CHAPTER 1

William Westrup, A sentimental cynic (1950)
Amy B Baker, The snake garden (1915)
Sidney Attwell, Drifting to destruction (1927)
John Buchan, Prester John (1910)
Nendick Paul, A child in the midst (1909)
Noel Hope (= Sarah Morewood), Nomquba: a Zulu maid (1923)
George W Hardy, The black peril (1912)
Bertram Mitford, The white and the black (1907)
Bertram Mitford, Forging the blades (1908)
Bertram Mitford, A dual resurrection (1910)
Bertram Mitford, Seaford's snake (1912)
G Heaton Nicholls, Bayete! Hail to the king! (1913)
Douglas Blackburn, Love muti (1915)

THE BAMBATHA REBELLION (1906)

Much attention has been paid in South African literary criticism to fiction concerned with the Anglo-Zulu War and with the Anglo-Boer War. As sparse reference is made to the Bambatha Rebellion it may be conjectured that there are very few relevant works of fiction dealing with it. My research has, how-
ever, brought to light no fewer than thirteen early novels in which the Bambatha Rebellion plays a prominent part.¹ The novels range from 1907 (Bertram Mitford, losing no time, brought out *The white hand and the black* barely a year after the rebellion) to 1927 (when Sidney Attwell’s doom-laden *Drifting to destruction* was published). The full list, in chronological order of publication, is as follows:


**Contextualisation**

The Bambatha Rebellion has received a great deal of attention from historians in recent decades. Shula Marks’s comprehensive account, however, continues to be regarded by historians as a highly reliable contemporary study of the rebellion. For Marks the rebellion was above all a protest against the multiple injustices of white colonial rule. In Catherine Greenham’s novel, *Rebellion* (the only contemporary novel that deals with the Bambatha Rebellion)³ the foreword written by Ingrid Machin provides a convenient summary of the main events that fits in with Marks’s interpretation:⁴

One of the most dramatic and tragic events in the history of colonial Natal was the so-called Bambata or Zulu rebellion of 1906: dramatic because the flashpoint was at last reached in the Natal government’s exploitation of the Natal Nguni; and tragic because the rising was quelled by fearful men, themselves caught up in events beyond their immediate control, to which they saw only harsh military solutions.

The trigger which set off the rebellion was the collection of the new Poll Tax by the magistrates, early in 1906. Chief Mveli’s men attacked police sent to enforce the law at Trewirgie, near Richmond, and Chief Bambata’s men attacked police at Mpanza in the
Umvoti county. Bambata then crossed the Thukela into Zululand. There he had, earlier, solicited the tacit support of the resentful Dinizulu, demoted in 1898 from the position of Paramount Chief of the Zulus to that of leader of the Usuthu faction of the Zulu people.

Twenty Natal chiefs and five chiefs from Zululand, a small fraction of the total of 321 chiefs, joined the rebels and gathered, with their followers, around Bambata in the Nkandla forest area. Here the colonial militia, fearing a general conflagration, ruthlessly defeated the rebels with much slaughter. In the final battle at Mhome Gorge, Bambata was killed. (Greenham 1991: Foreword)

The following additional historical accounts were consulted during my research: (earlier works) Captain Walter Bosman’s *The Natal Rebellion of 1906*; James Stuart’s *History of the Zulu Rebellion 1906*; (later works) Edward Roux’s *Time longer than rope*; and David Welsh’s *Roots of segregation: native policy in colonial Natal 1845–1910*. Welsh makes a point of trying to avoid the repetition of
material already covered by Marks. H G Lugg’s *A Natal family looks back* also provides a certain amount of useful information. An Honours dissertation by a University of Natal student, Warren A Smith (‘Motivations for and obstacles to rebellion in Mapumulo during the 1906 rebellion in Natal’), takes issue with Marks. His claim, ‘It is quite likely that the leaders of this movement had been considering rebellion as a course of action for some time and that Bambatha’s revolt was a far more powerful impulse to arm than Marks’s suggestion of a “reluctant rebellion”’ (1997:88), is persuasive, but does not require a radical change in my approach to the novelists. Its main value for my purposes is to confirm, though from a non-racist, legitimising perspective, the impression of a black leader with a considerable degree of agency as conveyed by several of the novelists, and to re-emphasise the points made in my Introduction about the discursive, constructed nature of all historical texts.
The novels

I discuss in turn: (a) the novels which are most prone to endorse one-sided white assumptions and interests; (b) those which reveal strongly ambivalent attitudes in terms of the degree of sympathy shown to whites and blacks; and, finally, (c) those which involve some sustained questioning, if not rejection, of conventional white propaganda, and possibly even an empathetic approach to the cause of blacks. These three categories do not necessarily coincide with a scale which would indicate writers' degree of freedom from mimetic representation of the historical records.

Colonialist racism: Westrup, Baker and Attwell

William Westrup is clearly fascinated with James Leonard Egerton, the hero of his romantic novel *A sentimental cynic*. Through endorsement of Egerton, Westrup manages to reinforce virtually all possible colonial prejudices, mores and ideals. Ironically Egerton is offered as a considerable challenge to local popular opinion because of his friendship and partnership with the alcoholic, Bill Adams. What Egerton has observed, as only a 'true gentleman' can, is that beneath Bill's dissolute exterior there lurks the heart of a fellow-gentleman. The story revolves round the gradual success of Egerton's risky but resolute rehabilitation of Bill.

In his account of both stages of the rebellion the novelist keeps close to the historical records, but his account reads more like a necessary insert to provide authenticity for the sake of his major interest in the two male characters. Shortly before news of the rising, when Egerton has become sufficiently impressed with Bill's farming skills to take him on as an assistant, he invites Bill to join the FMR (Frontier Mounted Rifles). Egerton's position as popular lieutenant commanding this troop gives Westrup the opportunity for rousing village scenes when the men are called up and when they return triumphant. Indeed, in terms of recording the response to the rebellion of what is probably a fairly typical small Natal white farming community the novel is worth reading.

Egerton's role as the lieutenant who earns the full esteem of his men fits in with what appears to be Westrup's own totally unquestioning attitude towards the colonial administration's handling of the rebellion. An early conversation in the novel, however, leads one to hope for possible signs of a more
enlightened position. Castigating Bill for a particular state of drunkenness, Egerton points out:

‘I am a great believer in the superiority of white over black, and in your present state you do no credit to my convictions.’ (43)

To this Bill replies with, one might have thought, telling force:

‘... it has been borne in upon me most forcibly that the blacks are, in many instances, infinitely higher in the social scale than the whites.’ (45)

Nevertheless, shortly before the regiment is ordered home after the first stage is over, Bill is happy to agree with Egerton’s belief that ‘one in every ten rebels should be taken and shot out of hand’ (237). No further attention is given to the bland and brief acknowledgment, when news of the rising first reaches the village, that ‘it was well-known that the poll-tax was very unpopular’ (271). Serious attention is given, on the other hand, to the news of ‘brutal murders on February 8th, when a sub-Inspector and trooper of the Natal Mounted Police were set upon and killed by the natives of the Umgeni’ (225). And when the regiment receives its second call-up, Bill expresses his delight in terms that would have warmed the heart of any sternly reactionary colonial:

‘Naturally the wily native is presuming on the tacit promise held out by our respected Mother Country that he shan’t be hanged if he murders an odd policemen or two. It is a fascinating pastime, and most ridiculously easy. Two policemen to a few square miles of country swarming with niggers! By Jove! We must show them we are in earnest this time, or there will be the very devil and all to pay.’ (249)

Needless to say, on their return home these two smug racists are much aggrieved at the tame handling of the rebellion.6 Amy Baker’s *The snake garden* 7 deals with Transvaal episodes in the Bambatha Rebellion. Like Westrup (and Mitford in two of his novels as we shall see later), her chief interest in the rebellion is as a means of testing and affirming the mettle of her female protagonist, Theo Hambridge, and there are initial signs of a *bildungsroman* which will chart the progress of an unusual and enlightened heroine. The young black woman, Papalata, takes grave risks in returning to the farm where Theo lives to warn her that her present and erstwhile lovers, who have just set out on a journey, are in danger of ambush from rebels. (She had become the new wife of the local chief, Mtschunga, and,
in order to warn Theo, had to deceive him.) The relationship between the two women could perhaps have been more fully developed, but unfortunately Baker’s plot prevents the Papalata strand from becoming extended beyond the Bambatha-related episodes of the novel.

Papalata’s secret visit to the farm is in ironic contrast to the equally secret visit by other tribespeople to steal cartridges. Despite the robbery, Fluffy Borne, Theo’s tobacco-farming brother-in-law, acknowledges that blacks ‘can’t be kept back for ever’ (241–242). Baker herself, however, has grave misgivings about the value of their going forward. Mtchunga, who — under threat of retribution becomes leagued with Bambatha, referred to as the disaffected chief in Natal (273) — spreads the spark of the Natal rebellion in his kraal, is presented as having gained from his education in England nothing more than a spirit of self-indulgence and indolence. Baker does not appear to have considered how inefficient a spreader of rebellion these qualities would be likely to make him. In any case, it is made clear that, apart from Bambatha’s pressures, Mtchunga was prompted into action by a white socialist agitator, Markin, who, having been given short and painful shrift by the local farmers after addressing them, has his own axe to grind.

Sidney Attwell’s *Drifting to destruction*, a much later novel than Westrup’s or Baker’s, is intended as a dire warning to whites. While Attwell emphasises the inflamatory nature of flagrant racism through the vicious behaviour of the lumber agent, Kortor, towards his black workers, there are few signs, on the writer’s own part, of a compensatory regard for the victims of racism.

The plot revolves around the shift of the forest-ranger, Blagstock, towards accepting the view of his police corporal friend, Botha, that segregation is the only viable solution for South Africa. To this end several fairly lengthy discussions are devoted, but the moment of conversion is attained only after Blagstock, in Botha’s company, has secretly attended a forest gathering of black rebels addressed by their Cambridge-educated leader, Inzeema (Attwell’s version of Bambatha). Having reassured his audience that he is not a Communist and, moreover, does not ‘trust a single white man’ (135), he proceeds to evoke their feelings of bitterness against the whites who ‘take great care that we remain poor’ (135). The one old man who seeks to dissuade the leader from such action is murdered at Inzeema’s behest because he refuses to swear not to warn the whites. At this point Attwell initiates his grim and fanciful reconstruction of the Bambatha Rebellion by having Inzeema instruct his audience to kill their masters (of whom the prime representative is of course Kortor) as stage one of their revolt.
Much emphasised in the sardonic build-up to this culmination of the novel is the crass stupidity and complacency of the local whites, the white press, and even the government in refusing to believe Blagstock’s frantic warnings. The forester’s sense of fighting ‘two enemies: the indifference of the government and the cunning of the blacks’ (181) is clearly one which his author shares, and which has indeed prompted this heavily didactic fictional exercise as a further desperate attempt.

Far from trying to understand and alleviate white panic and hysteria, the novel fuels it at every point. Lurid images accumulate: of the ‘whole country ablaze with fire’ (200); of the town of Stalville completely isolated; of rebels shelling the church (potent symbolic overtones here) where all the white townspeople have sought shelter (and where pathos can readily be mingled with horror). An unintentionally ironic moment occurs after Blagstock has rushed through the streets shouting the warning, ‘The Kaffirs are coming’ (183), when all the local blacks are seen leaving the town. At no stage does Attwell contemplate the sobering thought that, had they not been there in the first place, and had thus not needed to leave, as would follow from a logically applied segregation policy, the vulnerability of whites to attack by blacks might have been all the greater.

Colonialist ambivalence: John Buchan, Nendick Paul, Sarah Morewood [pseudonym ‘Noel Hope’], George Hardy

In Prester John John Buchan is not so much interested in the actual events of the Bambatha Rebellion as in the opportunity provided to exploit the Prester John legend, and the fascinatingly ambivalent figure, the Rev Laputa, as fictional fulfilment of the legend. Racism is inseparable from the conception of Laputa since there is a continual stress on his unprecedented and unique status. Buchan is skilled in mythopoeic evocation and the revelation of the sacred snake-necklace, Laputa’s fetish, handed down from the days of Prester John, gives rise to some of his most powerful writing in this successor to Rider Haggard’s adventure-romances. In the incantation to which David Crawfurd, the protagonist, is secretly party – the incantation which establishes Laputa as rightful heir of Prester John, and also provides the signal for the commencement of the rising – Buchan’s final emphasis is telling: ‘No Kaffir ever forged that ritual. It must have come straight from Prester John or Sheba’s queen, of whoever ruled in Africa when time was young’ (103). The mix-
ture of splendour and horror which characterises the ritual is part of the sus-
tained ambivalent rhetoric used for the developing portrayal of Laputa. When
Crawfurd witnesses Laputa’s dying moments, Buchan reaches towards even
greater heights of myth-laden fervour, ironically through a stress on Laputa’s
human, rather than superhuman, qualities:

He had ceased to be the Kaffir king, or the Christian minister, or
indeed any one of this former parts. Death was stripping him to his
elements, and the man Laputa stood out beyond and above the
characters he had played, something strange, and great, and
moving, and terrible. (178)

The Ethiopian movement (referring to the large-scale formation of black se-
paratist churches after 1892) 9 is of central importance in this novel. Captain
Arcoll (the experienced traveller who has long been on Laputa’s trail), after
defining for Crawfurd the meaning of Ethiopianism, explains that hitherto
the movement had seemed to him ‘perfectly harmless’ (75). Laputa, however,
has changed Crawfurd’s mind (‘none of your flabby educated Negroes from
America’); thus he decides to take seriously what he hears Laputa proclaiming
to his rebel audience, that ‘he was there to lead the African race to conquest
and empire’ (77). Although Buchan does not devote his most dramatic
writing to the exposition of black people’s grievances, there are substantial
indications, initiated in Arcoll’s long discussion with Crawfurd, and followed
up in Laputa’s oration, of the legitimacy of protest by blacks:

If it be the part of an orator to rouse the passion of his hearers,
Laputa was the greatest on earth. ‘What have ye gained from the
white man?’ he cried. ‘A false religion which would rivet on you
the chains of the slave. Ye, the old masters of the land, are now the
servants of the oppressor.’ (107)

These rhetorical moments of conscience-arousing for his white readers (colo-
nial or otherwise) are carefully limited by the overriding stress on the dan-
gerous, quasi-diabolical power of Laputa. Even that fear, however, is
controlled through the notion that ‘Laputa is the Rising’ (164).

Crawfurd’s moment of vision is his realisation, once the fetish is in his
possession, that Laputa is similarly in his power (161). Until this crucial mo-
moment Buchan seems intent on making Crawfurd’s motives mixed and even
confused. But no sooner has his sacred duty as white man become manifest
to him than these lesser motives evaporate and we see that Buchan is primarily
concerned with the challenge to Crawfurd, as a fairly ordinary and typical
representative of his race. Laputa is the Rising, but Crawfurd, relying on basic European resourcefulness, 'savvy', and sheer grit, crushes the rising in embryo. The fantasy of the white man's superiority is hereby re-affirmed: the exceptional black, no matter how extraordinary, will be no match for the plucky white. And so too, when Crawford reveals ultimately how much he has learned of the blacks' 'untold grievances', this moment of compassion is immediately qualified, if not erased, by a reference to their 'strange, twisted reasoning' (198).

Perfectly consonant with the notion of white superiority is the ultimate scenario offered by Buchan for a post-rebellion land. Aitken, Crawfurd's associate, has used part of the fortune accruing to him from a diamond mine to found a 'great native training college' (202). Buchan is intent on clarifying that this institution, erected with appropriate symbolism at the very site of Crawford's ultimate conflict with Laputa, was 'no factory for making missionaries and black teachers, but an institution for giving the kaffirs the kind of training which fits them to be good citizens of the state' (202).

Two of the novels that fall into the category of marked ambivalence are concerned with religion, and have female protagonists, a white girl and a black woman. Gladys Mayfield, the 'child in the midst'\(^{10}\) in Nendick Paul's novel,\(^{11}\) expresses to her mother the wish that God would use her to help 'make anyone love Him' (22). The encouraging reply contains a double challenge with which the novel sets out to engage:

'There is a lot of work for someone to do in Isigodini. There is no church here, and I'm afraid some of the farmers trouble very little about religion. Besides, there are the Kafirs, many of whom have never even heard of God.' (22–23)

A preliminary glimpse of Gladys's capacity for meeting this challenge occurs when she comes to the rescue of a black dairy boy who has been assaulted by four white farmhands. She argues with their leader that blacks have souls and her passionate defence gives even the farmers cause to question their own racist assumptions.

The first mention of the coming rebellion occurs more than halfway through the novel when Gladys's brother, Dick, comes home to their Greytown farm on holiday from Pietermaritzburg. Sympathetically aware of how the new poll tax is only one of the blacks' 'serious grievances', his predicament is that he will nevertheless 'have to go and fight them' (142). While at home, Dick even uses the opportunity of a Sunday sermon to impress on the farmers that 'it was their duty to treat the Kafirs justly and reasonably, and do their
best to raise them up by teaching them to become Christians’ (142). Dick’s eventual experiences in the Nkandla Forest and at Mome Gorge are reported to his mother in a letter but, as a prelude to the major climax of the novel, Nendick Paul makes direct use of the Greytown episode in which it was claimed that Bambatha aimed to attack the town:

The chief Bambata had conceived a very wicked plan for venting his wrath on the white people; and on the 22nd of February, 1906, he gathered all his warriors together in a big wattle plantation a couple of miles from the town. He was supposed to have brought his men in to pay the poll tax, but that was not his real object. He was going to send some of them into the town to pay the tax, and while they were waiting for their receipts, they were to whip out the assegai heads, which were concealed up their sleeves, and stab the Magistrate and his clerks. As soon as this was done they would rush into the shops and steal all the guns, knives, and axes they could find. Then their friends who were waiting in the plantation, would pour into the town, and massacre all the white people. (186)

Shula Marks confirms Stuart’s verdict that this so-called very wicked plan, as well as a substitute when the first plan failed (which would have involved killing the whites while asleep in their beds), was no more than a panicky rumour.12 Because Gladys and her mother have been warned that living in the country is not safe, they are already staying with a clergyman and his wife. When the rumour of the second plan alarms the Greytown people, the Mayfields join other women and children in seeking refuge in the town hall but ‘by God’s grace, Greytown was saved from what might have been one of the most terrible calamities that ever happened in South Africa’ (191). Gladys’s lack of insight – she is, after all, only a child – into the fantasy of ‘Bambata’s very wicked plan’ reflects that of Nendick himself in not recognising how the ‘child in the midst’ theme offers an opportunity for a radical questioning of white responses.

At the end of the novel Gladys falls seriously ill from exhaustion and exposure. Warned that the rebels have threatened to set fire to her home, she has had to spend a night summoning help from all the neighbouring farmers. (No such plots, incidentally, are recorded by the historians.13) Her illness so touches the farmers that they make a vow to God: ‘[I]f He will spare the life of the child we will start building a church for the natives this very week’ (236). A leading farmer, Mankel, when reporting the making of this vow to his fellow
whites in church, places it in the context of significant comments about Gladys and the rebellion:

'I know it is through them [the blacks] that our little girl is suffering such pain, but we must forgive them, for what they did was done in ignorance. If we treat them sensibly, and teach them about the love of God, there will be no more trouble and no more rebellions.' (234)

As a plan for preventing further rebellions, Mankel's idea is sadly limited. Paul has nevertheless tried, within the confines of his paternalistic ideology and watered-down Christianity, to imagine a redemptive role for Gladys in relation to the rebellion.

Sarah Morewood's *Nomquba: a Zulu maid* is a much more overt work of religious propaganda: published by the Salvationist Press, it was written to spread knowledge of the Salvation Army's mission amongst blacks. In some ways the work is daring in giving prominence to the lives of blacks, and furthermore in giving crucial roles to women. Since for Morewood the essential elements of the blacks' plight reside in their own culture, almost all forms of tribal life come in for condemnation: 'such things', so runs the catalogue, 'as horrible beer drink, savage dances, aimless chatter, empty laughter' (50). Other factors such as grievances against white administration are therefore not to be thought of as the causes of the Bambatha Rebellion. Morewood is in any case not greatly interested in the events of the Rebellion except insofar as they affect the mission station. It is true that Captain Clark, the main official representative of the Salvation Army portrayed in the novel, does express compassion for those caught up in the rebellion (141 ff). But the movement is opposed to war of any kind and strongly condemns tribal conflict. So, for example, when the captain is led to exclaim: 'How often has blood been shed on this land' (88), what he refers to is black-on-black violence, not white suppression of blacks.

Last in the group of ambivalent novels, yet the one which reveals the most startling divergences in its treatment of blacks, is George Hardy's *The black peril*. Though, like Attwell's *Drifting to destruction*, Hardy's novel can be described as an unashamedly didactic warning, its message does not concern approaching revolt. Hardy's attention is focused rather on the inadequate, shortsighted, and basically unjust social institutions of the Colony of Natal. It is also unique amongst all the novels I consider in taking account only of the first stage of the rebellion.
The execution of the twelve rebels at Richmond after a summary court-martial elicits Hardy's scathing condemnation of what he regards as a travesty of British colonial justice: "the most disgusting exhibition of "civilised barbarism" ever seen in a British country" (150). His point, stressed several times with vigour and venom (Hardy's characteristic, and ultimately wearisome, method), is that there was no legal justification whatever for shooting the rebels before martial law had been declared. Moreover, in his view, there was no justification for martial law itself. His account of the murder of the two policemen which inspired the retributive executions, though relying on some of his own assumptions, differs significantly from the official version: 17

... like many a white man in the history of England, some of the natives refused to pay what they considered an unjust imposition, at a time when they were very poor through misgovernment and pestilence. The police were, therefore, called upon to compel payment in certain districts; and of course they undertook the work with all the autocratic, not to say bullying, methods that are characteristic of Colonial police when dealing with blacks. And, one fine day, a certain Inspector, quite ignorant of native character, and a little troop of police ran into a few natives who had had the pluck to stand up for what, rightly or wrongly, they considered to be their rights. Then there was a scuffle, during which some of the police behaved in a despicable manner and, not to put too fine a point upon it, ran away. (148)

A Daniel come to judgement, one may be inclined to say. Hardy is impressive in his proclaimed liberalism and scathing condemnation of racial prejudice, but profoundly disappointing when his overall outlook is taken into account. The 'black peril' turns out not to involve anxiety about an incipient revolt, but about miscegenation which, in Hardy's view, 'threatens the ultimate subjugation of the two [white] races by the coloured peoples' (142). Hardy's tense, and scarcely believable, mixture of liberalism and racism may thus offer a useful clue for an understanding of the much later alliance of English-speaking South Africans with apartheid policy. Indeed the only kind of solution Hardy can point to is segregation, just as for Attwell, though he does seek to appease his liberal conscience by means of a qualifying addition: 'while treating every one with absolute justice' (309).
Colonialist critical ambivalence: Bertram Mitford, G Heaton Nicholls, Douglas Blackburn

These novelists are not merely critical of the colonial government, but able to empathise, even if inconsistently, with blacks’ perceptions and aspirations on an everyday sociopolitical level.

Mitford\^{18} is interested mainly in the second stage of the rebellion, the stage, that is, which is properly associated with Bambatha after he had fled into Zululand. Bambatha himself does not become a prominent character in any of Mitford’s novels, although in the first two there are scenes where he is presented as plotting with other chiefs (whose names are fictitious). In the third (\textit{A dual resurrection}) we are told: ‘Bambata’s broken out and is lighting the fuse in every location’ (173), though he does not appear in person. By the time of the fourth and last of Mitford’s rebellion novels, as part of what seems a growing process of distancing from actual events, Bambatha is not even mentioned. His role is taken over largely by Sapazani (first used in \textit{Forging the blades}), who is perhaps Mitford’s most compelling fictitious Zulu chieftain.

Central to Mitford’s favouring of his white heroes is endorsement of their interest in making a ready profit. This emerges most strongly in Seaford (of \textit{Seaford’s snake}), who likes nothing better than talking business with chiefs. Although he has cause to comment sarcastically to his wife, Aurelle:

\begin{quote}
These people won’t look at paper [money]. They’d spit at a five-pound note, but grab eagerly at a golden sovereign. Oh, we’ve civilised them! (123),
\end{quote}

there is no apparent wish on his part (or Mitford’s) that the process of commercial corruption should in any way be halted or curbed. The rebellion in this particular novel is indeed only an interruption of business dealings, and the ingenious Seaford, for his worldly good sense, consistently earns high marks from his author.

The Ethiopian movement, which the Natal colonists all too conveniently wished to regard as a major cause of the rebellion, is openly derided in Mitford’s first two novels (\textit{Forging the blades} and \textit{A dual resurrection}), even while he credits it as a major influence in fomenting discontent. The black Ethiopian preacher, Magwagwa, in \textit{The white hand and the black}, contemptible even in name, is described as fat, smug, and gluttonous – a ‘plausible, smooth-tongued rogue’ (54). Significantly, it is the enigmatic black character, Mandanjela destined to prove one of Mitford’s special saviour figures, who from the beginning shares his author’s contempt for Magwagwa. And then in a strange kind of placatory volte-face, having built up such antipathy for the
preacher, Mitford shows him as anxious to rescue particular whites from the effects of his own teaching.

Had Mitford been inclined to theorise his position with regard to the race question he would probably have opted for a fairly strong Shepstone position.19 Certainly he places much stress on the superiority of the tribal Zulu. Blacks in European clothes earn mockery. Educated blacks such as the Rev Magwagwa provoke scorn, while those who have retained authentic tribal ways deserve respect. Mitford’s journey through Zululand after the Zulu War, which led to his prose account, *Through the Zulu country*, reveals considerable interest in Zulu life and a readiness to understand the war from their point of view. In some ways, in fact, he seems to have been able to make a leap of sympathetic imagination and offer a convincing rendering of black consciousness. The reader is given access to intimate discussions amongst Zulu chiefs, and, surprisingly, even to farm servants’ private jokes about their masters. Most notable of all, Mitford creates fictional equivalents of confrontations between an individual Zulu and a magistrate, the white authority figure with whom the Zulus had most to do, and who were often, according to Marks and others, incompetent, blinkered or provocatively partial.20

Most powerfully rendered of all is the confrontation between Sapazani and the magistrate Downes in *Forging the blades* (clearly modelled on historical situations such as Bambatha’s defiance of the Greytown magistrate). I have space to give only a brief excerpt from this remarkable interchange when Downes queries why Bambatha (‘Babatyana’) and another Natal man have been seen near Sapazani’s kraal in Zululand:

‘A man of your intelligence, Sapazani, must know that the Government has the power to sweep this land from end to end if necessary until there is not a man left alive in it.’

‘The Government? Which Government?’ answered the chief, with his head on one side. ‘The Government of Natal or the Government of the Great King beyond the sea?’

‘Both Governments. Both work together. The question is childish.’

‘Both work together,’ repeated Sapazani, still with his head on one side. ‘*Au!* That is strange. Because when the men down in Natal were ordered to be shot for killing two of the *Nongqai* the King’s Government prevented it.’

‘That was only until they had inquired further into it,’ answered the magistrate. ‘But they were shot – were they not?’
'We have heard so.'

There was a note of incredulity about this reply which was exasperating. Perhaps it was intended to be. (283–284)

Sapazani is, par excellence, the tribal Zulu and yet he is also a rebel, pent up with bitterness and thus ready to challenge the entire colonial administration. There is, implicitly, a considerable dilemma here for Mitford, one that he either remains unconscious of, or simply will not allow to surface in the novel. The more overtly rebellious Sapazani becomes, the more he seems to slip from Mitford's imaginative grasp to become the stereotype of the cruel and treacherous black. And Mitford spares nothing in attempting to persuade us of the eventual malice to which Sapazani will stoop. Having allowed the reader a glimpse beneath the surface of the stock colonial view, Mitford does not seem to have realised how jarring would be a lapse back into it.

Two of Mitford's novels on the rebellion involve the use of a black saviour figure.

There is the strange Manamandhla of The white hand and the black, who, before his role of goodwill towards the Thornhill family can be manifested, is almost eliminated by the falsely suspicious Thornhill. Although Thornhill's son, Hyland, remarks before a climactic Zulu attack on his fortified laager, '[Y]ou can trust none of these chaps after all' (250), the outcome of the novel, in terms of Manamandhla's persevering loyalty, gives the lie to his words. And Hyland has apparently done some rethinking, for at the very end of the novel it is revealed that Manamandhla and he had 'twice met in battle face to face but the assegai of the one and the revolver of the other had simultaneously turned upon another enemy' (316).

Seaford's snake includes no fewer than three black saviour figures. The most important of these is the ancient wizard/witchdoctor Fumanisani, who, for reasons that remain mysterious, befriends and enables the trader, Seaford, with his magical powers (chiefly through the snake). Perhaps most impressive of all the enchantments that Fumanisani performs is the change in attitude of Seaford's hitherto racist and highly discontented wife, Aurelle:

... it was supposed to be a truism that the days of miracles were past. Yet, here was one wrought by a very ancient savage, in the heart of a wild, forbidding forest in Zululand. (307)

Innyoniyentaba, the servant of Seaford's partner, Torrance, is another saviour figure, unique as a female in this category of Mitford's characters. She not only saves her master from his burning house but goes back a second time to try to rescue some of his possessions. Moved by her loyalty and devotion, to which
the narrator has already paid tribute, Torrance exclaims to himself: 'And these are the people to whom we send missionaries!' (117).

However far Mitford's black saviour figures enable him to transgress conventional colonial boundaries, there is one route barred to them—support for the rebellion. The thought of Innyoniyentaba's being consulted on her political views of course never arises, while all the male saviour-figures are scornful of Bambatha's activities. Furthermore, Sapazani, who—in the earlier novel, Forging the blades—had been the trusted friend of the trader, Ben Halse, and of his daughter, Verna, becomes their enemy once he joins the rebels' cause.

In line with the lack of evidence which would implicate Dinizulu directly in the rebellion, Mitford is careful to insist, as in A dual resurrection, that the 'king has held aloof' (251). In The white hand and the black the old chief, Zavula, who was loyal to the white government during the Anglo-Zulu War, and remains loyal in the rebellion, is termed by Elvesdon, the magistrate, a 'dear old boy', and his murder by opponents is presented as an act of devilish villainy. Mitford does not try to pretend, however, that Zavula's loyalty is based on anything other than a pragmatic recognition of superior British power. Through this chief, Mitford makes a rare reference to the tax grievance which was in fact at the heart of the rebellion; Zavula tries to convince his followers that it should be seen as payment for their own protection by the British since otherwise they would be ruled by much worse masters, the A玛buna (boers). Even the experienced assegai-maker, Malemba, in Forging the blades, pours scorn on young enthusiasts for the rebellion, warning them somberly: 'We are the white man's dogs to-day, and always shall be.' (160). On the other hand, Ndabamatoba in A dual resurrection, who had ambitiously hoped to renew the Zulu achievements of the Anglo-Zulu War, is shown as a bitterly frustrated man when his plans come to nothing. Thus Mitford gives some general sense of the spectrum of probable attitudes shown by Zulu chiefs, while broadly favouring those who were opposed to the rebellion. Again it is in terms of worldly values that the second group is seen to be wiser; Mitford is not concerned with high-minded Empire sentiment, and the sense of injustice or bitterness shown by the proponents of rebellion is thus not in any serious way gainsaid.

Mitford panders to white fears through several distortions and falsifications of history in order to evoke scenes of maximum horror. Just how deliberate the process probably is may be suggested by the fact that one of the most appalling occurs in the first of the four rebellion novels, The white hand and the black, at a time when the historical events must have been startlingly fresh in
the author’s mind. The young English sergeant, Parry, is coldbloodedly butchered within the kraal of the chief, Nteseni, and at his command. This takes place within the hearing of the two men, Thornhill, the protagonist, and Elvesdon, the magistrate, who had been held prisoner with him. What provided Mitford with some justification was the conflation of two separate white deaths in the course of the rebellion. First was Sergeant Brown’s death, which occurred when a column of the Natal Police, while providing an escort for whites stranded at Keats’s Drift, was attacked by Zulu rebels. Four members of the police were killed altogether, four wounded, but the body of Brown, missing at the time, was later found mutilated. In a quite separate later incident a young postal official, O E Veal, who had accidentally wandered into the domain of the fully roused Qwabe tribe (despite a warning not to take a short cut through this part of the country), was murdered because he was, quite understandably, believed to be a spy. In opposition to the chief, his induna, Meseni, and several others decided to make use of parts of Veal’s body for ‘doctoring in war’. However, neither of these events matches the fictional circumstance in which the chief himself gives the order for murder, and in which the atrocity takes place within the hearing of fellow white prisoners.

A more complete fabrication occurs in *A dual resurrection* when the young Halfont is captured by Zulu warriors after what is called in the novel the Battle of Gcoma Valley (a fictional version, judging from the geographical detail, of the Battle of Mome Gorge, probably the most famous incident in the course of the rebellion). Although the chief is at first reluctant to yield to his soldiers’ clamour for Halfont to be handed over to them, he eventually does so because of the incessant background noise of shelling from the Natal forces. At this point Mitford regresses to the most conventional type of colonial horror story: Halfont, stripped naked, is held over an ants’ nest while his tormentors jeer. Although the torture is interrupted by some accidental shelling, the point is made: utter barbarism is at work. It is true that the context of the ‘iron hail’ (shelling) from the white forces which has brought ruin upon the Zulu rebels’ army is offered as a reason why they are incited to such lengths of cruelty. But Mitford’s overall strategy in his handling of the battle is not one that allows for much sense of impartial judgement. When it becomes clear to the white troops that victory is to be theirs, we are informed:

Those now becoming victorious here had old scores to pay – a recollection of comrades cut off and slain, and worse still, barbarously mutilated [probably a reference to Veal’s death: see Marks, p
No quarter had been offered them, and now the tables were turned. Blood ran hot. (194)

Here Mitford quite unscrupulously exploits a sense of jingoism and battle fever, making vast capital out of minimal evidence, and simply eliminating from the minds of his contemporary readers any possible concern with the rebels' just cause.

In general, however, what Mitford says of Seaford might well have some application to himself:

He understood [the natives], and looked upon them as brother humans and friends. They had their shortcomings, but when you came to weigh them with those of his own and other civilised races, why he thought with a frank sneer, that these did not need any missionarising. (71)

This echoes the characteristic impression conveyed by Through the Zulu country:

I think there can hardly exist a more thoroughly good-humoured race than these people; they never seem out of spirits, always cheerful and lively, ready with a jest too. (247)

Granted that Mitford and his hosts were no doubt on their best behaviour during his visits, and allowing for the condescension betrayed in phrases such as 'a savage also, but a fine savage', one cannot but note the unusual degree of admiration in Mitford's response. To win acceptance from the bulk of white colonial readers necessitated a great deal of pandering to prejudice and stereotyped thinking. In any case he had his own ready safety valve — his support of Shepstone policy — by means of which he could slide without too much discomfort into a racist mode and be in a state approaching harmony with his fellow whites. According to this convention the noble savage is to be admired. When an uncontaminated Zulu such as Sapazani, however, is on the side of rebellion, enough evidence of barbarism has to be mustered to offset his potential nobility. At this art Mitford is as adept as any conventional colonist when occasion requires.

More impressive evidence of detached and informed awareness emerges in Bayete! Hail to the king, written by G Heaton Nicholls. This is all the more surprising because of Heaton Nicholls' well-known espousal as a politician of white supremacist views, and his endorsement of the policy of separate development. The novel has two stages, only the first of which is based on the Bambatha Rebellion. In terms of insight, the least auspicious side of Nicholls' novel is his choice of a leader for the rebellion. In this matter he takes the
choice that Buchan avoided: Nelson, alias Chief Balumbata (presumably intended as a variation on Bambatha), stems from a ‘long ancestry of Arabs’ (12). This extraordinary inheritance (shades of the original great Zimbabwe myth) gave him ‘a dominance over the people by whom he was adopted’ (12). Furthermore ‘his impi was better trained, better disciplined and more daring than any other’ (13). Nicholls’ underlying racist belief that no black leader would be capable of forging unity amongst all the tribes and thus leading them to achieve power over the whites depends upon such mythologising.

Ethiopianism also looms large in this novel; the stress is in fact greater than in any other of the ‘Bambatha Rebellion’ novels. But Nicholls adopts the reverse of Mitford’s attitude: Nelson’s training in the United States as an Ethiopian preacher is to be taken with the utmost seriousness. The conviction he gains there enables him to follow his ideal with unswerving determination:

A negro church to which every negro belonged would soon put a stop to all injustice; for the voice of ten million people, speaking with one tongue, could not be ignored. Therefore ... I still think that I am doing God’s work in organising the Ethiopian Church. (36)

Nelson’s training, together with his ‘magnetic personality’ (136), equips him to dominate his black audiences with ease. When he presides over the baptism of Chief Shipopa in front of his Barotse people, and in the presence of the frustrated white missionary (a failure after years of struggle), we are told:

[Nelson] had successfully penetrated their imagination as a supernatural being, armed with occult powers; and they were prepared to do his bidding. (100)

Such moments of racism stand in contrast to the scene in which Balumbata, explaining to his warriors why he needs education in America, speaks forcefully of the whites’ treachery towards his people: ‘We treated the whites as friends while all the time they were laying traps for us’ (26). Later, addressing the Ethiopian Church Council in the United States, Nelson reports his conviction that the voice of God called him to be a prophet, and Nicholls does not make him rely on the kind of nativist mythopoeic imagery that Buchan stirs into Laputa’s speeches:

The Whites have forgotten me. Into their charge I committed the heathen of Africa and I gave them dominion over the land. But they have oppressed those whom they should have loved and taught, and used them as slaves to be exploited. To thee, Balumbata, I assign the guidance of the church in Africa where millions of my people have never heard of me. (51)
When the district commissioner, Bowden, suggests that Nelson's mission will be a failure, Nelson replies with a degree of passionate challenge that allows one to infer empathy on the author's part:

"And why?" he asked. "Can you tell me why? Because every white man the native meets gives the lie to the teaching of the missionary; and almost every missionary does other than he preaches. You whites have lost your religion. Religion is one thing to your missionary and another thing to the native." (76)

Perhaps most powerful of all the extended passages which indicate Nicholls' grasp of the racial situation in South Africa is the debate between Bowden and Collingwood, another district commissioner (in charge of the area where Shiropopa is chief, and where Nelson makes his first appearance as the expected 'Son of God'). When Bowden asserts that white occupation has brought benefits to blacks, Collingwood's contemptuous reply provides one of the most memorable passages in the novel:

"Don't let us have any false sentiment about it ... Let us justify the fact that the women are often left to sow and reap their fields themselves, while their sons and husbands are working for us at the mines, hundreds of miles away. Let us justify the fact that some of them never return – as much torn from their arms as ever Shiropopa tore them. Let us justify the use of a sjambok on an unfortunate native because he did not Kampa [presumably a form of obeisance – Nicholls does not list the term in his Glossary] when the District Commissioner was coming. Let us justify the annexation of their lands, which we are now selling to white settlers – land we have stolen from them. Let us justify the forcing of labour to work on the roads and for work as carriers, and the punishment they receive if they do not turn out. If you take your stand that all these things and many more that will occur to you are good for the native, that work will give him self-reliance, that a beating will curb his wild nature, that the grabbing of their land is an excellent thing because it is not beneficially occupied, that, in short, you intend, as a superior person, to buffet the native – then I have nothing to say. A person who believes that a native has no rights of any kind, and that he exists to be a serf to the Whites, is perfectly honest with himself. But don't let us excuse our occupation by saying the native is better off for it, because he isn't." (86–87)
Collingwood confesses that these opinions are private ones which he does not disclose in official business, and that, as a result, he feels hypocritical when he discusses such matters with Chief Shipopa.

The novel is of course meant as a severe warning to South African whites of the power that a black leader like Nelson can attain, and will need to use while injustice remains rampant. The first part of the novel therefore makes use of certain aspects of Bambatha Rebellion history (tax discontent; the warriors being doctored for war) to create a mood of alarm. At no stage, however, does Nicholls indulge in the crude panic-mongering of Attwell. Presumably, by offering a double package of potential enlightenment and scare-mongering, Nicholls intended to ensure a new political dispensation which would help the whites avoid revolution by bringing about some fundamental reforms for blacks.

In the second half of the novel Nicholls plays a most devious game. On the one hand he shows how Bowden’s erstwhile liberal idealism is corrupted by involvement in the white parliament, where subservience to the demands of the gold industry are paramount. On the other hand he introduces the alternative kind of ‘black peril’ concern, cross-racial sex, with increasing intensity until it becomes the means by which to achieve Nelson’s downfall. The black leader’s attempt to seduce Bowden’s wife, Olive—previously a friendly ally—is neatly timed to coincide with the failure of his countrywide black strike. In the melodramatic dénouement both Nelson and Olive die—he duly punished for creating double peril, she sacrificed as a warning about carrying liberal commitment too far.

Last in my final trio of more enlightened novelists is Douglas Blackburn, in whose novel *Lovemuti* the idea of the rebellion is central, although there is no direct contact with the historical events themselves. This is not a didactic warning novel, however, and, although much attention is given to romantic elements, and some to adventure, neither can it easily be labelled a ‘romance’. The integration of love and rebellion as themes is maintained throughout in a way that makes a novel like Westrup’s seem crudely constructed, and thematic concerns such as Mitford’s superficial.

The novel is governed by a pervasive sense of irony, verging at times on cynicism, that sometimes seems to undermine any possibility of affirmation. But Blackburn is concerned with a world where power games and manipulation flourish; where, in particular, the subjugation of people arouses violent emotional reactions, and the potential thwarting of natural human development because of racist and sexist criteria in combination incites individuals to Machiavellian cunning in order to attain their ends.
Letty Bandusa is a kind of female equivalent of the Rev Laputa in *Prester John*: she is somehow at the hub of the rebellion. Whereas Laputa’s being conceived of as the rising is a way of enhancing an impression of his power and influence, Blackburn uses the idea of an individual as synonymous with a rising to make Letty’s personal rebellion a miniature version of the large-scale one. The two forms of rebellion continually reinforce each other. There is enough realistic detail to make her a plausible leader of the actual rising and we are given several indications of her ‘ardent partisanship of the extreme faction’ (173). In her hidden Kloof ‘sanctuary’ she is the recipient of ‘messages and news from those who await the signal for revolt’ (235), besides being ready to accept imprisonment as a means of promoting the cause of rebellion. Disclosing that her motive for being regarded as a ‘principal agent in the Zulu Rising’ is to ‘get herself into a position of power and influence’ (251), Blackburn suggests that her personal search for identity and recognition mirrors the struggle of blacks generally.

Letty’s craving for marriage with Charles Robson, the young engineer Englishman, is both means and end in terms of her revolt. She anticipates how ‘her enemies will bow down and worship her when she’s married’ (250), causing the vexed Charles to enquire whether she has taken into account that the ‘career of ruthless vengeance that [she] is contemplating would hurt [him] as [her] husband’ (250). Since Letty is known to be a half-caste, part of her motivation involves an almost crazed ambition to be treated as a white. Her scheming merits to some extent his accusation against her of treachery (238–239). But, through Charles’s claim that Letty’s love is selfish, Blackburn makes one of his central revelations about her. She has used every wile and stratagem she knows (including even hypnosis!) to get him into her power. Yet her emphatic rejection of his accusation carries such a note of passionate conviction that the reader shares Charles’s credulity at this point. And surely this is Blackburn’s wish: she is, from one point of view, a ‘man-eating Siren’ (240); from another, however, she is totally devoted to him. The mixture of possessive scheming and genuine love in her actions is the complexity that Blackburn offers as a way of representing the effect of racial branding upon a lively, passionate and ambitious personality. There are no over-simplifications, no sentimental erasures in this novel.

Two characters, the magistrate Clegson and Ella King, Letty’s rival for the love of Charles, are offered as examples of opposite possibilities for white racists. Clegson becomes increasingly mean and sly in his vengeful pursuit of Letty. Her sudden intervention, which prevents Clegson from continuing with a merciless sjambokking of her black brother (269–271), is thus amongst
her most admirable actions; desire for power unites here with her finer sym-
pathies rather than with vengeful feeling. Ella’s plan to have Clegson publicly
sjambokked for his malicious spreading of gossip about Charles is highly
ironic. For Ella, erstwhile ‘champion of the “white” side’ (206), undergoes a
kind of conversion from racism as a result of her love and respect for Charles,
even leading her to show pity and kindness to Letty whom she formerly cas-
tigated as ‘only a Kafir’ (189). Part of the irony arises from the fact that,
whereas Ella’s earlier desire was to have Letty flogged, her wrath has now
turned on the corrupted representative of colonial justice. More tellingly
still, Ella has in effect joined the side of the black rebels in her open defiance
of a magistrate.

Blackburn does not invent or reshape Bambatha Rebellion events, nor
does he try to insert a solid historical package to give authenticity to his
novel. Apparently free from anxiety or tension about the possibility of an
actual black rising, his imagination can work on the deeper social and psycho-
logical issues at work in such events. Free too from the kind of worldly sanc-
tioning of dubious business practices in which Mitford indulges, Blackburn’s
searing critique takes account of every shade of venality, offering no character
protection or connivance. Whereas Mitford and Nicholls do show equivocal
enlightenment about the feelings and concerns of blacks, Blackburn comes
closest to a resonatingly imaginative and historical grasp of his society’s
flawed nature. That his insight should be inseparable from sardonic irony,
and even cynicism, is perhaps a measure of his despair at the deliberate perpe-
tuation of evasive racist stereotypes amongst South African whites.

Conclusions

The paramount concern of most writers analysed in this chapter is the threat
posed by the Bambatha Rebellion to the white ruling class. Blackburn is the
significant exception with his pervasively ironic sense of a flawed society, and
his attempt to subvert all stock white assumptions.

Some curious manoeuvering is required in order for writers to represent
the threat as powerfully as possible while, on the other hand, safeguarding the
notion of white superiority. Blackburn, while refusing to support this myth,
shows its powerful, insidious effect through the craving of Letty Bandusa to
be regarded as white. Buchan and Nicholls, who both extend the scale of the
rebellion to an imagined countrywide rising, emphasise in various ways their
belief in the inferior intelligence of blacks in general: in both these cases the
rebellion leaders (Laputa and Nelson respectively) are unique and so, once

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eliminated, the threat is safely dissipated. Apart from this stress on the exceptional mental capacities of such men, an added element in the writers’ veiled racism is the danger or futility of Western education for the black mind. Whether tribal culture is condemned (as by Morewood) or affirmed (as by Mitford), the basic assumption of white cultural superiority persists.

Two specially insidious weapons are available to fortify any gaps in white rationalising constructions: the idea that blacks will seek to achieve a ‘blacks-only’ Africa; and the phobic dread of cross-racial sex. This second weapon, the alternative form of ‘black peril’, spectacularly overrides passionate notions of justice in of Nicholls and Hardy. Blackburn’s provocative reply to the double peril onslaught is to make his black rebel leader a woman who actively, imperiously and even ruthlessly, seeks to keep a white man in her power.

Given the predilection of most writers surveyed, it is hardly surprising that they should in general support the use of violence against the rebels. Most enthusiastic in handling bloodthirsty revenge tactics are Westrup, Buchan and Mitford; most grudging in this respect is Nendick Paul. Invariably the blacks’ violence is so barbaric and atrocious as to merit consummate retaliation, thus simultaneously sustaining the belief in white superiority and supremacy. Morewood, who is in theory opposed to all violence, keeps a safe distance from the event of the rebellion itself, so that in effect only tribal violence is highlighted. Hardy, still in the early stage of his novel, is exceptional in showing the rebels as incited by bullying police intervention. Blackburn, like Morewood, avoids the representation of documented historical episodes but, unlike her, creates situations where the violence of the master race is exposed either to be thwarted, or to have its reversal contemplated.

One of the most intriguing aspects of several rebellion novels involves the speeches made by rebel leaders to their followers. Here my expectation of the uplifting and enlightening power of imagination has in some measure been fulfilled. Attwell, Buchan and Nicholls (with increasing degrees of intensity) all reveal, through these necessarily persuasive harangues, impressive awareness of blacks’ grievances. Blackburn, while sideling the historical crises, employs his entire representation of Letty Bandusa to keep such grievances in the forefront of his readers’ attention. A comparison between her role and that of Buchan’s Laputa – since both are claimed to constitute the rising – reveals just how vigorously ironic a challenge Blackburn poses to white establishment views. Some novelists – Westrup, Baker, Morewood – make a perfunctory acknowledgment of black grievances which enables them to continue grinding their respective axes, apparently without undue qualms of conscience. Hardy, whose indictment of the colonial administra-
tion's role in the crisis is the most vehement of all, then allows his zest for justice to be submerged beneath a tide of sex-directed black peril.

By and large the leaders, either a representation of the historical Bambatha himself, or magnified versions of him (such as Nelson), are granted a considerable degree of agency. The hypnotic power of Nelson and Laputa of course works to prevent their followers from having much agency themselves. Accordingly there are few non-dissident black characters. Exceptions are Baker’s heroic, self-sacrificing Papalata, and Mitford’s enigmatic saviour figures or loyal chiefs (who are represented in an unsentimental, non-imperialist fashion). Mitford is also unique in the degree of agency which he grants to the individual black chief, Sapazani, who is allowed not only to interrogate a magistrate, but to be given the upper hand in their interchange. However, as soon as Sapazani’s agency, undiminished as a force, turns towards rebellion, the legitimacy of his standpoint is rapidly cancelled. Mitford, Buchan and Nicholls all steadily erode the possibility of widespread agency on the part of black rebel participants through the device of Ethiopian agitators. This distinguishes them from a writer like Westrup, in whose eyes black barbarism is so rampant as to require no special extra provocation. Hardy’s case, however, shows that a novelist’s contrived inclusion of agitators is not necessarily evidence of latent sympathy for blacks; in his narrative of the early rebellion incidents the blacks are fully justified in their reaction, and require no stirring up by an external force. Blackburn’s Letty Bandusa is very much an agent in her own right, though the authorial, sardonic irony — perhaps his boldest heresy — minimises the possibility of agency on the part of her lover.

While Blackburn questions all stock white assumptions, and suggests through Ella King that racists can be converted, he offers no idealised future via the relationship of Letty and Charles Robson. Nevertheless, this kind of cross-race relationship, fraught with problems as it is in their society, clearly marks a path forward, given the context of greater freedom and tolerance provided by a quasi-cosmopolitan environment such as Johannesburg. Westrup’s desired society is an unquestioning endorsement of colonial administration, with blacks firmly and mercilessly put back into their supposedly inferior places. Somewhat less harsh is Buchan’s view of re-affirmed white authority — he allows for a limited form of educational training to be given to blacks. Morewood and Paul sidestep political issues by advocating purportedly Christian religious enlightenment for blacks, though the framework of such endeavours is implicitly white trusteeship. Attwell and Hardy, whose imaginations are much disturbed by the thought of cross-racial sex, cling helplessly to the flimsy philosophy of segregation, but steadfastly avoid any ex-
ploration of its practical implications (a precedent much to be imitated over the succeeding decades). While Nicholls creates a vague impression that fundamental reforms for blacks are required to prevent any such vast rising as his plot entails, the main impression of the novel is the need for white vigilance, especially in relation to sexual border crossing. Beyond the quelling of dissidence, Mitford’s vision would seem to include a sort of healthy mutual respect between the races that would foster thriving trade with minimal administrative interference. The bottom line of course, though never too rigorously inspected, is that whites must remain dominant.
CHAPTER 2

Frances Bancroft, *An armed protest* (1918)
Leigh Thompson, *The lion and the adder* (1918)
F Mills Young, *The shadow of the past* (1919)
Stephen Black, *The dorp* (1920)
Norman Giles, *Rebels in the sun* (1935)

THE BOER REBELLION (1914)

My concern in this chapter is a group of five novels that involve the Boer Rebellion of 1913–1914 as a significant facet of their plots. In chronological order the novels are *An armed protest* by Frances Bancroft (1918); *The lion and the adder* by Leigh Thompson (1918); *The shadow of the past* by F Mills Young (1919); *The dorp* by Stephen Black (1920) and *Rebels in the sun* by Norman Giles (1935).

Part of my task will be to show how these five white writers construct and interpret the Boer Rebellion, and what its significance is within their fictional projects. By and large I shall show how they share some measure of keenness to regard the Boer Rebellion as a serious obstacle to the white-dominated South Africa they favoured in their present. However, I shall also observe the degree to which their recreation of the Boer Rebellion leads the writers (within the scope of the novels) to at least some awareness of the gap between the actual and the ideal society which I have outlined in the Introduction. As already indicated in the Introduction, this chapter is the only one in which I
have used a thematic mode to engage in comparison of the selected group of novels.

**Contextualisation**

Certain historical details need to be conveyed at this preliminary stage although, as I have already indicated in the Introduction, it is not part of my task to reach any conclusive interpretation of the events. My sources of historical information are as follows (in alphabetical order): T R H Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history* (1977); J D Omer-Cooper, *History of Southern Africa*

*Generals Botha, De la Rey and Botha (photographed on their way to England after the Anglo-Boer War)*
On 4 August 1914 Britain declared war against Germany. Only on 8 September, however, did the South African prime minister, Louis Botha, decide that his country would enter the war on the side of Britain. His fellow Anglo-Boer War hero, Koos De la Rey, had already summoned a mass meeting of burghers in the Transvaal with the aim of seizing control and declaring an Afrikaner republic. Although Botha thought he had talked De la Rey out of this plan, leading officers of the Defence Force (including Beyers, Kemp, Maritz and De Wet), secretly in league with De la Rey, planned a mid-September takeover. First the Transvaal and then the Free State were to be re-declared republics. The government agreement to Britain's request to invade German South West Africa created the appropriate opportunity for the plan to go ahead. By a strange twist of fate the coup had to be abandoned when De la Rey was accidentally killed in a roadblock intended to intercept a gang of robbers. The later defiance of Maritz in crossing over to the German side in GSWA, together with 500 men, and De Wet's calling up of the Free State commandos for armed rebellion finally led Botha to take decisive action. By 16 November he had virtually succeeded in crushing the rebellion; De Wet was captured on the Bechuanaland border, Beyers drowned in the Vaal, Kemp surrendered and Maritz fled to Angola.

Sandra Swart, in her paper 'A conservative revolution: republican masculinity and the 1914 Boer Rebellion', notes that there is still little consensus surrounding interpretation of the Boer Rebellion: "[A]ssessments range from
seeing the event as a fratricidal conflict to one of the most significant events in the history of the Afrikaner volk’ (1997:1). Amongst the ways in which it has been understood she lists opposition to the government’s decision to enter into World War I; opposition to the government’s proposed expedition to GSWA; a demonstration of bitterness over Hertzog’s exclusion from the Cabinet; and a desire for the return of republican government.

Given the potential range of interpretations as suggested by Swart, interpretations which of course involve a good deal of overlap, I deliberately leave as open as possible the question of a fully reliable record of the event and an interpretation of it. However, I do enter as far as possible into an exploration of ways in which these novels correspond to the accounts I have read. Since I make use mostly of prominent elements common to such accounts, I hope to have minimised the danger of exploring the fictional representations in relation to erroneous accounts.

The novels

Frances Bancroft and Stephen Black are probably the best known of this group of novelists. I have already referred in the Introduction to Bancroft’s first novel, *Of like passions* (1907). It was followed by a series of four novels concerned with the divided loyalties caused by the Anglo-Boer War. Stephen Gray introduced Black to South African literary criticism through comparison of his play *Love and the hyphen* (1908) with Andrew Geddes Bain’s *Kaatje kekkelbek* (1838) (Gray 1979). *The dorp* is one of two novels written by Black, a Cape Town sports and crime reporter before he formed his own touring repertory company. F E Mills Young, a prolific writer of novels (often two a year), was fond of bringing contemporary events into her plots. Leigh Thompson’s earlier novel, *Fate’s high chancery* (1916), concerns a man whose early childhood life amongst Hottentots deeply affects him as an adult. The presence of a trustworthy Hottentot voorloper in *The lion and the adder* suggests that Thompson himself may have had experiences like those of his earlier protagonist, but of his actual life I have so far discovered nothing. Information about Norman Giles (a pseudonym for N McKeown), who wrote several novels in the late twenties and thirties, will be found in the biographical appendix (B).

The one feature these writers have in common is a wish to promote the unity of whites, English and Afrikaners, in South Africa. One realises through these novels how grave a threat the Boer Rebellion posed to the recently
forged ‘Union’. Virtual or complete neglect of the reality of the population of the country emphasises, however, how artificial was the general white conception of unity. In proportion to the concern with union is the almost pervasive support for General Botha, who tends to be sentimentally idealised. Mills Young in particular has nothing but approval for him. Through her favoured characters she holds that Botha will be ‘equal to dealing with [the rebellion]’ (191). ‘Work[ing] unselfishly for the country’s welfare’ (240), he can be relied on as a man with a “great nature” to be both “generous” and “impartial” towards the rebels (314). Giles’s focus is entirely on an Afrikaans community and he is furthest in time from the establishment of union; nevertheless he shares the adulation of three of the other novelists for Botha’s wish to unite the white ‘races’. Rendering the thoughts of his protagonist, Kaspar de Buis, he emphasises that Botha is ‘no less a patriot than De la Rey or De Wet’, and that he should therefore receive ‘the unstinted support of every right man, be he English or be he Dutch’ (73).

Bancroft, on the contrary, views the leaders on both sides somewhat more dispassionately. Her heroine’s mentor, Mrs Sadler, explains sympathetically why General de la Rey and his burghers regard the German South-West Campaign as ‘in part a war upon their own kinsmen’ (152). Later Mrs Sadler speaks of Beyers and Smuts, Minister of Defence at the time, as being ‘at one another’s throats’, and thinks with pity of how the ‘ignorant’ people of the country are being misled by ‘firebrands’ (173). Furthermore, no rejoinder is offered to a rebel Boer wife who claims that the real reason for the GSWA raid is ‘to steal land’ (194).

By and large, ignorance is regarded as the main reason for the difference between the two types of Afrikaner, ‘verlig’ and ‘verkrampt’ (the rebels). Even Bancroft places a fair amount of emphasis on the idea of ‘ignorant back-veldt Boers’ (206). The fuelling of feelings of revolt by bitterness against the English is an ingredient in all the novels. However, the scope given by Bancroft and Mills Young to this aspect prevents their assessment of the situation from having the overtone of contempt for ignorance which is strongly present in Thompson’s and Giles’s works. Black’s satirical eye pounces on prejudice as a pervasive phenomenon in the society, though, as I shall demonstrate, his vision involves more hope for the younger citizens.

The chief symbolic strategy by which three of these novelists promote English-Afrikaans unity is through love and marriage between members of each group. This makes, of course, for a potentially useful commercial mix of war and romance genres. The rebellion itself is in fact given little direct representation (with the exception of certain episodes in Thompson’s and Giles’s
The largely domestic settings thus allow for maximum development of intimate love relationships. In each of these cases the man is English, the woman, Afrikaans; an implicit sexism seems to be at work here, the male representing the culture which the author regards as superior. In *The lion and the adder* Leigh Thompson uses an extraordinary device to win the sympathy of an Afrikaans farming couple, Jacoba and Herman Van Dekken, for Jocelyn Sackvill, the young Englishman to whom an accident of fate makes them virtually obliged to offer temporary accommodation. Although he and their niece, Nonnie, fall in love with speed and ease, Jocelyn only wins Nonnie’s relatives over through sustained kindness to Ki, their crippled daughter, who claims that before Sackvill’s arrival she experienced no joy. Eventually her bigoted mother, Jacoba, is led to exclaim: ‘Englishman! I hate your country, but we don’t hate all of you as individuals’ (177).

In *The shadow of the past* Mills Young, though following the formula of romance between Englishman and Afrikaans woman in terms of the broader scope of the plot, gives much sympathy to the passionate bitterness of Honor, the younger daughter in an Afrikaans farming family, with whom the protagonist, Guy Matheson, falls in love. This bitterness, however – the ‘shadow of the past’ of the title – is an obstacle so serious as to cause Guy to return to Brenda Upton, his English woman friend in Cape Town, and to marry her, though still very much in love with Honor. Although Mills Young leaves the reader in no doubt that she does not side with the rebel Afrikaners, her treatment of them differs markedly from that of Thompson. Honor’s arguments are allowed enough scope to convince one of her assertion that she is led by ‘patriotism and a hatred of injustice’ (159). The repeated image of the past as a shadow over the land becomes a sombre motif; for Matheson it overshadows the brightness of Honor’s being but impels him at least to try to understand her point of view. Although she never wins his agreement with her cause, she leads him to develop a politically committed consciousness. The situation thus differs markedly from that of Thompson’s hero, Sackvill, who is ever the patient, wise Englishman with nothing to learn, only the virtues of the English to bestow.

Giles’s version of this romantic device, with its implied sexism, works in another way. At the centre of his novel is Sara, Irish wife of an Anglo-Boer War hero, Kaspar de Buis. Her enthusiastic support of the Irish rebellious anti-English spirit makes her initially an uncritical defender of the Boer rebel cause. The major action of this novel thus concerns the lesson she and certain of her more naive neighbours have to learn about the kind of spirit actually impelling the Boer Rebellion (in Giles’s view – basically, rape and
pillage). The wider implication of this lesson, of course, is a vindication of Botha’s resorting to force against the rebels. As the Deputy Minister of Defence in the novel explains to Kaspar: ‘Clemency is General Botha’s watchword, but the stiff behaviour of the rebels has made it hard to pursue’ (125). Sara’s friends believe that she married Kaspar de Buis because he fought against the English, and when she quarrels with her husband because of his reluctance to join the present rebels, she reminds him: ‘[Y]ou fought to retain [your independence] and you gave your blood, Kaspar, so that the foreigner might not desecrate the sacred soil’ (57). Giles’s plot includes Sara’s countryman, ‘Natius Doyle, a German agent, who has come to hide at the De Buis’s farm. ’Natius believes that the republic is on its way, and moreover that Sara could light the torch of rebellion. Great is his vexation that neither Ireland nor South Africa seems ready to take the opportunity to destroy England provided by the outbreak of the war in Europe. Sara and Kaspar argue about Botha’s policy because in her view he has asked them to kill their own brethren (70). In his view she refuses to admit that ‘we owe even the chance to rebel to the good heart of the English people’ (108). Their quarrel eventually reaches such a pitch that parting seems the only option; she is to return to Dublin, he to oppose the rebels. However, their friends in the neighbouring village, distressed at the apparent wreck of what is regarded as an inspiring marriage, prevent separation at the eleventh hour.

In the case of Bancroft – the one novelist in the group who promotes women’s rights and who also has a good deal of antipathy towards the British government – the genders are reversed; thus we have a South African English-speaking woman and an Afrikaans man as the focal couple in love. Mrs Sadler, who first introduced the heroine, Heather Gamble, to the pacifist movement in England, preaches vigorously that ‘War is eternally war: a sin against God, a crime against humanity!’ (46). Although Mrs Sadler has sympathy for the rebels, she does not allow this feeling to modify her pacifist-cum-feminist indignation. More significantly still, Heather decides that she will not marry the Afrikaner Garth Schultz, although they love each other, but asks him instead to join her in making themselves willing sacrifices to the pacifist cause. Garth at first understandably hates this cause but the combined fervour of Heather and her author lead him ultimately to conversion, or, as it is termed in the novel, the ‘hour of enlightenment’ (271).

Apart from Bancroft, the novelists tend to have fairly balanced sympathies for the English and the anti-rebellion (or ‘verlig’) Afrikaners. Although Mills Young allows the enterprise of empire-building to be questioned, full support is registered for Matheson’s secondary wish to reconcile Boer and
Briton. The 'lion' and the 'adder' of Thompson's title are derived from the psalm quotation which the predikant uses to stir up revolutionary feeling in his people: 'Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder ... the day of our deliverance is at hand ... is it not to be interpreted that it is the British Lion that you shall trample upon and the adder is surely the false Afrikaner, who has turned his fangs upon our faithful leader General Herzog, and cast him out of the cabinet' (86–89). The rebels, however, receive no sympathy from Thompson; we are invited instead to admire their lone opponent, Oom Gert Thuys, who tries to convince a gathering of rebels that they are being duped by the dreams of the false prophet, Van Rensburg, 'into bloodshed against their own folk' (92). The promise of a fanatic, Van Erck, that Germany will give the Afrikaners the independence of the former republics, turns out to have far more sway than Thuys's warning, and he is eventually forced to leave, more or less branded as an adder. Thompson's anti-rebel sentiment actually prompts him to a bold inclusion of historical figures within his fiction.5 General de Wet's visit to Vrede, at one stage centre of the rebellion, allows the author to create an increasingly damaging account of the Boer leader's tendencies. His armed forces assault the postmaster and smash the telegraph machine which had been used to send out a message of loyal opposition, and the reluctant magistrate is forced to attend De Wet's meeting. Most effective of all is the device of having a member of the crowd offer a running and scathing commentary on De Wet's speech. De Wet is made to seem particularly contemptible by publicly repudiating the magistrate and meanly using this opportunity to vindicate himself from a charge of 'beating a native boy' (257); by denouncing the 'unholy scandal' of Botha's government; and by ordering the shopkeepers to open their shops to supply his men free of charge with every possible need (258). In such a context the capture of De Wet can be regarded as a timely end to a scoundrel's activities. Beyers's flight and drowning are even more openly the subject of scorn.

Giles, who needs to engage the reader for part of the novel with Sara de Buis's pro-rebellion stance, ultimately spares nothing in his virulent repudiation of the rebel cause. Thus the climax of the commandeering process undertaken by local rebel leader, Gert Losper, is his attempt to rape Sara in her own house. At first she had been ecstatic at his threat to take her with them, gleefully informing him that Kaspar will not pay for her release (184) — all this handled in Giles's fairly pervasive semi-comic mode. The attempt by her admirer, Bart Radyn, to warn her of Losper's likely plan is in vain. Of course Sara has to learn a lesson not only about the rebels but about her dangerous tendency to play on the passions of men, and Giles, who has thoroughly en-
joyed tantalising his readers throughout the novel with the possible con­sequences of Sara's indiscreet behaviour, derives equal relish from subjecting her to a severe moral shock. Losper has argued for his right to the treacherous Kaspar's money and his wife, and proceeded to undress. Since the police arrive just in time to make it impossible for Losper to concentrate on his victim, helpless in her bed, Sara can learn her doubly bitter lesson without too much disturbance to the comic mode. In the process Giles can have his anti-rebel cake and eat it with a subtly anti-feminist icing.

Black's novel, *The dorps*, metes out equally satirical treatment to both Afrikaner factions, the 'Sappers' and the 'Nats', in this community, ironically called 'Unionstad'. Like almost all the white inhabitants in general, both sides are guilty of meanness, hypocrisy, double standards, economic greed, pretensions and ignorance. The novel begins with their hostility, and scarcely a page passes without further mockery of its ostensibly trivial and ridiculous nature. Chief basis of Black's satire is that the factions are in fact only superficially different: in the town council Nat motions are scarcely distinguishable in content from those of their rivals. The rebellion splits these factions apart more widely, but when the election occurs, the mayor and deputy mayor are simply reversed. When the Sappers are convinced that the predikant had worked against them in the pre-election phase, they simply boycott the evening service. The chief excitement for the dorp then turns out to be the struggle between the predikant's supporters and opponents.

Only two Afrikaners stand out from this general moral slackness: Huysman, the verlig government visitor to the town, and Anita van Ryn, the Nationalist mayor's daughter, whose fervent hope is that 'a great Afri­kander [sic] will one day rise with a genius for peace instead of politics or war' (61). The community expect this to be a match but Anita's predilection for the young Englishman, Ned Oakley, wins the day. Ned, like Anita, is somehow strangely exempt from the surrounding folly and corruption, but Black's pro-English streak shows through in that Ned's father, though prejudiced against Afrikaners, has some redeeming features which raise him marginally above the level of the other whites.

Black's plot emphasises the inextricable economic links between the Afrikaners and the English (not to mention other groups). Observing how his father's trade is declining, Ned persuades Anita's father to buy the shop — yet Van Ryn actually makes it a condition that Ned should stay on as assistant. Convinced, like Ned, that the Boers are destroying themselves, Anita tells her father that the Afrikaners should not blame the English for their problems. She tries to persuade him that the government had to suppress the rebellion

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(which occurs completely offstage in this novel). On one occasion Van Ryn admits that she is right but ‘bitterly reproached General Botha for taking the field in khaki’ thus proving ‘himself to be an Englishman at heart’! (77). In any case he continues to blame Oakley for all his troubles and reveals open sympathy for the rebels at the expense of his own trade. The rival groups of Afrikaners actually go to opposite sides of his store: Nats to the left and Sappers to the right.

As part of Giles’s strategy in *Rebels in the sun* to engage the reader with Sara de Buis’s passion for rebellion, he creates an initial impression of being anti-English. Certainly the sub-plot, involving an English detective who has come to the De Buis’s farm in search of stolen diamonds (purportedly used for Sinn Fein funds), and deviates at no stage from this pursuit despite the impending rebellion, does nothing to promote support for the English. But presumably Giles is making a concerted attempt to woo English-speaking readers to awareness of the complexities of Afrikaner allegiances (and the period preceding publication of this novel in 1935 did involve something like the 1913 cleavage in the Afrikaner community). Thompson is the most consistently pro-English of these novelists: when Sackvill ventures to implore the assembled crowd in Vrede that they are being tricked by the rebels, he is given a preposterously jingoistic speech: ‘England has always tried to play the game to the races that live under the flag ... Englishmen do wrong, but Britain tries to do her best’ (233).

Bancroft is the most forcefully anti-English of these novelists in the political sense; although she is intent on promoting pacifism, her novel involves the largest measure of sympathy for the Boer rebels. There is no sympathy for the other side, however. Indeed it is England which is held, through its influence, to have driven the Afrikaner rebels to political desperation, and – the analogy which drives the plot – it is an Englishman who has driven the heroine, Heather Gamble, to marital desperation. Her chauvinist husband, Captain Jermyn of the British army, is shown to be despicable in his manipulativeness, obduracy and treacherous hypocrisy. These qualities are naturally also crucial in relation to Bancroft’s quasi-feminist perspective.

Although the Boer Rebellion might well have been linked with the possibility of black rebellion, these novelists are fairly resolute in their apparent myopia concerning such an event, not to mention the presence of blacks in general. In the cases of Leigh Thompson and Mills Young, the few non-whites and non-‘coloureds’ given space in their novels prove, at times of crisis, to be conveniently intent on loyally rescuing their white masters. Sackvill’s devoted Hottentot ‘voorloper’, Nootje, inspires Nonnie to sing the
praises of his people: ‘[T]hey know more about the veld herbs and remedies that lie in our plants and roots than we do who have lived in Africa more than three hundred years’ (59–60). Similarly, in The shadow of the past Butter Tom, a black servant, is dutifully on hand to save Matheson’s life from the ruthless verkramptes.

In Matheson’s argument with Honor about what Britain has done for South Africa, he makes the promising comment: ‘There’s always injustice where the interests of races conflict. If one went back far enough, I imagine one would find the greatest injustice has been meted out to the natives’ (83). Matheson’s favouring of what he refers to as ‘race preservation’ is clearly meant by the author to be an enlightened idea, yet on consideration it does not differ greatly from Honor’s brother’s confident belief that ‘European principles don’t apply in South Africa’ (176). Honor, dismayed by her neighbour’s rabid anti-English stance, comes closer than at any point to siding with Matheson, and the formulation at this point suggests authorial backing: ‘Guy Matheson [in Honor’s view] had summed up the situation correctly: the country was governed for the benefit of the white races impartially and for the good of the native community’ (302). However, the earlier hint of injustice to the ‘native races’ is not allowed to intrude at this more precarious point, and indeed Butter Tom’s driving of Matheson to safety acts as a safe exit from the novel of any further thought of blacks.

Bancroft, on the other hand, reveals her awareness of the likelihood of black rebellion when she allows an Afrikaans character to object to Botha’s policy of sending the army into German South West Africa on account of the consequent vulnerability of South Africa to attack from within by its blacks. The point is not enlarged upon elsewhere, though, and in terms of the overall effect of the novel is simply submerged beneath Bancroft’s over-riding pacifist propagandism. Certainly no hint is offered which would extend the analogy that has been set up between Heather’s right to protest and that of the Boer rebels. As Corder notes in her thesis: ‘Typical among white middle-class feminists, Bancroft’s dissenting politics did not embrace all races’ (1995:27). Speculation about black rebellion does not enter the mind of Giles or his characters at any stage. Indeed blacks might almost seem not to exist in his construction of South Africa in 1914, whereas in his later novel, Jim Crow’s brethren (1932), he attempts, even if rather lukewarmly, to heed their concerns. Stephen Black’s saving grace is actually to represent the myopic state within his novel. Only Ned Oakley and Huysman acknowledge that South Africa’s black population is five times as large as the white. It is interesting that each produces the statistic for Anita’s information, in order to foster a ‘black peril’
kind of consciousness. Ned raises the question of white unity by implication, but Huysman states quite explicitly: ‘Our people will realise their danger one day... very suddenly, and draw together’ (204). When the mayor, Van Ryn, is robbed by blacks (in chapter 9, pointedly entitled ‘A hint from the black majority’), he is too obsessed with hostility towards that ‘verdomde Engelsman’, Oakley, to take in the implications of this other threat. The culmination of the chapter is an intimate dialogue, unique in this novel, between Grietje, Van Ryn’s cook, and Sara, his housemaid, in which it emerges that Sara’s lover must have been the thief. Sara feels that Grietje, who has been felled by the thief’s knobkerrie, should not have tried to stop him. Here, all too briefly, Black offers us a glimpse of a very different, shrewd world, a glimpse which needs to be related to another earlier, and even briefer moment in which the housemaid, standing outside the bioscope door, hopes that she will be admitted to stand at the back of the gallery for sixpence. But the development of Black’s plot and its culmination in the union of Ned Oakley and Anita Van Ryn suggests that the novelist preferred not to make too much of his recognition of the really significant rebellion for South Africa – given a minor satirical niche, it is not allowed to interfere with the need to retain the sympathy of his white readers.

Of all five novels Bancroft’s is the only one with vision enough to question ‘armed protest’ of any kind. Although she sets up a temporary analogy between the Boer protest and ways in which her heroine, Heather Gamble, tries to protest against her treatment by Captain Jermyn, the novel moves more and more resoundingly towards condemnation of violence even under the banner of war. Protest and rebellion are key terms in this novel; its driving force, however, is to stir up the earnest question, ‘[W]hat is going to be done to help women, to help nations – to get free of this never ending business of protest, ending in revolt, rebellion, war?’ (268) Heather’s new form of protest is therefore a combined feminist-pacifist revolt against the ‘conditions which made war possible for men, the conventions which made rebellion impossible for women’ (235).10

No pacifist philosophy lurks in Giles’s pages, although Kaspar de Buis is ultimately persuaded that he will do more good back on his farm persuading neighbours to abandon their pro-rebellion inclinations than by fighting in GSWA. Sara is shown to be misguided in her perception of the Boer rebellion, but Giles himself is, I would argue, deeply ambivalent in his treatment of the Irish spirit of resistance towards involvement in World War I. Certainly there is no attempt on Giles’s part to brand ’Natius Doyle and his compatriots as rogues of Gert Losper’s ilk.
Mills Young and Thompson betray allegiances and prejudices much more to be expected of writers who had the chance to compose novels towards the end of World War I. In Mills Young’s *The shadow of the past* the fictitious instigator of the Boer Rebellion is an unscrupulous, calculating German, Holman (disguised version of his real name, Holmann), who turns out later on to be married to Honor. Holmann had initially trapped the Englishman, Guy Matheson, through a gambling forfeit, into delivering a crucial letter to the rebels in the Krige’s farm area. When Matheson rediscovers Holmann in Johannesburg after his first visit to the Krige’s farm (and before Honor’s marriage), he accuses the German of ‘inciting the dissatisfied Boers to open rebellion’ (178). This enables Mills Young to endorse with vigour her thesis that the ‘verkrampf Afrikaners like Honor’s brother have made themselves vulnerable to dubious allegiances as a result of consuming hatred and bitterness. Two signs of hope in her bleak perspective are that Matheson makes his discovery about Holmann through an enlightened Afrikaner brother-in-law of Honor’s married sister; Honor herself makes valiant efforts to rescue Matheson from her husband’s vengeful machinations. The shadow of the past thus finally seems less oppressive through a partial fulfilment of the English-Afrikaner reconciliation which is at the heart of Mills Young’s project.

Leigh Thompson cunningly combines two prejudices by having as rebellion agitator a ‘coloured’ foreman, Albertus, who has German blood. As a direct consequence of his ostensibly depraved make-up (even the Hottentot Nootje calls him a ‘white kaffir’ (125)), Albertus is made to seem irredeemably villainous, devious, and vengeful. His cursed nature is demonstrated especially in his relentless pursuit of Nonnie, who, in the face of his threats, has temporarily to lie to Sackvill that she does not love him, and then go into hiding in Vrede. In the intricate final twists of the plot, after Albertus has located Nonnie, he has Sackvill — now a member of the Highveld sharpshooters helping the government troops to quell the rebellion — at his mercy. Instead of killing the wounded Sackvill, Albertus dabbles the Englishman’s wristwatch in his own blood promising to make it a gift to Nonnie on her wedding-night. Having no further need (or space) to prove Albertus’s dark malice, Thompson has only to engineer a most vile and degrading death for him. And who should be the author’s agents in this task but the loyal Hottentot and the Van Dekkens’ black servant, M’lalaba!

Possibly because of his distance in time from the events themselves, Giles rings the changes on Mills Young’s and Thompson’s use of treacherous German characters. Sara de Buis tries to enlist the help of Smit, their German
farm manager, in the Boer rebel cause since, in her eyes, he belongs to a ‘noble nation that is the best friend to every enemy England ever had’ (149). Much to her surprise and dismay, however, Smit beats the Botha-leagued-with-empire drum loud and clear: ‘These rebels are dirt – they are the ill-bred hound who snaps the hand of a generous master. To me such are vermin and, as I go after the jakkal who threatens the sheep, so would I destroy them’ (151). The remainder of the plot involves Giles’s resounding vindication of Smit’s case.

Black’s humorous attempt to convey something of the actuality of the mingled lives of whites and blacks in a small South African town reveals his capacity for a more comprehensive vision. His clever satirical touches include the newspaperman, O’Flinnigan, who cravenly seeks to please all parties in his paper: if he writes an article attacking the Nats, he follows it in the same issue with a disclaimer signed ‘Sapper’. His initially vociferous support of the Allied forces in the Great War has to be carefully modified when he realises how much pro-German feeling there is in the dorp. When sustained ambivalence on issues proves impossible, he goes on holiday. The only two who benefit from the Afrikaner dissension are the Jew, Schlimowitz, and the Indian, Mahomet, who promptly take advantage of the disarray to further their own business schemes. Pragmatism is always, in Black’s view, a powerful social agent. Boer customers are tempted into using Mahomet’s store because of the long wait they endure at Van Ryn’s; Mahomet treats his black customers as deferentially as whites – provided that whites are not present! Schlimowitz in the election promises both sides his vote, on condition that Mahomet’s application for ownership of a store is refused. No particular racial prejudice is involved in Schlimowitz’s scheming, however: he plans the defeat of Van Ryn with equal tenacity. Mahomet, knowing of Schlimowitz’s manoeuvres, promises to fly the Union Jack for ever in return for Thomas Oakley’s help. Such are Black’s tactics for keeping his distance from the rebellion, from World War I (including the German threat), and from the anxiety over union (somewhat like his own character, O’Flinnigan). Nonetheless, whether to sweeten his readers’ pill or not, the English-Afrikaner romance has a degree of affirmation which is withheld from virtually every other aspect of the society he observes.

What is remarkable, first, about this group of five novels is that, despite being popular romances, all have specific propagandistic aims. Those written nearest in time to the event (An armed protest, The lion and the adder) share a twin concern with the preservation of the union and with the repercussions of the World War. Since the novelists did not consider propaganda as inimical to their fictional writing, one can only lament that they lacked the insight or
nerve to promote a just and non-discriminatory society. Perhaps their publishers, who were more likely to have had a wider vision, should have encouraged or even demanded more signs of a shift away from racist consciousness. Since the majority of readers would most likely have been in Britain in any case, the loss of such an opportunity becomes still more remarkable and distressing. If Bancroft’s pacifism could have been acceptable to Hutchison publishers just when Britain was congratulating itself on its World War victory, it would seem that other unorthodox fictional positions could have been given scope.\textsuperscript{12} Equally well Stephen Black might have been prompted to pursue less bet-hedging manoeuvres, and to give challenging prominence to the lives and aspirations of the black citizens of Unionstad.

**Conclusions**

In the case of the writers surveyed, concern for English-Afrikaner unity prevents legitimacy being given to the Boer rebels (except for Bancroft whose animosity is directed against the British government). Support for Botha accordingly prevails, sometimes on a lavish scale. They are generally myopic about the possibility of black rebellion, although Stephen Black does offer a hint. No black characters appear in Giles’s and Bancroft’s novels in any case. Mills Young’s and Thompson’s blacks are the souls of loyalty to their white masters.

Bancroft’s novel is partly driven by a spirit of pacifism, but she is the only one to take up this issue. Yet, even in her case, the exigencies of the immediate situation make the use of arms an unavoidable necessity. As the rebellion in Black’s novel occurs offstage, he can mostly avoid the depiction of large-scale violence. For Thompson and Giles the unscrupulous behaviour of the rebels makes the use of arms against them imperative. The objections of Giles’s heroine to bloodshed are not part of a pacifist plea but a symptom of her general state of political confusion and delusion. When she eventually views the rebels through Giles’s lens, she is only too happy to be protected by arms.

An inclination to give credit to the rebels’ cause is a partial consequence of Bancroft’s sympathy with their anti-English bitterness. Her standpoint, as I have already suggested, is unique in this group. While Mills Young invites understanding of Afrikaner hatred, and indeed makes such enlightenment an essential aspect in the development of her protagonist, Matheson, she remains vigorously opposed to the rebel movement. In Black’s eyes both Afrikaner factions are culpable of all forms of vice, pretension and ignorance. The pro-
blem with the rebel supporters is their disruption to the cause of white solidarity. Thompson, on the other hand, portrays the rebels as foolish, headstrong and reprehensible; even the leader De Wet emerges as a contemptible scoundrel. Giles ultimately shares Thompson's view of the rebels, but reveals more awareness, as does Bancroft, of the difficulty within a small Afrikaner community of knowing which side to support.

Thompson invites admiration for Oom Thuys, apparently the one Afrikaner dissenter in his community. His brutal treatment by the rebel supporters evokes much sympathy. In Mills Young's novel the dissident neighbour is less conspicuously a lone pariah in a rebel area, but his life is clearly fraught with tension and danger. Her main concern, however, is with the possibility of her embittered heroine shifting to a more tolerant position. Giles offers the most forceful spokesperson for the loyalist position, Koos de Buis, even though the cards are already so firmly stacked, in terms of the author's overall representation, against the rebels.

Bancroft offers some suggestions of Boer rebels' ignorance but largely grants them more agency and legitimacy than any of the other writers. Mills Young's sympathy for the rebels because of the way they are trapped by the 'shadow of the past' is in direct proportion to her sensationalising of the German (Holmann's) instigating role. Even more lurid, and without Mills Young's sympathetic overtones for the duped, is Thompson's German/coloured agitator; one is made to feel that the bigots deserve him. Kaspar and Sara de Buis in Giles's novel are given much scope as agents even though she is finally shown to be deluded about the rebels. To some extent also, her agency is qualified because of the way she is vulnerable to 'Natius Doyle's exploitation of her for the Irish cause. The very notion of agency is problematic in Black's novel because so much prejudice and toeing of party lines abound, yet there are some saving exceptions, two 'verlig' Afrikaners and one young Englishman. In a world where pragmatic shrewdness counts for much, and legitimacy is therefore generally a moot point, Black makes it seem unsurprising that the Indian and Jewish businessmen should be at least ahead in the agency stakes.

The marriage of the young Englishman and Afrikaner woman in Black's and Thompson's novels are hints of what they would regard as a utopian future, though it is not at all clear how Ned and Anita in the former will confront that 'hint from the Black majority'. The acceptance by Honor, in The shadow of the past, of her lover's political perspective ('the country is governed for the benefit of the white races, and for the good of the native community'), provides the most formalised statement of a desired possibility
amongst these novelists. Their shifting towards more tolerant respect for each other's communities, along with the support for Botha's style of government, also involves the largest element of didactically articulated consensus attempted in these novels. Bancroft is the only one of the group who seeks a far-reaching utopian vision in promoting a pacifist, non-sexist world.