism arouse within the reader feelings of disgust, sorrow and resentment. Yet, it is the ability to bring about such feelings which, to a large extent, accounts for the artistic success of the novel. But two ideas emerge from this ability. Firstly, one has to ask, what about the novel is racist and how is this articulated? Secondly, a paradox unfolds at stages during which Millin's personal appearance undermines the artistic presentation of [her] subject,

thinking that talking about the subject, is equivalent to presenting". (Booth, 1983:25)  
However, the question remains: what is racist about God's Stepchildren?

When we ask this question, we presuppose that Millin's fiction is indeed racist. This assumption is based almost solely on the fact that Millin's preoccupation in the novel is with blood or race purity. The reasons for this are not important at this stage. What is essential in answering the question is the fact that racism in the novel is dramatised and 'embodied' in what she calls, "God's Stepchildren".

Booth cites Gordon and Tate (1950) as maintaining that from the beginning of the "story (the 'modern one'), we are never told anything; we are shown everything". (Booth, 1983:26,27) This is partly the case in God's Stepchildren. We are 'told' from the beginning, for example, that Flood is an English missionary en route to the South African interior in the hope of converting the mal-believing indigenous tribe to Christianity and civilization. We are also told of his liaisons with one of the members of the tribe, and the subsequent developments of that relationship.

What we are shown are a series of similar events that portray the misfortunes of ill-fated relationships which have their roots in miscegenation. We are perhaps also afforded a glimpse of the African landscape through the eyes of a seemingly knowledgeable narrator. But the novel does much more than tell and show this. It transcends mere graphic presentation and linear narrative progression. Racism in the novel is not told nor is it described or presented. On the contrary, it becomes a lingering presence throughout the novel. A scene that depicts this type of racial arrogance is one in which the Reverend Andrew has asked the Reverend Mr. Burtwell to perform the wedding ceremony between him (the Reverend Andrew) and Silla, one of the Hottentot girls. The Reverend Burtwell's response is that Andrew must clearly be delusional. Andrew's response is that he is "prepared to make the sacrifice". (GSC:62)



Finally, it is difficult to disagree that the “author’s judgement is always present, always evident to anyone who knows how to look for it”. (Booth, 1983:17) Millin’s judgement as author/narrator in the novel is as explicit as her honesty about race. She professed to write about life on the diggings (her immediate environment) which was characterised by, among other things, a “dreary degeneration [with] aspects of drunkenness and a confusion of white men, black women, and brown children”. (Millin, 1969:118) This, in essence, accounts for the inherent compulsion to communicate her innermost feelings on race and miscegenation in the form of the novel.

The idea that God’s Stepchildren can be viewed as an ‘authorial narrative’ is based on the theory that there are moments in the novel during which the author consciously transplants/projects her views on to the characters. This argument is reinforced by the character of Edith Lindsell. She resembles the adolescent Millin who frequently feared the idea of never attracting a man. This kind of displacement in the novel does not involve “retreating down the corridors of the self”. (Atwell, 1993:56,57) Instead, it communicates the very heart of Millin’s racism and adolescent preoccupations with sexuality, beauty, desirability, etc. In another sense, Millin, has created a narrative subject who carries her “own burdened fascination with miscegenation and not antagonism toward a part of [her] inherited culture”. (Atwell, 1993:57)

### **Rhodes and Hitler**

There is another side to Millin which, I believe, is under-explored if not ignored. This concerns Millin’s explicit rejection of miscegenation (and therefore the Coloureds) in her novels, and which can best be described as her ethnic paranoia and/or madness. It was a madness that enveloped her because of her obsession with the ideologies of Cecil John Rhodes. An ideology which will ultimately find expression in Hitler’s Nazism. But before exploring this it is necessary to take a step or two backwards by looking briefly at her relationship with Smuts and the autobiographical way in which Millin’s Coloured comes to be.

Her dealings with Smuts were as interesting as they were ironic. He championed the plight of the Coloureds when, in January 1947, he stated that the Coloured was "an appendage to the European population". (Lewis, 1987:237) Millin, in turn, looked upon any person of apparent 'mixed racial' origin with utter distaste and contempt. It is little wonder that she would confess to her works as reflecting the real ideological developments of her time: she criticised the "attitude of South African writers [saying that] appreciation seem[ed] to be chiefly based on a lack of realism". (Levy, 1969:1) Her reality was the idealization of the separation of races which Smuts tried perhaps to guard against (though not unequivocally) since he was more 'lenient' towards the Coloureds. Millin's attitude towards Coloureds is captured in her summary of the origins of the Cape Coloured:

So here in the very home of Van Riebeeck, the father today of South Africa, the first of South Africa's truly indigenous people – the Cape People [emerged, who] came to have in them not only pure European mixed with primitive African blood; but also the blood of Hottentots and Bushmen who had been pushed down to the Cape from the regions of the Red Sea. (Millin, 1966:30)

Generally speaking, it was this knowledge and *attitude* which perhaps explains her writing in the medium or genre of the "tragedy of colour". (TNL:145) God's Stepchildren was not, however, her first novel to capture this. Indeed, the novel was a reply to a review of her third novel, Adam's Rest. The review, which focused mostly on the Coloured issue, expressed its hope that Millin would "return to the subject someday at greater length". (TNL:145) She eventually did this and it subsequently, in her opinion became the theme of God's Stepchildren. The names Andrew Flood emerged from a "case-index of Halisbury's Laws of England". (TNL:148)

It becomes clear that in God's Stepchildren Millin pieced together a history of Coloureds by drawing from various sources. But the ideas upon which this history is founded are unlike those contained in her memoirs. Certainly Millin must have been

aware of the dilemmas inherent in 'ethnic purity' or 'race superiority' as it unfolded in the South Africa of her time. In The Night is Long this consciousness abounds and culminates in her summary on Rhodes. She was attracted to what she termed Rhodes' "aggressive nationalism", and reported (with admiration) what he had stated shortly before his death: "faith in race is the only faith left. I believe in my race. I don't believe in your ideas about going to heaven and twanging a harp [ ] whole day...No, I believe in race; I believe in my people. I would annex the whole world, I would if I could". (TNL:282)

It was this sort of vigour and blood-pride that she admired in Rhodes and which antagonised her towards him because it was analogous to Hitler's. She summarised the major difference between the two as follows: "Rhodes felt about the Natives he conquered that they were his children...[Hitler] felt about them that were [his] slaves". (TNL:283) However, what she does not express is the fact that German Nationalism cannot be seen in the same light as British Imperialism, for they too are different.

When Millin spoke of Rhodes's "aggressive nationalism" it validated her sense of racial pride and social and national security which was founded upon her sense of national and racial identity as a white South African of the time. So, in principle, she would have supported such an ideology as was proclaimed by Rhodes. But the paradox lies in the fact that, whereas in South Africa she considered 'pure-bred' whites (like herself) as superior, in Hitler's Germany she would have been similarly denigrated. For it was a very different kind of nationalism at play. Hitler, as we know, wanted to 'cleanse' the world of Jews and re-establish a world of 'angelic' beings: thoroughbred, fair-skinned, blue eyed, blonde-haired and obediently industrious.

The nationalism of Millin's South Africa was a bisected one. On the one hand there was the

Tradition of the Boer Republics that there should be no equality between blacks and whites... and on the other hand, the commitment of the

'liberal' Cape to the slogan 'equal rights' for all civilized men south of the Zambezi. (Dubow, 1989:1)

The complex nature of the race-pride/nationalist ideology as it manifested itself in South Africa is in no way a new insight. Rather, an important point to remember is the fact that there have been more attempts to define it than there have been to resolve it. But what is more important for the purposes of this essay is that Millin, in my view, hoped to project this ideology on to 'the Coloureds' as a term that could accommodate her views.

The Coloureds, as can be deduced from Millin, were more than just a reminder of the fall of the white man. They were symbolic of the very misfortune her Jewish predecessors had suffered in the lands of their birth. This sense of compassion for the Coloureds that is communicated through novels like *God's Stepchildren* is, in my opinion, by no means accidental. The novel is more than just evidence that Millin was a "prisoner of her childhood experiences – and of her social environment as a whole – in matters concerned with colour". (Rubin, 1977:82) For this would be to ignore the religious and national pride of the Jewish lineage instilled in her by her parents, a characteristic which predates even them. And if this fact is overlooked, one could easily lose sight of the real essence of the complexity of Millin.

As mentioned earlier, Millin had close political ties with Smuts. But these were soon to be tested especially after the rise of Hitler to power in 1933. Many German Jews sought refuge abroad, and at the time "immigration into South Africa had been governed by an act which limited the number of people who could enter the country east of an imaginary line drawn down the continent of Europe". (Rubin, 1977:185) Rubin points out that although Smuts did oppose the original limitations, there was little he or Hofmeyr could do "because they were serving under a prime minister, General JBM Hertzog, whose anti-British sympathies made him somewhat favourably inclined to Germany". (Rubin, 1977:186) It becomes clear then that one can, to a large

extent, trace, in Millin, parallels (tensions) between the 'Jewish question' and the 'Coloured issue'.

The conflict in Millin is explicated by the representation of the Coloureds as 'Impurities' and as a race of 'degenerates' in God's Stepchildren. This to a large degree predicts Hitler's ideology of ethnic degeneracy and sub-humanness; qualities which were readily applied to the German Jewry. Hitler too wanted to engineer into being a world of fair-skinned human beings similar in appearance, origin and intellect. Ironically, these were the very ideas that Millin (who was of Jewish origin) held in high esteem. For, she despised any taint of non-Whiteness as it manifested itself biologically in the form of the Coloureds. She too subscribed to the idea that miscegenation should never have been allowed. And if Millin was to regard the White race as pure, it follows logically that the very Hitler she regarded as insane was also a member (if not leader) of such a race. (TNL:285)

The unifying strand of thought with regard to Millin's revulsion for the Coloured, the idea of Hitlerian eugenics and the plight of the German Jewry is this: she feared that the Coloureds would eventually constitute a biologically (and therefore otherwise) recognised race in the way that black and white have been. (Rubin, 1977:186) In the South African context, Hitler's upsurge resulted in the fear of a German-Jewish influx to this country. In this respect, two problems for Millin's race ideology emerge.

Firstly, as a 'blood-proud' Jewish person in South Africa she (and others like herself) were received with a great deal of hostility, particularly by the Afrikaners who leaned towards German (Hitlerian) nationalism. For both Millin and Hitler the "mixture of blood was...the original sin and the cause of the decline of civilization". (Waite, 1977:83) In God's Stepchildren, for example, Flood, as an Englishman (or of Nordic descent) would have been regarded by Hitler as a member of the Aryan race for surely he (Flood) gave up the purity of his blood and therefore he lost his place in the Edenic paradise by becoming submerged in a race mixture.

Noteworthy at this juncture is the prominence of the Garden myth in both Hitler writings (see Waite) and Millin's God's Stepchildren: Flood (Adam) wants Mary Keeble (Eve) to share the new-found Paradise with him. Equally important is the fact that Millin's paranoiac image of the yellow, half-caste boatman of her childhood days which "was to haunt her dreams and fantasies for many year to come" (Rubin, 1977:15), carries similar psychotic suggestions of the fears of Hitler "who found Jews lurking in the most unlikely places". (Waite, 1977:86) Although there are evidently similar fundamental features in Millin's race ideologies and Hitler's eugenics, there is one major point of difference; namely, religion.

Despite God's Stepchildren's seemingly strong religious undercurrent, Millin was generally irreligious. (Rubin, 1977:35) She did, however, show a "strong identification with Jewish people and Judaism and would speak out against anti-Semitism wherever she thought she saw it". (Rubin, 1977:35) In the novel, by contrast, one senses more readily a Christian religion reminiscent of the one which accompanied colonialism (the Christianization of the heathen). This conflict was perhaps Millin's own way of expressing her quasi-intellectual 'neutrality' or objectivity as a literary agent. But Hitler's anti-Semitism was not in accordance with the kind that "had been generated by the Christian denunciation of the Jews as the murderers of Christ". (Geary, 1993:7) In fact, Hitler never regarded Jesus as Jewish. (Waite, 1977:87) And for him, those "Jews who converted to Christianity [did not merely] cease to be regarded as Jewish in public law" (Geary, 1993:7); for,

in the pseudo-scientific, biological anti-Semitism of the Nazis, such a possibility did not exist: once a Jew, always a Jew. In Hitler's way of thinking there could be only one race, the Aryan, the rest he regarded as 'dancing apes'. (Waite, 1977:85)

Millin's dancing apes were the non-whites, who she refers to as a "monkey-like people". (GSC:34) But what is significant, and what emerges prominently from the 'mixed' characters in God's Stepchildren is that they are always caught in a conflict of

association and identity: they are intensely self-conscious of the fact that they do not want to be black and can never be white.

Just as there are similarities between Hitler's Jew and Millin's Coloured, their notions of what constitutes a pure-bred, superior human being resemble each other in principle. Flood (as missionary-cum-colonizer), like Hitler's Aryan, was

prepared to sacrifice [himself] for the communal good, conquer [Christianize] larger number of inferior people and bring them to the value of culture [civilisation]. (Geary, 1993:7)

A remarkable distinction between Flood and the Aryan is that while the former's superiority lies in both his blood and intellect, the latter's "resides in his capacity for work, the fulfillment of public duty [spiritual in the case of Flood], self-sacrifice and idealism". (Geary, 1993:7) Ironically, these qualities "are not created by society but genetically determined". (Geary, 1993:7)

Hitler's non-Aryan and Millin's non-White are equally indolent, unproductive and apathetic. Contrary to the 'pure' European, who was defined as "white, ruddy [and] muscular", the non-European types of human were defined as "reddish, choleric, erect" or "yellow, melancholic, inflexible" while the African was considered "black, phlegmatic and indulgent". (cited in Cornwall 1989:7)

In Hitlerian terms the Jews are "parasitic". (Geary, 1993:8,19) Millin's non-whites are essentially a people who would sleep only when they were completely exhausted, and would eat only when hungry. (TNL:32) But, whereas Hitler was completely ruthless towards the Jews, Millin's irresolute sympathy for the Coloureds can, in part, be ascribed to her alliance with the ideas of Rhodes who, as mentioned earlier, "felt about the natives he conquered that they were his children" which contradicts the view of the Nazi inclination to enslave its subjects. (TNL:283)

Millin's "ideological' parallel with some of Hitler's theories stemmed from her enchantment with Rhodes": both men wanted to conquer the world and replicate, if not their physical selves, then at least their race ideologies:

Rhodes's plan of a secret society to carry out a scheme for setting most of the world...with members of his own race took actual shape in Hitler...Rhodes's Raid that is called Jameson Raid was precisely an Hitlerian Putsch. (TNL:286)

Millin could "describe Hitler no less than Rhodes" in the sense that both embraced the ideas of race domination. (TNL:288) But her obsession with "aggressive nationalism" stems from her own longing for the reproduction of a single, identical race which (in keeping with Hitler and to a lesser extent Rhodes) implied the eradication of ethnic 'inferiority': the removal from society of those individuals who did not resemble the ideal superhuman.

The inferior in Hitlerian terms was everything but Aryan. In the case of Millin it was embodied in the already mixed-race, the Coloureds. Millin's theories of race superiority constituted a problem for this group: they possessed elements (genes) of both pure races (white and black), and they formed a group of sub-humans who are "detrilled, bastardized, degenerated, dressed in the offal of European clothing, meager with hunger and frail with disease". (TNL:27) In addition to this, as God's Stepchildren shows, some of them have inherited (from their white progenitors) adulterated variations of the genes that determine intellectual, resourceful and industrious behaviour. This point is best illustrated by the characters of Silla and Kleinhans: the former, as already mentioned outshone her (blacker-looking) brother in every respect, the latter because of his apparent whiteness, "became a prosperous man and a decorous churchgoer [and] reaped the benefits of his paler pigmentation". (GSC:99) A similar fate is true of Barry Lindsell who because of his share of white blood is successful both educationally and socially. Of course, what these characters share, and cannot deny nor transcend is their biological inheritance which, if it does



not foreshadow their socio-economic decline (as revealed by Kleinhans's fate), would serve as an inescapable psychological plague lurking either in the back of the mind or on the tip of the tongue.

In a manner of speaking, Hitler, Rhodes and Millin shared one thing in common: a type of schizophrenia. This issue of a psycho-social 'condition' was similar to one Coetzee refers to and, central to it, I believe, was its manifestations of "irrational thought in the social body and of integrating madness into historical explanations" (Coetzee, 1990:3). But it is not so much the way in which they had interpreted the world as the obsessive compulsion and vigour with which they had done it.

### **Millin and Edith Lindsell**

Another perhaps less striking feature of the novel is its manipulation of the issue of prejudice in order to precipitate the idea of 'equals'. Millin was just as contemptuous of 'degenerate whites' as she was of all coloureds. These two types of beings, in the novel, are portrayed in a similar fashion. In addition, she categorically expresses the social idea (myth) of predetermined match making. People will inevitably (through some sort of predestined, metaphysical force) end up with partners whom they naturally deserve or who match them, if not physically, then socially or morally. These sentiments are communicated in two distinct ways. In the first instance through some of the main characters, and secondly, in Millin's emphasis on the classical notions of beauty: straight hair, blue eyes and a slender build (in the case of women), and social acceptance: wealth, social status and education (in the case of men).

Evidence from the novel to illustrate this point can be derived from the relationship between Elmira and her father's landlord, Adam Lindsell. For Lindsell, it was Elmira's virginal youth, her sensuality and apparent attractiveness that had rendered her desirable in every respect. She was not 'pure white' but the closest to it for him. When Kleinhans objects to the marriage of his daughter to his landlord, the latter promptly remarks, "you think I am old...yes but there are other things than years to be

considered...I mean, first, that I am white and Elmira is not". (GSC:170) Her 'colouredness' cancels his old age; his whiteness and wealth match her looks.

Again, in this respect, Millin fell into the autobiographical trap of expressing not only her personal prejudices but also her dismay at her own physical attributes. Rubin stresses that Millin was "always to remain a rather unfeminine woman direct, masculine and strong". (Rubin, 1977:16) Millin's representative in God's Stepchildren is Edith Lindsell, who resembles Millin physically and to some extent psychologically. Millin's insomnia is substituted by Edith's unattractiveness: both conditions plague them throughout most of their lives. Edith is obsessively self-conscious of her appearance as a woman, and is frequently haunted by the fact that at age twenty-seven she

knew as certainly as if she had seen the tablets of her life written to the very end, and signed by the word 'Fins', that she was destined to spend the rest of her life as what people called an old maid. (GSC:161)

This was a thought that dominated the mind of the young Millin whom Rubin describes in the following way:

In the aridity and loneliness of her youth, Sarah Gertrude was disturbed by the increasing fear that she would remain a spinster, doomed like the unfortunate woman she had known in the hostel in Kimberley. Forbiddingly sharp in manner, uncomfortingly clever, and somewhat unattractive, she was not a young woman who appealed to any man with whom she was in contact. (Rubin, 1977:36)

These sentiments are true of Edith especially in her realization that her sister's would-be lover, Darrell Tibbits, did not have the slightest inclination towards her. In this sense, the point of 'surreptitious' autobiography creeping into the novel is reinforced.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

Millin's race ideology, as portrayed in God's Stepchildren, can be summed up as projecting four major strands of thought. Firstly, she believed that the prime function of the Coloureds was to remind the white race of its (spiritual and moral) weakness. The Afrikaners, for example, (whose language the Coloureds adopted) rejected the Coloureds on the grounds that they were

evidence of this frequent lapse on [the part of the Afrikaner] and [the Coloureds] often received a peculiarly virulent brand of hatred because of [their] supposed degeneracy. (Rubin, 1977:18)

This point alludes to the idea of the 'confused Coloured' who had been bastardised 'traditionally and historically' by the Afrikaner; (in God's Stepchildren Kleinans is assaulted by Boers who had identified him as a Bastaard). Coetzee cites Cronje's observations thus:

because Coloured people are neither white nor black, it cannot as easily be said...what they are as what they are not...they want to be like whites [and] the result is 'inner confusion'...the 'bastard' is regrettably doomed to be unhappy since he suffers from inherited disharmony...his only salvation is to marry within the 'bastard' community. (Coetzee, 1991:13)

The point is explicit in the novel at a stage where Deborah, the child of the first mixed union, seeks advice about the apparently white man for whom she shows a liking: "you say black is not for me; you say white is not for me...what is for me then?". To which her employer, Mrs. Burtwell, replies: "The same as you are!". (GSC:91)

Millin hoped to ridicule any attempts (by any ethnic group) to initiate and promote the ideals of social integration and harmony; miscegenation, which represented the epitome of such attempts, she believed to be the original sin. The myth of Eden, as

touched on earlier, is an undercurrent in the novel but in this, the sin is not deceit but race betrayal; the consequences are similar, though: eternal damnation in the form of social embarrassment bestowed upon the transgressors and their offspring.

Secondly, God's Stepchildren can be construed as Millin's literary attempt at tracing of the origins of inter-race union, and thereby the beginnings of a history of a Coloured 'race'. But she did more than just sketch four generations of Coloureds and their ascent to the 'throne of whiteness'; she carefully articulated a detailed, graphic analysis of the physical, social, cultural and mental being of this apparently homogenous group. However, the major dilemma which she (and others like her) had faced was the practical impossibility to articulate a single and static definition of the term 'coloured'. This conflict is synonymous with the one which attempts to define 'race'; for just as 'race' (with 'ethnic group' as its euphemistic cousin) has proven to be a mutable concept, so too has the concept 'coloured' eluded the trappings of linguistic definition and stagnation. Dubow perhaps offers one way around this difficulty by declaring that "Intellectual racism" in South Africa has been overlooked or denounced as pseudo-scientific. He proceeds to argue that

the tendency to dismiss racial theory in this fashion initially arose out of the post-war anti-racist consensus that 'race' was a biological 'myth' whose meaning was socially constructed rather than intrinsic. (Dubow, 1989:3)

This insight, I believe, escaped Millin's construction of the Coloured a term which was also a biological myth but one that she wanted to revitalize and validate in literary form.

This is not to say that Millin was oblivious to the problem, even though Rubin holds that Millin disregarded the socio-evolutionary explanations for her own ideological preoccupations. I believe that Millin represented, almost prophetically, the ideals of social integration by representing it as a major theme in her novel. Moreover, she did

more than just excite levels of consciousness about miscegenation. Instead, God's Stepchildren added impetus to the whole 'phenomenon' of sex and marriage across the 'colour-line'. The subject was nothing new to the South Africa of Millin's time. Perhaps, what she tried to do was to warn her fellow white (bourgeois) South Africans about the emergence of a class who, if it would not aspire to match them physically, would soon threaten their (the lower middle-class whites') socio-economic position and so doing, invalidate Millin's claims of race superiority.

Thirdly, the novel signaled Millin's mark on the literary scene. An achievement which was more noticeable as she had not received a formal education. (Rubin, 1977:33) Unfortunately, this novel (like some of her others) is overshadowed by the racist ideologies of its author. This is particular true in her Inimical representation of Coloureds and her blatant hatred for Coloureds along with her inability to perceive the social underpinnings of the "manifestations of degeneracy, drunkenness, lewdness and sloth". (Rubin, 1977:19) I therefore agree with Rubin when he states that:

Millin simply wrote about the kind of life she saw all around her, paying more attention to local colour and types than to character development, with the result that people [in the novel] tend to be stereotypes rather than individuals and thus believable characters. (Rubin, 1977:33)

She was, however, more set on manipulating the characters, depicting the setting and eloquently narrating the text as a marketable piece of literature which she hoped would be quantitatively consumed abroad. It remains rather unfortunate that a writer of her measure could acquiesce to purely politically and financially motivations. She drew on the history and experiences of a then marginalized community and reproduced them in literary form with the sole intention to capitalize on its success.

Lastly, the novel is symptomatic of Millin's internal perplexity about her own world-views regarding ethnic difference. She both admired Smuts as liberal statesman, and loathed his apathy towards the plight of the Jewish people and his consideration for

the Coloureds. She worshipped Rhodes whom she believed resembled Hitler politically and ideologically; Hitler, in his turn, she completely abhorred. What is perhaps most prominent about her confused state of mind was her apparent rejection of Hitlerian eugenics which in most cases resembled the principles of her own race theories: she was sensitive to the predicament of the German-Jews, a victimized and despised people, but did not foster the same emotions for a local majority who had been suffering a similar fate.

It is perhaps not entirely over-zealous to reduce Millin's racism to an aristocratic, snobbish and unenlightened rejection of the constructive values of humanity, philanthropy and equality. She admittedly held personal (capital) gain in higher regard than the qualities that enhance or develop the lives of the less fortunate. Her claims of "putting both justice and humanity above art" and her regard for human kindness as the greatest virtue, do not necessitate any serious consideration. (TNL:150) In her misrepresentation of the Coloureds, she betrayed nothing less than a lack of interest in the plight of the Coloureds.

If eugenics involves selective breeding, then God's Stepchildren can be construed as an experiment in the literary engineering of a people. The Coloured people in the novel certainly do not appear. They are consciously and progressively pieced together but only to discover a disjointed nature. This interpretation would reinforce the author's position as a quasi-scientist/anthropologist, for the novel uses features familiar to a study of the human anatomy and to some extent physiology even though it tends to purport that it operates on an ethno-cultural level.

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