

only be destroyed by raising the condition of the black workers, rather than by combining against them.

The travels in writing the *Agrarian Problem* exposed MacMillan to what he called the 'poor-black' question, and led to his major work, *Complex South Africa* (1930) (p60), "a scholarly and passionate intervention against the segregationists". By now MacMillan had come to see that the solution to South Africa's problems lay in raising the condition of black workers. In *Complex South Africa* MacMillan wrote (p60):

"Colour may be a peculiar social complication, but is still only an accident, and in economics the blackness of the native makes no difference. The problem he represents is in essentials that of 'dilution', familiar enough to workers in Europe when the war brought about an invasion of the skilled engineering trades by women".

Krikler concludes this picture of MacMillan by analysing his writings about the 1919 and 1922 strikes on the Rand. MacMillan was strongly opposed to the 'Soviet' direction of the 1919 incidents, notwithstanding the follies of the City Council, which precipitated the strike. He consistently advocated moderation on both sides of the 1922 strike, and, unlike his friends, became neither a scab nor a special constable. "I knew that the best of the men had a case" (p63). Yet Krikler criticises MacMillan's writings on 1922 (p65):

"A gifted historian such as he should surely have perceived that an insurrectionary struggle cannot be explained by complaining of the implacability of the contending social forces that compose it....What made their clash so unremitting? An analysis of such questions was more likely to create the sympathy for the strikers which MacMillan, in his decency, sought to create. Such analysis, however, would have required an emphasis upon the essential class nature of the fateful combat of 1922. And it was precisely 'class struggle' from which MacMillan was taking flight".

In short, MacMillan's moderation prevented him from understanding the great social issues of his day. Just as one cannot be moderate about whether the earth is round or flat, a moderate, or classless, analysis of the 1922 revolt prevents historical understanding of that revolt. Similarly, no matter the degree of sympathy which MacMillan had for 'black' people, his racism in denying the (p70) "semi-barbaric masses a swamping vote" meant that he was politically the enemy of democracy.

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(no references supplied. Ed)

Malds and Madams. Domestic Workers Under Apartheid, Jacklyn Cock, The Women's Press, London, 1989 (rev) (206pp, £6.95 pbk).

In the wake of increased international interest in South Africa, the Women's Press of London has issued an updated and revised version of Jacklyn Cock's *Malds and Madams*. This volume has virtually become a classic of South African social science. Based on Cock's PhD research in the Eastern Cape in 1978-9, *Malds and Madams* forcefully depicts the lives of black women domestic workers under apartheid.

This work is representative of a range of writing by South African academics who are committed to the overthrow of the apartheid system. Cock makes no attempt to hide her bias in collating data from interviews with 175 domestic workers and 50 employers. Her research was "undertaken in the belief that sociologists in South Africa have a particular obligation to record the injustice and exploitation that surround us and of which we are all too often a contributing part". The main thrust of this work was not lost on at least some ultra rightwing white South Africans. *Maids and Madams* elicited a steady campaign of harassment of Cock. Attacks against the Witwaterstrand University lecturer culminated in late 1980 with a bundle of dynamite being thrown through her front window as she ate a late night dinner. Only a faulty fuse saved Ms Cock from the lot of other assassinated white South African intellectuals such as David Webster, Ruth First and Richard Turner.

Even ten years later there is much in this book that would anger a significant portion of the white population of South Africa. The power of this study lies in the repeated use of the voices of the domestic workers themselves. The sensitive rendering of the interview material was a product of Cock's diligence and the efforts of 'field worker' (co-author might be a better title) Nobengazi Mary Kota. Kota, herself a former domestic worker, did all the in depth interviews with the women. By dwelling on essential aspects of the domestic workers' existence, Cock and Kota have presented a grim portrait of the lives of these 'trapped' women labourers.

Perhaps the most compelling chapter is entitled "Deprivations". Here many workers reveal the intimate details of the oppressive routine apartheid has carved out for them:

"We leave our children early in the morning to look after other women's families and still they don't appreciate us" (p44).

"I never sleep at home with my husband and children. Even if I have a half day off, I have to come back and sleep at night" (p54).

"I don't have time for friends visiting" (p46).

Similarly telling were the responses the workers gave when asked to name the best thing about their job or employer (p55):

"There is nothing good to say. My job is hell".

"Perhaps that sometimes her daughter gives me a tip or a jersey but then my employer moans and says she is spoiling me".

"She swears at me in a polite kind of way".

"She does greet me in the mornings".

If the comments of workers seem to reveal an excessively negative picture of their employers, Cock's chronicling of employer responses hardly vindicates white 'bosses' and 'madams'. When asked to describe their workers, typical depictions were:

"An impossible thing, very self-willed, she is the first girl I've had that's gone to school...The completely raw ones are better (p113).

"She is all right as long as she doesn't drink out of my cups" (114).

"In Rhodesia (*sic*) a boy does three times the work these do" (119).

In addition, employers' general comments about black people often showed the most undiluted racist views (p140):

"They have got a long way to go in evolutionary terms. Putting them in European clothes doesn't make them civilised".

Through the extensive use of such excerpts from the interviews, Cock has produced a harsh yet readable indictment of the effects of apartheid on a major sector of the black workforce. This trimmed down version of the original has lost none of its strength. In fact the elimination of certain sections which focused on somewhat esoteric academic debates enhances the essential message of the author.

Yet for all its power, *Malds and Madams* has not completely stood the test of time. In the 1970s most writers on the South African experience were primarily concerned with showing the oppressive nature of the apartheid system. However, more recent scholarship has also embraced the various ways in which black people in general and workers in particular have resisted apartheid. Writers such as Van Onselen and Bozzoli of the Witwatersrand History Workshop, among others, have examined both trade union organisation and nonformal methods of worker resistance (such as theft, desertion, go-slows, and sabotage). By drawing attention to resistance, these authors have emphasised that black workers are far more than passive victims of an apartheid system.

Cock's work does not give us this fighting side of the domestic worker. She has tried to address this problem by adding a short chapter entitled "Struggles". This briefly describes the role of the domestic workers union during the 1980s. But "Struggles" seems cursory. While domestic workers have become somewhat unionised, their organisation has hardly approached that of the metalworkers or mineworkers. Much more important than formal union resistance are the informal ways in which domestic workers resist their oppression. In fact, the domestic workers' environment presents a wide variety of opportunities for such informal resistance - from the classic 'borrowing' of large quantities of sugar to wearing the madam's best dress to a wedding and sneaking it back into the wardrobe on Monday morning. In her excessive focus on the oppressive nature of labour under apartheid, Cock has omitted another important side of the work experience of the women she and Kota interviewed.

In addition, Cock's main concern here is with race and gender. While the position of the South African domestic work force is largely conditioned by these two factors, the writer has avoided giving much weight to class. As we are hopefully near the downfall of the apartheid regime, one wonders if black women domestic workers will fare much better under a majority rule government. If Zimbabwe is anything to go by, there is little reason to think that rule by the ANC or some coalition of forces will spell total liberation for domestic workers. Cock could have given us a hint of things to come by including in her sample some black households which employed domestic workers.

In spite of these shortcomings, Jacklyn Cock's *Malds and Madams* remains a masterpiece of both research rigour and political commitment. She and Kota deserve to be commended and creatively emulated by other social scientists who share their concern to eliminate race, gender and class inequalities.

Reviewed by John Pape, Harare.

References

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