

valuable addition to the debate taking place in women's history on the subject of the ideology of homeliness.

Whoever wants to find out more about the birth of the ideology of homeliness in the better-off layers of early-modern English society, should read this book, my earlier comments notwithstanding.

*Christi Boerdam*

WORGER, WILLIAM H. *South Africa's City of Diamonds. Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895.* Yale University Press, New Haven, London 1987. xvi, 330 pp. Ill. Maps. \$ 35.00.

In 1867 the possible presence of diamondiferous soils north of South Africa's Cape Colony was first recognised. From 1869, following the discovery of a stone weighing a dramatic 83.5 carats, the diamond rush began. The significance of the discovery of diamonds and the subsequent development of a massively profitable extractive industry in South Africa has been properly credited with great explanatory force within the ranks of the most influential historians of southern Africa. It has been argued that the diamonds and later the even more significant discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand are, taken together, the beginnings of the processes which have made modern South Africa so distinctive a state on the African continent.

Mineral wealth was undoubtedly the motor of an industrial revolution, the scale and nature of which is unique in Africa. From 1870 or so it became clear, with hindsight, that South Africa was not likely to become another settler colony like Kenya or Zimbabwe. South Africa became a magnet for white immigration on a scale unparalleled in Africa. It also became an attractive prospect for international finance capital. Towns grew where none had existed before. A complex and necessary infrastructure extended and expanded to serve the needs of heavy industry and its employees. Ore extraction, moreover, created industrial processes with a hunger for plentiful, free and above all cheap labour. Mobilising such labour, in an environment in which African self-sufficiency based upon the continued availability of farming land meant that all but the highest wages were unattractive, proved highly problematic. Recruitment ultimately demanded the intervention of the state if such labour was to become readily available. The state, increasingly dominated by mining capital and white, capitalist farming enacted a sequence of legislative measures designed to progressively induce adult, male Africans to sell their labour and to sell it cheaply. The most significant of these comprised the double-headed coercion of taxation and reduction of access to land. Much of the essence of modern *apartheid* – labour reserves, influx controls, fixed labour contracts, urban segregation – has its roots in the traumatic period in which a set of predominantly agricultural economies were transformed into a very particular form of economy dominated by an industrial core. By these processes above all South Africa very rapidly ceased to be just another settler colony.

William Worger's book is an extremely well-written account of the first 30 years of this dramatic, violent and increasingly tragic transition. It is a particularly accessible book, organised on the comforting basis, for historians at least, of a well-argued periodisation. The account and analysis have grown out of concerned, energetic and diligent scholarship. But is this book, as John S. Galbraith is quoted as claiming on the blurb, "definitive"? Even if one could agree that a definitive work was possible, this is always a dangerous claim and it is a particularly dangerous claim on this case. Within 2 months of Yale bringing out this fine volume, another book, no less fine and in some respects much more challenging and original, emerged from Cambridge University Press: Robert Turrell's *Capital and labour on the Kimberley Diamond fields, 1871-1890*. Both authors received their doctorates in 1982, Worger at Yale, Turrell at London University. Worger cites Turrell in his bibliography but never in the text. He never seeks to challenge or to agree with Turrell's conclusions although these are drawn from a considerably wider body of material and frequently differ considerably from those of Worger. In an era in which the availability of funding for young historians has dramatically declined this obviously missed opportunity for collaboration at best and some apparent scholarly reciprocity at worst strikes this reviewer as profligate.

Worger's fluency stands in sharp contrast to the sometimes over-ornate and often intensely compacted prose of Turrell. But in some senses the problems Turrell appears to create emerge from his greater sensitivity to the complexity of the subject. Indeed at times Worger's readability is in part a reflection of his over-simplification of the implicit contradictions within his sources. Worger is at his weakest when he is confronted with eddying material, some of which contradicts some of the theoretical underpinnings of what has been called the "revisionist school" of southern African historians with whom he, utterly reasonably, identifies with. This emerges, for example, with his treatment of the politics of colour on the diamond diggings. Turrell's evidence shows clearly that the rigidities of race, which emerge so much more clearly and later on the gold-fields, were far less significant in Kimberley. By the mid 1870s, for example, something like a sixth of the claim-owners on the diggings were, in that awful phrase, "non-white". Worger's more static and somewhat rigid picture prevents the reader from grasping how racially polarised societies emerge from far more ambiguous relationships.

It is an allied weakness in his treatment of the evidence which leads him to see Africans as being very rapidly reduced to powerlessness by the virtually untrammelled power of mine owners and their allies in the legislature. The development of the compound system, a development of enormous importance for the history of South African labour which Worger quite rightly stresses, was a more ambiguous set of events than he allows. Compounds as such as anything else demonstrate the continuing success, albeit a diminishing success, of Africans to command some arenas of choice. They also show that mine ownership adopted such measures of labour control because of their inability to control labour more generally through the state. They were not quite monarchs of all they surveyed however much they might have tried to be.

Worger's book has a great deal to commend it and it deserves to be widely read. At the same time the serious student of South Africa in this period will want to read Turrell's volume alongside it. Both are far from perfect, both are good – and flawed – in different ways. Together they open up a crucial era and its processes in a most exciting fashion.

*Richard Rathbone*

ABRAHAM, RICHARD. Alexander Kerensky. *The First Love of the Revolution*. Columbia University Press, New York 1987. xv, 503 pp. Ill. \$ 29.95.

We have, at last, a biography of Alexander Kerensky, the absence of which has been one of the glaring omissions in the history of the Russian Revolution and the revolutionary movement. It is a good biography, but reading it helps to explain why we have had to wait so long for Kerensky's biography: he was a complex person difficult to portray; he aroused strong emotions which made writing objectively about him difficult; there was enough disagreeable about him that it has not been easy for historians to find sufficient empathy to want to, much less be able to, write his story. Fortunately, Abraham has managed to develop a feel for Kerensky which has eluded other writers. This is important not only because Kerensky's role in the pre-1917 period is significant and his position in 1917 pivotal, but because to understand Kerensky is to enrich our understanding of the Russian intelligentsia, of which he was so typical, faced with the revolution.

Abraham has done a good job of telling Kerensky's story. Especially valuable is the account of his career before 1917, where Abraham gives us for the first time a good picture of the development of Kerensky's political outlook and activism, which he insists remained remarkably consistent throughout his career and which is essential to evaluating Kerensky's activities – and inactivities – in 1917. This does help to produce a picture of a man acting, at least until August 1917, in a more consistent and principled manner than has been the usual evaluation. Abraham is especially good at pointing out the tensions Kerensky felt in 1917 between his older beliefs and the actions he was forced into by the exigencies of being in authority, tensions which often immobilized him.

Nevertheless, despite Abraham's efforts the reader comes away less than fully convinced that Kerensky had much in the way of developed political convictions (other than belief in himself and his own advancement). Kerensky undoubtedly showed great personal courage before and during 1917. No doubt he was deeply committed to "democracy", "the people", and other catchphrases of the radical intelligentsia. However, I find little evidence that he understood those beyond the level of vague utopianism and of useful if heartfelt slogans, that he had any real sense of what they meant or ever grappled with how to translate his emotional commitments into functioning political democracy. Indeed, Kerensky's actions in 1917 showed virtually no respect for the opinions