Blood, race and the construction of 'the coloured' in Sarah Gertrude Millin's God's Stepchildren

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Abstract
In this paper I attempt to look critically at the literary construction of one particular 'race', namely the 'Coloureds', in Sarah Gertrude Millin's God's Stepchildren. To this end, the paper draws on the historical background of Millin, and investigates the way in which Millin has consciously and strategically formed, as it were, a 'unique' Coloured identity. Furthermore, the paper explores the proximity or tension between author and narrator in the novel. This tension, I suggest, emerges in response to various pressures in the novel which in turn are based upon the author's social, political and economic background. Evidence to this effect is derived from Millin's biography and other sources. What emerges from the paper is that the concepts 'race' and 'Coloured', as they are employed in this novel, are equally elusive. In attempting to piece together a 'race', the novel communicates Millin's aversion to miscegenation, and discloses characteristics of her 'self'. Ironically, I conclude, she falls prey to the same kinds of prejudices that she projects onto her literary subjects.

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end, a sustained oratorial invective against racial mixing. Millin’s obsession with blood and its different qualities offers a range of different justifications. In God’s Stepchildren, published in 1924, Sarah Gertrude Millin wrote of the British attitude to the ‘colour problem’: … colour was so rare a thing [there] that it was only a matter of casual… This process is experimental and the keywords may be updated as the learning algorithm improves. This article was written by Dr David Rabkin as a chapter in an uncompleted study of South African fiction, before he was sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment in 1976 under the provisions of the South African ‘Terrorism Act’. He is serving his sentence in Pretoria Prison. The chapter has been very slightly edited by Arthur Ravenscroft for publication as an article. This is a preview of subscription content, log in to check access. Preview. Unable to display preview.