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IMPERIAL SPLENDOR: DIAMONDS, COMMODITY CHAINS, AND CONSUMER
CULTURE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

BY

DANIELLE C KINSEY

DISSERTATION

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Antoinette M Burton, Chair
Professor Kristin Lee Hoganson
Associate Professor Tony J Ballantyne
Associate Professor Dana Rabin

Abstract

This dissertation examines the meaning of diamonds in imperial Britain in the nineteenth century and how Britain's involvement in diamond commodity chains across the century informed metropolitan consumers' conception of and desire for diamond jewelry. It argues that knowledge about the conditions of production in colonial spaces and supply to the metropole increased diamond appreciation and, ultimately, consumption of diamond jewelry by white, middling- and upper-class Britons. Though predicated upon a useless luxury commodity, when economic depression struck in 1873, the diamond market remained relatively buoyant, thus enabling the growth of production and distribution monopolies in southern Africa and Europe. This fairly consistent consumer demand occurred because, increasingly, diamonds were associated with the maintenance of imperialism and white privilege. To own and wear diamonds was to proclaim one's cultural enfranchisement in late Victorian society on a global scale, not only in terms of class but gender and race ideology as well. Victorians knew about the rise of the De Beers monopoly, the brutal control the Company exercised over its workforce and the trade, and condoned it – thus, in a time of depression, the monopolization of the diamond market was an apparent guarantee to the “haves” that they need not find themselves in the “have-not” category in myriad ways.

This work is based on a wide range of British newspapers and jewelry trade periodicals, particularly *Jeweller and Metalworker*, archival work done in the Birmingham City Archives on the Birmingham Jewellers' and Silversmiths' Association, the papers of Joseph Chamberlain (University of Birmingham) and Cecil Rhodes (Rhodes House, Oxford), the records of the East India Company (British Library), travelogues of Britons in Brazil, and records on aesthetics and

natural history consulted at the Natural History Museum Archives and the Archive of Art and Design at the V&A Museum (London).

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Introduction: Historicizing Commodity Chains and the Meanings of Production in Imperial Consumer Culture

In 1813, the British geologist and jeweler John Mawe confessed: “There are few things in the history of the human race that at first sight appear so remarkable as the prodigious value which...has been attached to the Diamond. That a house with a large estate...should be set in competition with a transparent crystallized stone not half the size of a hen’s egg seems almost a kind of insanity.”¹ Adam Smith made a similar comment in *Wealth of Nations* (1783) and Karl Marx would reiterate the sentiment in the 1840s: why would a *thing* requiring exorbitant measures to produce and having virtually no practical use be appreciated in "the West," self-styled to be the world's arbiter of rationality, high capitalism, and progress? Interrogating this kind of insanity by looking at diamond appreciation and the diamond trade is the project of this dissertation.

In the nineteenth century, the global supply of diamonds – and the diamond commodity chains that facilitated this supply – underwent massive changes that affected not only the number of diamonds available to consumers but what diamonds and diamond jewelry meant to those consumers. Through it all, Britain stood at the center of the trade, the edifices of British imperialism in many instances facilitating the growth and maintenance of diamond commodity chains until, by the end of the century, London stood as the guarantor of diamond wealth the world over, the base of rough diamond production and distribution control that would continue for almost a century thereafter. This dissertation examines the meaning of diamonds in imperial Britain in the nineteenth century and how Britain's involvement in diamond commodity chains across the century informed metropolitan consumers' conception of and desire for diamond

¹ John Mawe, *A Treatise on Diamonds and Precious Stones; Including Their History, Natural and Commercial. To Which Is Added Some Account of the Best Methods of Cutting and Polishing Them* (London: Murray, 1813).

jewelry. In other words, this dissertation argues that knowledge about the conditions of production in colonial spaces and supply to the metropole increased diamond appreciation and, ultimately, the consumption of diamond jewelry in Britain.

In terms of the diamond trade, the nineteenth century was a pivotal one in a number of ways. At the beginning of the century, the market appeared to be in freefall: demand was extremely low, and diamonds were associated with the most outrageous aspects of the Old Regime in terms of monarchical decadence and colonial looting. In marked contrast, by 1894, Cecil Rhodes could confidently assure his De Beers Consolidated Mines shareholders that demand would never die, that "as long as there are ladies in the world, there will always be a demand for diamonds."² The prevailing logic was that De Beers and the Diamond Syndicate in the 1890s was able to fix prices to be artificially high because demand for gem-quality diamonds was insatiable, a foregone conclusion. Thus, a massive transformation occurred between 1800 and 1890 that created a reliable demand for diamonds, particularly within the "respectable" segments of society, the rising bourgeoisie.

This transformation, I argue, occurred in large part through the increased imbrication of British imperialism with diamond commodity chains. As Britain became more and more associated with the trade, the meaning of diamonds in imperial culture stabilized: diamonds came to encode hierarchies that went far beyond localized notions of class, proclaiming the wearer's cultural enfranchisement in racial and gendered terms, and evoked a particular map of British and European geopolitical power on a global scale. Far from being disassociated with the places and means of diamond production in India, Brazil, and South Africa, diamonds in Britain were always, if even subtly, emblems of empire. This connection became more and more pronounced as the century wore on, as the stakes of British authority in southern Africa became inextricably

² As in L. Chapman, *Diamonds in Australia : The Fields and the Prospectors* (Sydney: Bay Books, 1980), 10.

linked to one company's ability to control the diamond trade. Not only were Victorian consumers aware of the exploitative conditions of diamond production, but that knowledge compelled them to value diamonds as particular and peculiar symbols of imperial and international power. Thus, while the question at the beginning of the century may have been, "Could one own and wear diamonds and still maintain a bourgeois respectable status?" by 1893, the question had become, "Could one be respectable *without* buying diamonds?"

This dissertation pulls from a number of historiographies and, in doing so, is less about diamonds and the diamond trade *per se*, and more about creating a narrative of British imperialism in the nineteenth century. First and foremost, it was designed to be a project of the "new imperial history," in the vein of work done by scholars such as Catherine Hall, Mrinalini Sinha, Antoinette Burton, and Tony Ballantyne to study the rise of British imperialism and modernity as mutually constitutive. Sinha coins the term "imperial social formation" to describe how society and culture in Britain and empire formed in the same crucible, were dependant upon one another, and indeed are not distinguishable phenomena. Ballantyne has developed the notion of the web to visualize how flows of information, people, and things occurred in multidirectional ways and with a number of centers (or nodes) throughout the empire and beyond. As a whole, the historiography of the new imperial history studies transnational movements in an effort to explode any facile notion that nations and national histories are hermetically sealed, self-contained developments and that those narratives are of higher historical value.³

³ Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race : Aryanism in the British Empire*, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series (Houndmills, England ; New York: Palgrave, 2002), Antoinette M. Burton, *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham, N.C. ; London: Duke University Press, 2003). Tony Ballantyne, "Introduction: Debating Empire," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 3, no. 1 (2002), Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects : Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002).

Recently, the new imperial history has undergone a "global turn" of sorts, challenging narratives that conceive of the British empire as operating in its own hermetically-sealed crucible or failing to appreciate how colonial spaces, just as imperial spaces, are constituted by transnational pressures that have little to do with the business of British empire. By placing the British empire in a global framework, the "new new imperial history" seeks to provincialize and more fully assess the British empire within imperial, colonial, global, and transnational studies.⁴

What is both exciting and challenging about these historiographical priorities is that the methodologies for enacting projects of this kind are still being worked out beyond the basic *modus operandi* of tracking people, ideas, and things as they move across borders of all kinds. In a very practical sense, in a framework where depicting sprawl and border-crossing is the imperative, how does one circumscribe their topic? It is a false pathway to argue that the global diamond trade of the nineteenth century can be collapsed into a discussion of British empire, that the global and the imperial (and by extension, globalization and imperialism) are synonymous. The diamond trade in the nineteenth century was not merely about Britain or Britons; the trade was constituted by a staggering variety of actors, interests, and metropolises, including Antwerp, Amsterdam, St. Petersburg, Cairo, Bombay, Lisbon, Paris, Vienna, Istanbul, New York, Calcutta, and Hanau. Yet networks that animated the global trade overlapped significantly with the networks of British imperialism, particularly when we take into account that of the three major rough stone-producing sites in the century, Britain formally colonized two, India and South Africa, and played a heavy role in the mineral production of the third, Brazil. This suggests an inquiry is needed into the overlap of London-as-diamond-metropole and London-as-imperial-metropole. In an effort to study British imperialism and be mindful of its limitations, as

⁴ Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette M. Burton, *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette M. Burton, eds., *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

well as the ways in which pressures seemingly outside of imperial networks nonetheless worked to sustain them, I have chosen to structure my work based on the concept of commodity chains. In other words, instead of beginning with the British empire as my scale for the study of diamonds, in this dissertation I attempt to study imperial culture from the perspective of the diamond commodity chain.

The definition of "commodity chain" that I employ was developed by economic and historical theorists Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein en route to conceiving of Dependency Theory. They defined it thusly:

Let's conceive of something we shall call, for want of a better conventional term, commodity chains. What we mean by such chains is the following: take an ultimate consumer item and trace back the set of inputs accommodated in this item -- the prior transformations, the raw materials, transportation mechanisms, the labor input into each of the material processes, the food inputs into the labor. This link to such processes we call a commodity chain. If the ultimate consumable were, say, clothing, the chain would include the manufacture of cloth, the yarn, etc., the cultivation of cotton, as well as the reproduction of the labor force is involved in these productive activities.⁵

Stephen Topik, among others, have argued that the visual of a "chain" is in fact misleading because to study a commodity chain in its entirety demands that one study corollary trades that put pressure on the primary chain. Thus, chain methodology is much more like the web of Ballantyne's conception (Topik uses networks, circuits or flows).⁶ Topik describes the strength of chain methodology in that it forces one to work in a framework of interconnectedness that is not necessarily based on a higher political unit (an empire, for example). It also demands that

⁵ As in Jennifer Bair, "Global Commodity Chains: Genealogy and Review," in *Frontiers of Commodity Chain Research*, ed. Jennifer Bair (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 7.

⁶ Steven Topik, "Historicizing Commodity Chains: Five Hundred Years of the Global Coffee Commodity Chain," in *Frontiers of Commodity Chain Research*, ed. Jennifer Bair (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 37.

the conditions of consumption and distribution be analyzed alongside production, thus decentering both production and consumption in the study.⁷

By tracking the global or transnational diamond commodity chain, the methodology for this dissertation necessarily puts pressure on the scale of the “imperial,” and it is precisely this pressure that is productive in thinking about the “how” of British empire. Conceiving of diamond history through commodity chains forces us to consider how British imperial networks and consumer culture rose in a global scale, in tandem with French and American fashion and Dutch industry. It also forces us to evaluate informal and formal imperial connections. While imperial historians such as Tony Hopkins and Peter Cain have long been comfortable with conceiving of Brazil as an informal colony within the British imperial pantheon, the question remains about how informal colonies participated in imperial social formation.⁸ To put it bluntly, did British actions in and gain from Brazil matter to the cultural formation of Britain in the way or to the degree that India or Canada or South Africa did? Finally, by prioritizing the whole chain versus *just* production or consumption, this approach has allowed me to gain insight into the everyday business of empire, a facet of imperialism often lost in purely metropolitan, literary, or “high political” analyses. The result has been to gain an appreciation for just how much work remains to be done on the low-level businesspeople and bureaucrats of empire and transnational corporations, the quotidian workings of empire. Importantly, many of the people who animated everyday business transactions across the empire were Jews who worked through transnational familial networks as much as through imperial networks – much work remains to be done on this

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, 2nd edition, (New York: Longman Pearson, 2002), 247, 261.

group if we are to gain any understanding of how empire and economy meshed in the nineteenth century, as David Feldman has recently argued.⁹

Structuring my analysis around commodity chains has enabled me to address two issues that loom large in national-imperial historiography. The first has to do with the place of economy – an economy predicated upon imperial-colonial trade as well as international trade – and more specifically economic change in the formation of Victorian culture (and vice-versa). The issue is one of real application when we look at diamonds: one of the most startling conundrums of diamond history is that the growth of De Beers, a company predicated on the sale of a useless luxury item, occurred *in the midst* of the worst economic depression on record, the Great Depression of 1873-1897. I find myself revising this introduction at a time when the economy, or more specifically economic depression, is on the tip of everyone's tongue. The European Union is reeling at the prospect of having to bail out Ireland, the latest in its membership to reveal itself as essentially bankrupt, and the American electorate has just seemingly chastised the Obama-led Democrats for not instantly solving the country's woes by voting in a Republican-majority House of Representatives. It strikes me that there is much in common between today's global economic depression and the depression that gripped the world in the last three decades of the nineteenth century: neither of these downturns were precipitated by environmental or medical disasters but rather financial crises and a marked drop in consumer spending. Further, the rise of virulent and overt anti-Semitism, jingoism, misogyny, homophobia, and overall anxiety about the decline of gentile white privilege we see from the 1870s onwards in British (and much of Western) society seems terrifyingly familiar with respect to the recent rise of Tea Party politics in the United States. Of course, there are vast differences between the nineteenth-century British empire and early twenty-first century American empire (only one of

⁹ David Feldman, "Jews and the British Empire C.1900," *History Workshop Journal* 63, no. Spring (2007).

which is that blatant anti-Semitism has seemingly been replaced by Islamophobia), but the overall impression holds, that the political economy – especially in a time of depression – has a profound effect on the workings of imperial culture and, perhaps more significantly for my purposes here, vice-versa. In other words, my experience of this current global economic downturn has led me to appreciate how the culture of high imperialism in the late Victorian period was, in fact, a depression culture. This kind of depression culture did not regard the economy as an abstract, *a priori* background to its comings and goings but rather actively engaged with realities of imperial Britain's place in the global economy on a quotidian basis, in terms of unemployment, education, tax and credit disputes, investment, consumer choice, and questions of fashion and taste.

This is not a revelation. For decades, authors such as Gareth Steadman Jones, interested in class culture, formation, and interrelation have, of course, been sensitive to economic change and how the Great Depression (1873-1897) pressurized late Victorian society.¹⁰ But the audibility of this economic context in late Victorian analysis has become less and less in recent historiography, particularly as scholars pursue other agendas committed to developing less working class-centric narratives of the cultural and political manifestations of the nineteenth century. There are now several studies of Victorian consumerism, such as Erika Rappaport's captivating *Shopping for Pleasure* (2001), that emphasize women's agency, the growth of individualism, and the controversial transformation of public space through shopping and consumption that occurred in the latter half of the century, but they tend to gloss over the question of what this consumerism meant in the context of a depression, especially a depression

¹⁰ G.S. Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society*, (London: Pantheon Books, 1971).

that contemporaries understood to be caused by a lack of consumer spending.¹¹ Even in scholarship that focuses primarily on the trappings of class identity – in collections like *Gender, Civic Culture, and Consumerism: Middle-class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940* (1999) edited by Alan Kidd and David Nicholls or David Cannadine's *Ornamentalism* (2002) – the economic context (much less the depression) is treated as a static, deactivated entity, hardly even attributed the rank of background noise to issues of identity formation. What does consumerism mean in a depression? The brunt of this scholarship casts culture as wholly separate from economy.¹²

Works that prioritize the empire in British social formation are not insulated from this critique; indeed, perhaps they are all the more implicated because most scholars would agree that imperialism is first and foremost about economic exploitation. Few if any "new imperial histories" read imperial culture and policy and the transnational connections between colonies as effects of a depressed economy or vice-versa – though a shift towards protectionist, monopoly-loving economic policy á la Joseph Chamberlain (whose professional résumé can hardly be more pertinent to my point as he was President of the Board of Trade from 1880-85, mayor of Birmingham, and Colonial Secretary from 1895-1903) occurred in the same breath as the explosion of the colonial nationalist debates about Ireland, Canada, India, Australia, and South Africa, the precious metal rushes of the late nineteenth century, and the Scramble for Africa.¹³

¹¹ Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Erika Diane Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Penguin, 2002); Alan Kidd and David Nicholls, eds., *Gender, Civic Culture, and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

¹² Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*. I would characterize Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska's *Austerity in Britain* as a beautiful and extremely instructive analysis of depression and rationing culture, but the depression she deals with is not the late nineteenth-century one. Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption, 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹³ Burton, *After the Imperial Turn : Thinking with and through the Nation*, Catherine Hall, ed., *Cultures of Empire : A Reader : Colonisers in Britain and the Empire in Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Routledge, 2000), Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, *At Home with the Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

This "where's the depression?" observation is not meant to be a Peter Mandler-ish indictment of "the cultural turn," or the "imperial turn" or a denigration of any kind of turn in the historiography of the last two decades or so – where Mandler whines that by pursuing priorities about cultural formation scholars have purposefully turned a blind eye to the "real" -- it is only meant to illustrate the historiographical moment in which I find myself and this project.¹⁴ If anything, British consumption studies is still awaiting its imperial turn; *not* examining imperial cultural formation in the context of empire-laden economic exploitation and trade has been more the norm in British consumer historiography. This dissertation's priorities originated out of a dissatisfaction with histories of "empire" commodities and explanations of the so-called consumer revolution in Europe during the early modern period. Efforts such as James Walvin's *Fruits of Empire* (1997) generated a laundry list of imperial "fruits" – tea, cocoa, coffee, ivory, sugar, and so on – but no explanation as to why metropolitan consumers craved them, what cultural changes they wrought in imperial society, or how the structures of formal imperialism shifted to enable their delivery.¹⁵ Consumption studies, such as John E. Wills' contribution to Roy Porter's and John Brewer's monumental *Consumption and the World of Goods* (1993), noted how demand for colonial products drove the consumer revolution in the eighteenth century but reduced this demand down to the consumer's seemingly natural and unthinking desire for exotica of any kind. The fact that the product had been delivered to the metropole amidst a field of unequal power relations between producer and consumer, the "exotica" narratives intoned, was merely the structure of the market and did not inhere in the meaning of the product to the consumer.¹⁶ Yet works like Charlotte Sussman's *Consuming Anxieties* (2000), a detailed account

¹⁴ Peter Mandler, "The Problem with Cultural History," *Cultural and Social History* 1, no. 1 (2004).

¹⁵ James Walvin, *Fruits of Empire : Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1660-1800* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997).

¹⁶ John E. Wills Jr., "European Consumption and Asian Production in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, edited by Roy Porter and John Brewer, (London: Routledge, 1993), 133-147.

of how female abolitionists boycotted sugar in order to protest Atlantic slavery, seemed to indicate that for certain products and under certain circumstances, the imperial-colonial power dynamics of consumer versus producer were very much alive in the minds of consumers and the meanings of colonial produce.¹⁷ How much did the Victorians know about the stuff they consumed, and did that knowledge matter to them or the workings of the empire-nation? Moreover, even the designations "exotic" or "colonial produce" seemed to be slippery in consumption literature – tea, coffee, chocolate, tobacco, sugar, were the usual suspects, as were bananas and Indian shawls, but diamonds never made the list. Again, how priorities, meanings, and knowledge changed with the economy is still an open question in much of this literature.¹⁸ Thus, tracking changes in the diamond commodity chains throughout the nineteenth century forces me to engage with the question of a changing economy and a depressed economy, as well as the linkages between British manufacture and consumption, international manufacturing, and colonial production. Acknowledging diamonds as a product of non-European origin allows me to study the domestication (to borrow from Susan Zlotnick's argument about the common

See also Amanda Vickery, "Women and the World of Goods: A Lancashire Consumer and Her Possessions, 1751-81," *Consumption and the World of Goods*, Brewer and Porter, 274-301; Marcia Pointon, "Jewellery in Eighteenth-century England," in *Consumers and Luxury*, edited by Berg and Helen Clifford, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 120-146.

¹⁷ Charlotte Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender and British Slavery, 1713-1833*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

¹⁸ The focus on foodstuffs is striking. Nupur Chaudhuri, "Shawls, Curry, Jewelry and Rice in Victorian Britain," in *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, ed. Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Lizzie Collingham, *Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Elizabeth Kim, "Race Sells: Racialized Trade Cards in 18th-Century Britain," *Journal of Material Culture* 7 (2002); Beverly Lemire, *Fashion's Favourite: The Cotton Trade and the Consumer in Britain, 1660-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); John Loadman, *Tears of the Tree: The Story of Rubber - a Modern Marvel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power* (New York: Penguin, 1986); Marcy Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures: A History of Tobacco and Chocolate in the Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Redcliffe Salaman, *The History and Social Influence of the Potato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949); Keith Sandiford, *The Cultural Politics of Sugar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg, eds., *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Susan Zlotnick, "Domesticating Imperialism: Curry and Cookbooks in Victorian England," *Frontiers* 16, no. 2/3 (1996); Chitralkha Zutshi, "'Designed for Eternity': Kashmiri Shawls, Empire, and Culture of Production and Consumption in Mid-Victorian Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 48 (2009).

presence of curry in Victorian cooking) of a product viewed as both domesticated *and* exotic, perhaps a perfect metonym for Victorian imperialism.

In this vein, one branch of consumption studies, fueled by literary criticism and anthropological "thing theory," typified by Elaine Freedgood's *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (2006), has worked towards addressing the question of exotic and/or colonial things by excavating the meanings encoded in material culture and how these meanings both effected and affected people who owned and enjoyed *things* – in other words, how things that could elicit affective responses in people actually had a kind agency in compelling knowledges.¹⁹ Freedgood's work was particularly instructive as I grappled with the question of whether it really mattered to British consumers where diamonds came from. She argues that the process of disassociating the product from its conditions of production and distribution, so integral to Marx's explanation of the commodity fetish and consumption as a whole, was far from complete in the nineteenth century. Instead, Victorian consumers – of products, spectacles, and ideas – were in many ways hyper-aware of where things came from and the networks of exploitation that were in place to deliver these goods. This knowledge inhered in the meanings of things within imperialism and imperial culture. In the space of the mid-Victorian novel, as Freedgood explores, things operated to suggest networks of exploitation, power dynamics, and associations that did not necessary have to be spelled out by the author to be understood by the reader. In other words, repeated reference to cotton curtains in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) could have comprised a "fugitive narrative" for the reader about the cotton trade, slavery, industrialization, and privilege that could both offset and underline an

¹⁹ Daniel Miller, ed., *Materiality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Bill Brown, *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006); Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

author's "control" of the overall reality of the novel.²⁰ For diamonds, while knowledge of the conditions of production may have subtly disrupted the Victorian consumer's pleasure at diamond consumption, evident earlier in the century with Brazilian production (the focus of Chapter 1) and the appropriation of the Koh-i-Noor into British material culture (the focus of Chapter 2), by the end of the century, this knowledge actually compelled diamond appreciation (Chapter 5). Thus, the commodity chain approach allows me to be alert to both changes in the economic structure of international and imperial trade, the shifting meanings of "exotic" produce to British consumers, and how this was manifest in the crucible of global economic depression from the 1870s onward.

In ways that are much related to the intersections of imperial trade and imperial culture, the second issue that this commodity chain approach demands I attend to is the question of London as *the* center of the trade as well as the center of the empire. One of the obvious strengths of Ballantyne's "web" approach is that it does not necessarily privilege the metropole as the center of meaning in all imperial history. Connections between colonial sites are as significant as flows from colony to metropole and back again, and imperial/colonial power can be exercised on an empire-wide scale from any number of "nodes" within the web. In short, the "web" visualizes a precarious system of multiple centers of meaning production.²¹ In contrast, to think of the system in terms of chains (however web-like in practice) seems to be a project in re-centering the metropole in imperial studies and with it the violence of imperialism. To continue the metaphor, this dissertation is not about peripheral or subversive "flows" or "trickles," it is not about pockets of cultural exchange and appreciation (I am thinking of Maya Jasonoff's 2005 book *Edge of Empire* here); it is about *chains*, about the hardwiring of imperialism on the basis

²⁰ Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel*, 12-29.

²¹ Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire*.

of economic and environmental exploitation.²² Chains are designed to channel, restrict, and contain – they move but not without great effort; they are heavy, they clang, they are metal. Above all, they are *forged*.²³ There was no *a priori* reason why London should become the center of the raw diamond trade and why the imperial government should become so heavily involved in the trade. A fascinatingly plausible counterfactual narrative that is instructive to ponder is what would have happened if, upon the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley in 1867, the region declared itself independent or affiliated with Prussia/Germany. This did not happen, in large part because many interested parties – official and unofficial in many parts of the world – worked hard to ensure it did not, to forge links with London, to aggrandize the metropole. The power plays between London and Kimberley that would continue for the remainder of the century serve to remind us how chains were created to center the metropole and, in so doing, chained the metropole to the priorities of the outside world. Thus, this diamond production-and-consumption study is not entirely unlike Zoë Laidlaw's study of imperial bureaucracy: London served as the center because it fought to be; this in turn chained the British bureaucracy to a treadmill of correspondence and bureaucratic maintenance that developed metropolitan practice.²⁴ The fact that the "web" and the "chains" are part of the same system is what is instructive here – that empire operated through and against both of these constructions, rather than one or the other.

What follows is my attempt to track the flow of diamonds from Brazil, India, and South Africa through London in the nineteenth century and to gauge the effect this traffic had on British imperial culture, particularly in terms of diamond consumption. Chapter 1 details the

²² Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750-1850* (New York: Vintage, 2005).

²³ This metaphor was – thankfully! – impressed upon me by Antoinette Burton.

²⁴ Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections, 1815-45 : Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

Brazilian commodity chain and looks at British involvement in the chain. Metropolitan readers learned about diamonds and Brazilian enterprises largely through scientific discourse in the first half of the nineteenth century. Thus, the chapter argues that a major reason diamond appreciation surged in the opening decades of the nineteenth century was because they came to symbolize British science and engineering.

Chapter 2 looks at the Indian diamond commodity chain and how associations of India with diamonds continued to inform the imperial imagination long after Indian rough diamond production had faded out. Specifically, I examine Victoria's appropriation of the Koh-i-Noor Diamond and its controversial public "unveiling" at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Together, Chapters 1 and 2 show how the meaning of diamonds was unstable in the period before the rise of South African mining, how there were several competing ideas about what diamonds meant for consumers and for Britain. Still, knowledge about the conditions of production in Brazil and India inherited these meanings, but to varied effects.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the South African diamond commodity chain as it grew up after 1867. Chapter 3 looks at the period of the "early rush" to the Diamond Fields and argues that a rush could be observed throughout the entire commodity chain between 1867 and 1873. Through the motif of a "rush," the third examines the movement engendered or encouraged by the discovery of diamonds in South Africa. This marked a moment in the democratization of diamond ownership and diamond appreciation as well as an openness in the trade. Chapter 4 examines how the rush disintegrated after 1873 when the area, and the global economy, was plunged into a depression that would last the next two decades. In this context, a number of amalgamations began to occur throughout the entire chain that put the trade into the hands of a few and set the stage for monopolization. In other words, Chapter 4 details the rise of De Beers.

It also shows how issues of racial hierarchy and the stability of the diamond market became entwined with African colonialism in ways that imbued the industry as a whole.

The final chapter looks at the fascination metropolitan crowds had with diamonds, diamond cutting, and diamond mining as they was shown at international exhibitions. These exhibitions, by educating fairgoers about Illicit Diamond Buying (I.D.B.), not only facilitated a widespread acceptance of the De Beers monopoly but implicated diamond consumers in British colonialism in Africa in ways that bolstered diamond appreciation. Diamonds took on a comparatively stable meaning in Victorian culture, one that associated wearers with whiteness, privilege, and African colonialism.

Taken together, my analysis shows that the Victorians knew a great deal about where diamonds came from and how they were mined, trafficked, cut, and set. Their knowledge, indeed fascination with diamond commodity chains with production strands in Brazil, India, and South Africa inhered in the meaning of diamonds in Britain. Moreover, they knew about the rise of the De Beers monopoly, the brutal control De Beers exercised over its workforce, and the diamond trade, and condoned it – the monopolization of the diamond trade was a guarantee to the "haves" that they need not find themselves in the "have-not" category. Thus, in the late Victorian anxiety about national-imperial stability, the De Beers monopoly was a desirable image of stability.

Chapter One: The Brazilian Commodity Chain: The Empire of Science and Diamonds

In the 1720s, diamonds were discovered in Brazil. This chapter considers the diamond commodity chain as it developed based on Brazilian production. The British government and British entrepreneurs and financiers played an indelible part in the rise and maintenance of the Diamond District of Brazil; this, in many ways, laid the groundwork for British-Brazilian relations in the nineteenth century which could easily be classified as one in which Brazil operated as an informal colony of Britain. This informal relationship was far less pronounced and celebrated in British society and culture than more formal imperial relationships were (such as in India, the subject of Chapter 2). In the first half of the nineteenth century, the "semi-covert" status, as Marika Sherwood calls it, of British activity in Brazil may have been in large part because Brazil maintained its reliance on slave labor well into the 1880s, decades after Britain supposedly abolished its ties with slavery and the slave trade. Thus, Britons were not in the habit of advertising their illegal involvement with slavery and the slave trade *after* abolition.¹ When we examine British discourse about diamonds and diamond production in Brazil, however, we can gain insight into just how much Britons did know about Brazilian slavery and the extent of British involvement in it. Importantly, it is through scientific discourse that we can find the most popular and sustained "diamond talk" in the first half of the nineteenth century. Therefore, this chapter explores how the connection between metropolitan science, Brazilian diamond production, and public interest in both diamonds and Brazil, was worked to stabilize diamonds as rationalized, valuable property in the nineteenth century and academic science as progressive.

Before the advent of large-scale exhibitions in 1851, outside of the jewelry shop the British public learned about diamonds through the auspices of modern science: the scientific

¹ Marika Sherwood, "Britain, the Slave Trade and Slavery, 1808-1843," *Race & Class* 46, no. 2 (2004).

travelogue, the mineralogical shop, the geological museum, and through the writings and lectures of academic men who would become associated with the infamous recutting of the Koh-i-Noor. The discussion of diamonds in scientific texts was not unique to the first fifty years of the nineteenth century – as the Victorians often noted, one of the first mentions of diamonds in Western discourse is found in Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* (circa 76), and medieval texts valued diamonds mainly for their perceived medical application.² What was unique to this period, however, is the degree to which diamonds came to function as emblems of how modern British science, particularly geology and mineralogy, bolstered British activities overseas and thus ensured national prosperity.

This new, masculinizing element of diamond discourse developed just as consumers turned away from diamonds at the turn of the nineteenth century, associating them in gendered and orientalist ways with the despotic, the irrational, the foreign, and the unstable. British science offered a competing, reformed image of diamonds and diamond appreciation, arguing that while the elements of chance, romance, and glitter would perpetually compel women and other irrational thinkers to desire the stone – ensuring constant demand for the commodity in the minds of potential investors – the study of diamonds could unlock the secrets of light, geological formation, the classification of the mineral kingdom, mining efficiency, and ultimately strengthen the political economy. It followed that diamonds were objects of real public concern, the purview of any respectable individual interested in Britain's national-imperial health and its standing on the international stage. Diamonds became understood as a territory of empire in real and imagined ways, a space worth gaining control of physically and in terms of controlling the production of diamond knowledge.

² For a discussion of classical, biblical, and medieval discourse on diamonds, see Godehard Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade*, (New York: Praeger, 1970), 1-23. Medical applications included breaking up kidney stones, as a cure for poison, and diamond dust as a poison in itself.

Importantly, this "diamond science" discourse developed while the earth sciences were emerging as separate, professionalized, institutionalized disciplines; the incorporation of diamond appreciation into how academic science promoted itself to the public was a significant way that both diamond appreciation and academic science were normalized in British culture. As communications scholar Judith Williams has argued, "advertisements clearly produce knowledge...but this knowledge is always produced from something already known, that acts as a guarantee, in its anteriority, for the 'truth' in the ad itself."³ In the first half of the nineteenth century, the diamond trade and Victorian science operated in ways that legitimated and naturalized one another; that because knowledge about gem-quality diamonds was of scientific interest, this helped to maintain diamonds as worthy, respectable pieces of material culture. Conversely, because diamonds were deemed worthy pieces of material culture, academic science gained legitimacy in a period when the link between scientific knowledge, objectivity, and Truth (what Susan Faye Cannon has called the "Truth-Complex") was being forged.⁴

This symbiotic relationship between institutional science and diamond appreciation went beyond the symbolic: "scientists" not only produced texts for expert and public consumption but were materially involved in diamond production and manufacture, designing mining machinery, creating and maintaining authenticity tests for crystallized carbon, predicting where and how diamonds might be found, prescribing diamond-cutting strategies, and, like modern alchemists, attempting to produce gem-quality stones in laboratories. Diamond scientists, particularly the mid-century band, were also instrumental in producing histories of diamond production and "biographies" of the world's largest diamonds, many of which found a wide audience. Given this discursive and material activity, academic science made a heady claim to expertise in all

³ Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*, (London: Boyars, 1984), 99.

⁴ For a discussion of the "Truth-Complex" see Susan Faye Cannon, *Science in Culture: The Early Victorian Period* (New York: Dawson and Science History Publications, 1978).

things diamond in the first half of the nineteenth century, this in the face of an established, transnational body of expert traders, jewelers, setters, and cutters, as well as amateur collector-mineralogists. Because the British academy disallowed Jews, South Asians, and women into its ranks in this period, the effect was to call into question the credentials of a wide swath of people involved in the industry and promote London as *the* arbiter of the trade. Only white, male gentiles who had the economic means to enter the academy could claim to “know” diamonds in this discourse.

This chapter explores the symbiotic relationship between diamond appreciation and mineralogical discourse to show how it worked to territorialize and colonize diamonds. The crucial context for understanding the stakes of this process is Britain's and Britons' close commercial, financial, and political relationships with Portugal and Brazil in the nineteenth century. British influence in Brazil and the high degree to which the British government, entrepreneurs, and financiers profited from this connectivity must compel us to consider Brazil an informal colony of Britain in the nineteenth century. Not only is this true for the logistics of diamond mining, but through constructing diamonds as a territory of empire in discursive ways, diamond scientists centered Brazil as an informally colonial space within British imperialism.

The study of British exploitation of Brazilian resources is not new. On the contrary, it is a mainstay of Latin American studies, featuring prominently in dependency theory literature for example, and shows up in British studies as an acknowledged lucrative gain for the British economy throughout the nineteenth century.⁵ Peter Cain and Tony Hopkins, for example, describe Britain as "South America's leading trading partner" by 1850, and they characterize British activity in Brazil as extensive and progressive: "Britain achieved in Brazil what she failed

⁵ See for example, Nathaniel H. Leff, *Underdevelopment and Development in Brazil*, Vol II (1982), chapter 4 and Alan K. Manchester, *British Preëminence in Brazil: Its Rise and Decline: A Study in European Expansion* (Chapel Hill: 1933), Ch 8.

to bring about in Africa: the conversion of a slave-holding state to one capable of sustaining new and much expanded forms of 'legitimate' commerce on terms which were still consistent with the maintenance of sovereign independence."⁶ Others such as Marika Sherwood have begun to poke holes in this generous reading, asking why if Britain was so committed to abolishing the slave trade (since 1807) and slavery (since 1833) it would tolerate doing so much business with a state that would be the last to outlaw slavery (in 1888) and openly traded in slaves until the 1850s.⁷ Indeed, British financiers invested in the production of commodities that were widely known to be slave-produced such as gold, diamonds, coffee, and tobacco.⁸ What did this hypocritical involvement mean for the development of British imperialism, society, politics, and culture?

British studies is only just beginning to scratch the surface of how British activity in Brazil affected and effected Britain. The discourse of diamond science, I argue, is one way we can appreciate how this informal relationship nevertheless played an indelible role in the formation of British imperial culture, particularly in terms of commodity culture in the case of diamonds. By examining how scientists imagined Brazil as a colonial space and worked as conduits for delivering knowledge alongside commodities to London, I am engaging with a growing body of scholarship on how scientific networks were instrumental in facilitating British overseas expansion and formed an important part of imperial-colonial culture. Richard Drayton's *Nature's Government* (2000) charts how life science and botanic collecting cultivated imperial culture in the metropole.⁹ Saul Dubow's recent *Commonwealth of Knowledge* (2006) show how

⁶ P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, 2nd edition, (New York: Longman Pearson, 2002), 247, 261.

⁷ Marika Sherwood, *After Abolition: Britain and the Slave Trade Since 1807*, (London: IB Taurus, 2007).

⁸ Marshall Eakin, *British enterprise in Brazil : the St. John d'el Rey Mining Company and the Morro Velho Gold Mine, 1830-1960*, (Durham: Duke UP, 1989).

⁹ Tony Ballantyne, *Science, Empire and the European Exploration of the Pacific* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2004), Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and The "Improvement" Of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), N. Jardine, J.A. Secord, and E.C. Spary, eds., *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Patrick Petitjean, Catherine Jami, and Anne Marie Moulin,

fundamental the language and institutions of science were to the culture, political and intellectual life of white settlers in South Africa in the nineteenth-century. Through the print culture of science, Cape Town whites could lay claim to not only local but empire-wide status. *Victorian Sensation* (2000), by James Secord, examines the sensational cultural "throw" one work that theorized evolution before Darwin's writings, detailing how natural science was very much in the metropolitan public's eye in the early nineteenth. Taken together this body of literature shows how the emerging professional sciences were deeply embedded in imperial and colonial culture, in the ways in which colonial sites were created and exploited, and how colonial sites were connected to one another as well as to the metropole.¹⁰

The first section of this chapter details the rise of the Brazilian commodity chain and how Britain and Britons came to be so involved in it. Then the chapter moves to discuss the prominent and prolific diamond scientists of the early nineteenth century, John and Sarah Mawe. Beyond the Mawes, the remainder of the chapter focuses on the careers and writings of various mid-century British earth scientists: David Brewster, James Tennant, Nevil Story-Maskelyne, and William Pole. Each of these figures made names for themselves in Britain, and in some case internationally, as diamond experts. Of the work that diamond scientists did, one commentator for the *Daily News* wrote in 1867 : [a diamond is] an object of intense interest, not only to the ladies who could just say that it was 'a love' and think how it would become them, but to men of science and men of taste."¹¹ The knowledge they produced about monster diamonds and Brazilian labor conditions, in particular, would become indelible facets of diamond discourse for

Science and Empires : Historical Studies About Scientific Development and European Expansion, Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science ; V. 136 (Dordrecht ; London: Kluwer Academic, 1992). See also Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes : Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

¹⁰ Saul Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge : Science, Sensibility, and White South Africa, 1820-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), James A. Secord, *Victorian Sensation : The Extraordinary Publication, Reception, and Secret Authorship of Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

¹¹ "The Paris Exhibition," *Daily News*, May 28 1867.

the remainder of the century, setting the stage for how Victorian consumers understood (and condoned) South African diamonds and diamond mining.

The Brazilian commodity chain reveals how diamonds in the nineteenth century were cast in a progressive light for British readers. Certainly this was the central message disseminated by nineteenth century scientists, bound up as they were in the networks of diamond production. As I explore in Chapter 2, this message continued to compete against other images of diamonds as essentially oriental, irrational, and frivolous.

* * *

Brazilian Supply Chains

In about 1728, diamonds were discovered in Brazil; by 1753, the area known as Minas Gerais was producing at least three times the amount of rough stones than was the diamondiferous region in Gujarat, India. Circa 1820, Indian production had fallen to negligible levels and the diamond market was driven almost solely by Brazilian stones until the 1870s when South African production began in earnest.

In the century or so that Brazilian production reigned over the market, one could argue that on paper at least, the supply chain was much more centralized and far less open or “free” than the commodity chain that would form out of South Africa. Similar to the system that operated in Gujarat in the seventeenth century, in Brazil the Portuguese crown claimed all of the mineral rights and produce within the “Diamond District,” as it was called, for itself.¹² The Crown granted diamond mining contracts to a select few companies that were in its favor; it demanded that these companies deliver diamonds *only* to the Court in Lisbon; the Court would then broker transactions with one or more select buyers; and the buyers had to agree to have the

¹² The Diamond District was about 150 miles in circumference in the province of Minas Gerais. Its capital city was Tijuco, renamed Diamantina. Harry Bernstein, *The Brazilian Diamond in Contracts, Contraband and Capital* (London: University Press of America, 1986), 12.

diamonds cut in Lisbon.¹³ The Portuguese monarchy became known for its diamond wealth, and often gave diamonds and diamond jewelry as gifts to appreciated subjects, visiting dignitaries, and fellow monarchs. Thus, to wear diamonds was to advertise one's favor at Court, and Harry Bernstein argues that diamond-wearing in Lisbon, especially, was a practice that transcended class divides: "Men, women, and children like and bought Brazilian stones. The stones knew no class and no degree of wealth or status. There was an air of equality in acquiring diamonds and other gems. In short, the demand and circulation for Brazil's diamonds and Portugal's internal, domestic market for those diamonds was both deep (throughout the social classes within Portugal) and extensive (through a wide international market)."¹⁴ Thus, it would appear that the Brazilian commodity chain was a closed, imperial network, concentrated on Lisbon and presided over by the Crown. The fact that slave and convict (as well as free) labor was used to mine diamonds also lends credence to the vision of this chain as hardly "free" in the liberal meaning of "free market."

Yet, in practice, the flow of diamonds from Brazil to Europe between 1750 and 1860 was arguably more open than the flow from South Africa in the 1880s. Firstly, this was due to the fact that the mining and buyer contracts the Crown granted did not necessarily, or even usually, go to Portuguese-Brazilian proprietors. The first mining contracts in the 1730s went to John Gore and Francisco Salvador, for example, both based out of England. Salvador was a Portuguese Jew involved in the diamond trade from India to London.¹⁵ While several Dutch and British companies were granted buyers contracts in 1771, Daniel Gildemeester, the Dutch Consul in Lisbon and owner of Gildemeester & Company in both Amsterdam and Lisbon, held the first major buyer monopoly between 1772 and 1787. Anglo-Dutch control of the buying contracts

¹³ Ibid., 14-15.

¹⁴ Ibid., 46.

¹⁵ Ibid., 17-19.

was so consistent, in fact, that the French government and individual French jewelers steadily petitioned to be allowed into the trade from 1780 until 1808 -- when Napoleon's armies marched into Lisbon and took the Crown's cachet of diamonds by force. The Portuguese monarchy fled to Brazil in 1808 and many British companies followed them; from then on, it was even easier for British companies to gain mining and buying concessions from the Crown.¹⁶

Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, the illegal trade – that is, trade that occurred without the knowledge of the Portuguese Crown – was by all accounts just as abundant as the legal market. As Bernstein puts it, “illegal ‘international’ trade became so frequent that it was almost regular. Contraband diamonds went straight into the hands of Northern European sailors, merchants, and artisans, and then to the jeweler-craftsmen.”¹⁷ The specter of this illegal trade intrigued and tantalized European readers from the eighteenth century onwards; the print culture about the illegal trade (tales of Africans concealing diamonds in their eyes, for example) was much more developed than the “licit” trade narrative. Indeed, one could argue that the memory of the extent of the Brazilian illicit trade was the single most important discursive legacy that came out of the Brazilian commodity chain: in the context of South African production and fears about IDB (Illicit Diamond Buying), Brazil was often held up as the example of rampant IDB.¹⁸ Nonetheless, the volume of the illegal trade had a good deal to do with the development of Amsterdam as the premier diamond-cutting center of Europe, in open competition with Lisbon and Brazilian cutters. Dutch and British government saw nothing wrong with IDB: the

¹⁶ Ibid., 5-8, 22-24. France had the largest luxury market in Europe so to have French jewelers cut out of the diamond trade was significant.

¹⁷ Ibid., 3.

¹⁸ For examples of this in the late Victorian era, see “Passing Notes,” *The Illustrated Police News*, May 2 1885, 3; “I.D.B or Illicit Diamond Buying,” in *Mysteries of Police and Crime*, by Arthur Griffiths, Volume II, (London: Cassell, 1899), 257.

Portuguese structuring of the diamond trade, they argued, was antithetical to the value of free trade (this argument was forgotten by the time of De Beers in the 1880s).

While the legacy of IDB is certainly a significant discursive outcome of the Brazilian commodity chain, the most profound structural change to the diamond market and Europe financially, predicated upon Brazilian production, was undoubtedly when Anglo-Dutch banks began to accept diamonds as currency and loan collateral in the late eighteenth century. From then on, diamonds were seen as a capital resource, en par with gold. This huge step occurred in nonchalant ways: as early as 1761 (and several occasions after that) Gildemeester suggested that, in lieu of cash, diamonds could be used as deposit by the Portuguese crown for loans from the Bank of Amsterdam. He was the holder of the first lucrative distribution contract with the Crown and assured the bank that he could sell the stones for a profit. Uneasy with becoming so indebted to Gildemeester, the Portuguese put off entering into the loan but by the end of the century, as Napoleon's armies threatened and cash flow became a Europe-wide problem, using Brazilian diamonds as currency seemed to be a solution. The French took Holland in 1795 forcing many financiers and diamond traders to relocate to Britain and thus the series of diamond loans the Portuguese Crown negotiated included Portuguese Joaquim Quintela (the contract holder after Gildemeester) and several London bankers (John Hope of Hope & Company and Francis Baring of Baring Brothers). These loans proved successful and a major loan was brokered in 1802 directly between the Crown, the British government, and the Bank of England; the first shipment of diamonds (200,000 carats) went immediately from Brazil to London aboard a British ship. As Bernstein puts it, "Processions of people in London were invited to look at the shipments of diamonds and to watch the opening of the diamond sacks and boxes." Allegations that the Brazilians were sending underweight shipments and could not produce enough stones to

pay back the loan were common. From the Portuguese administration's point of view, it was a painful irony that now *both* legal and illegal shipments of diamonds were leaving Rio on British ships. Other loans were negotiated, including private loans to the Portuguese royal family: between 1808 and 1819, 164, 329 carats, for example, were sent to England from the Crown's personal treasury.¹⁹

Once the Crown was re-established in Brazil in 1808, it was easier for British companies to gain mining and distribution contracts. One such company, Samuel, Phillips, and Company, came to be associated with the Rothschilds.²⁰ In this way, primarily London, but also Amsterdam came to be the European "managers" of the Brazilian diamond commodity chain.

John Mawe and the Diamond Market

When John Mawe (1766-1829) penned the work that he would become internationally famous for, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil* (1812), he was well aware of the state of the diamond market at the time. He was as much of a diamond trader as he was a mineralogist, and maintained a successful mineral and gem dealership in Covent Garden, a section of London known for its cheap to middling-range jewelry and gemstone shops.²¹ Following the French Revolution, diamonds flooded the British markets, as Mawe himself recalled, "The nobility and other emigrants who sought shelter here from the commotions of their own country, brought with them large quantities of Diamonds. These, from the necessities of their owners, soon found their way to the market, and were disposed of to the jewellers at prices which had a reference rather to the necessity of the sellers, than to the intrinsic value of the article."²²

¹⁹ Bernstein, *The Brazilian Diamond in Contracts, Contraband and Capital*, 58-80.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 81-126.

²¹ H.S. Torrens, "Tennant, James (1808-1881)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²² John Mawe, *A Treatise on Diamonds and Precious Stones; Including Their History, Natural and Commercial. To Which Is Added Some Account of the Best Methods of Cutting and Polishing Them* (London: 1813), 41-42.

In European popular and high political discourse of the 1790s, the buying and wearing of diamonds was seen to symbolize decadence, debauchery, and despotism – most famously in the trials of Warren Hastings and accusations against the late French monarchy. Marcia Pointon has also shown how the British monarchy and particularly Queen Charlotte, the fecund consort of George III, were caught up in these critiques. The Queen's representations became associated with the consumption and display of diamonds.²³ As well, popular caricatures of Hastings' relationship with the crown and activities in India served to remind the public of the link between India and diamonds, ironically just as Indian diamond production was dropping off.

Thus, the gemstone went out of fashion just as aristocrats were most compelled to sell their diamonds, hoping to flee the uncertainties of post-Revolutionary France or present themselves as respectably bourgeois. As outlined above, the Portuguese and British governments became dearly invested in the health of the diamond market. Bernstein writes that Napoleon, begrudgingly, took to trying to compel a fashion for diamonds and buoy the market after he invaded Portugal and gained a vast amount of stones left in the Crown treasury. He and Empress Josephine wore more diamonds than Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette ever did and Napoleon quickly adopted the Portuguese Crown's tactic of giving diamonds as political reward (instead of cash or land).²⁴ His incursions into Southern Europe and Egypt flooded European and Middle Eastern markets with luxury items, just as he disrupted the ability of traditional elites in these areas to purchase luxuries.²⁵ In all major consumption centers of the diamond trade – India, the Ottoman Empire, and Europe – it became increasingly difficult to find buyers for diamonds,

²³ M. Pointon, "Intriguing Jewellery: royal bodies and luxurious consumption," *Textual Practice*, 11:3 (1997), 493-516.

²⁴ Bernstein, *The Brazilian Diamond in Contracts, Contraband and Capital*, 23-4.

²⁵ This is the moment when private and public collectors in Britain and what would be Germany were able to amass Italian artifacts and masterpieces from antiquity to the Renaissance for cheap. This is the start of the great art collections of the British National Gallery, for example. George Fox, *An Account of the firm of Rundell, Bridge and Company, the Crown Jewellers and Goldsmiths on Ludgate Hill*, unpublished manuscript, written between 1843-1846, Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, 8.

particularly large gems. This was a moment, in other words, where the ‘priceless’ was priced, bought and sold, in ways that did nothing to encourage elite investor confidence in this "traditional" commodity.

There was still widespread interest in diamonds, but aristocrats with the financial means to acquire them did not feel they would benefit enough from buying and wearing the gemstones to warrant the expenditure. The saga of the Pigot Diamond aptly demonstrates this. In 1800, special legislation was moved through parliament to enable the Pigot diamond, a piece approximately 82 carats and estimated to be worth £30,000, to be disposed of through private lottery on behalf of the late owner’s family. The diamond had “been offered for sale but owing to its great value no individual hath been willing to purchase it, whereas there is now no prospect of selling it to any advantage.” Acquired in India by Lord George Pigot, former Governor of Madras, the piece was advertised to be “by skillful lapidaries esteemed...but little inferior in weight and equal in water and brilliancy to any known diamond in Europe.” The London lottery proved popular, selling out the 11,428 tickets at two guineas each Parliament had limited the enterprise to, and raised close to the estimated value of the diamond at just under £24,000.²⁶ The gem was awarded to the holders of ticket No. 9488, an aggregate from London’s Exchange Alley that wished to sell it immediately. Indeed, it was likely that most ticket holders were off this professional class and had no intention of holding onto the diamond themselves.²⁷ Like the Pigot family, the group of four stock brokers and lace manufacturers found no buyers in the market and had to settle for a £6,000 pay-out from Christie’s auction house. Christie’s in turn sold the piece to the self-appointed ‘Crown Jewelers,’ Rundle and Bridge, who took two decades to

²⁶ Nevil Story-Maskelyne Papers, Natural History Museum Archives, DF 5001/2, “Notes on the Koh-i-Noor and other historic diamonds, 1850-1860”, 6. See also George Fox, V&A archives, 9-11.

²⁷ “Pigot Diamond,” *Times*, March 3 1801, 2; “Parliamentary Intelligence – Pigot Diamond,” *Times*, June 27 1800, 1.

brokered a deal for the stone involving themselves, Samuel Briggs of another elite jewelery house, Briggs and Company, and Sultan Mehemet Ali, Pasha of Egypt, reportedly for the sum of £30,000.²⁸ Taking into account the money Rundell and Bridge used to find a buyer, making inquiries with Napoleon Buonaparte, the British Royal Family, “several Crowned heads in Europe... and very eminent and distinguished persons in every part of ...India and Egypt”, legal and insurance expenses, and the 5 percent commission fee they had to pay Briggs, a senior employee estimated that the Company lost at least £10,000 on the deal.²⁹ The Pigot diamond saga foreshadowed what would become one of the truths of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century diamond trade: it would be far easier and more lucrative to sell several smaller stones to members of the aspiring classes than large, sensational pieces to aristocrats and monarchs. If the story of diamond consumption in the 18th century, the “Age of Diamonds” as art historians have coined it, is one mainly of elite buying and showing, the story of the nineteenth century is how diamond appreciation and consumption was embraced by the “respectable” classes, the middling segment of British society known for its repudiation of aristocratic vanities, dissenting religious beliefs, and emphasis on “progressive” economic strategies.

²⁸ Frederick Stanley Rodkey, “The Attempts of Briggs and Co. To Guide British Policy in the Levant...” *Journal of Modern History*, 5:3 (Sept 1933), 328; Harry Emanuel, *Diamonds and Precious Stones: their History, Value, and Distinguishing Characteristics*, (London: John Camden Hotten, 1867), 84. Fox, V&A archives, 8-13. Rundell and Bridge likely purchased the stone from Christie’s for £10,000 and then shopped it around to Napoleon around 1804, just when Napoleon was about to crown himself Emperor. The Pigot Diamond was going to be an important piece in the coronation ceremony. But first Rundell and Bridge had to smuggle the diamond into France so Napoleon could see it; they did this via a Jewish merchant and diamond cutter, Philip Liebart, who travelled to France via the Netherlands with the diamond sewed into a pocket in his waistband. Napoleon figured out that the diamond had come from England soon after he saw it, refused to buy it, and refused to let it leave France so another seller could be found. Post-restoration, Rundell and Bridge started legal proceedings to get the diamond back. When Buonaparte returned to France from Elba, the French monarchy entrusted the French Crown Jewellery to the Duchess of Wellington and along with it they found the Pigot Diamond. Rundell tried to sell it to the British monarchy to no avail, “models of it were cut in glass and chrystal [sic] with suitable letters to very eminent and distinguished persons in every part of Europe and also in India and Egypt.” Finally the Pasha bought it, Rundell and Bridge had to pay Briggs’ a 5% commission on the deal.

²⁹ Fox, manuscript, V&A archives, 12-13.

But this is not to say that diamonds suddenly disappeared from aristocratic material culture. During Napoleon's time and after his defeat, the monarchies of Britain and France re-invested in their 'Crown Jewels' as part of a symbolic move to, ostensibly, reconstitute or consolidate *ancien regime* motifs. If anything, especially by the 1820s and 30s, this led to levels of participation in diamond spectacles among the royal and aristocratic classes as never before. While operas, balls, and royal events were still populated with gemstones, the difference was that the majority of these jewels were rented or fakes. Elite jewelers found their major source of business in reworking necklaces worn to the opera on Friday night to be passed off as new pieces at balls on Saturday. They rotated imitation gems into jewelry to cheat their customers, aggrandize a meager piece, or simply offset the high overhead they maintained in order to keep large numbers of diamonds on hand for what was basically a rental market.³⁰ This was standard practice at even the highest levels of British society: in 1820, finding that the majority of the British Crown Jewelry was counterfeit, George IV asked Parliament for the funds to purchase real gems, including the acquisition of "a scrumptious new Diamond", and refurbish several crowns for his upcoming coronation ceremony.³¹ Terrified of republican dissent that might be fostered by allowing such a purchase, Lord Liverpool's Cabinet refused the request and advised the king to rent gems at a sixth of his proposed budget. After several rounds of negotiation, he managed to obtain funds for the purchase of a small amount of real jewelry alongside the rentals. George IV's purchases form the basis of today's British Crown Jewelry; the large diamond that was featured in his coronation crown was a rental from Rundell and Bridge.³² The coronation event itself, though not a public one, nearly bankrupted Rundell and Bridge, who had to purchase

³⁰ Fox, V&A archives, 13-20.

³¹ A.M.B, *The Story of Garrads: Goldsmiths and Jewellers to Six Sovereigns in Three Centuries, 1721-1911*, (London: Stanley Paul and Company, 1912), 94-99.

³² Fox, V&A archives, 66.

large amounts of gemstones and precious metal in order to produce the quantity of jewelry the king rented for the occasion. They, like other jewelers, consented to these rental agreements in part because they thought that interest in the coronation would tip-off more widespread purchasing of jewelry by the king's subjects, which only proved to be a modest rise. A senior employee observed that the financial burden of the coronation was the beginning of the end for the Rundell and Bridge firm.³³ If there was to be a future for the diamond market, it could not rest on the buying power of the aristocracy.

But this instability in the market was not merely the concern of jewelers like Rundell and Bridge or traders like John Mawe, it was a matter for public concern, as Mawe well knew. In the spirit of challenging traditional territorializations of British imperial history I would like to forefront 1802 as a watershed moment. It was in that year that Portugal effectively paid Britain to defend it against Napoleon's armies, and significantly, the deal was brokered in Brazilian diamonds – upwards of 3 million carats, a transfer that would not be fully paid until 1817. In that moment, seventy years before Cecil Rhodes' administration in South Africa, the British government officially went into the diamond business and the use of diamonds for currency and collateral in banking matters received irrevocable official legitimacy. As never before, controlling diamond prices, heightening consumer demand, and surveiling global production came to be significant public as well as private priorities in Britain.³⁴ For the majority of the nineteenth century, British financiers and companies oversaw (and at times suppressed) much of the gold and diamond production in Minas Gerais – to the resentment of local Luso-Brazilians

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Bernstein, *The Brazilian Diamond in Contracts, Contraband and Capital*. Some of the loan was repaid in tobacco; after 1810 Britain requested that it only be paid in diamonds, which may or may not have been due to concerns that Britons would negatively associate tobacco payments with the government supporting slave labor. Marshall C. Eakin, *British Enterprise in Brazil: The St. John D'el Rey Mining Company and the Morro Velho Gold Mine, 1830-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989).

who petitioned Portuguese and later Brazilian governments to develop iron mining and other industrial infrastructure in vain.³⁵ British-Portuguese relations, on one level, were literally brokered by the diamond market, a position made even more permanent after the Portuguese court fled to Brazil under British protection in 1808. Britain became the conduit for the Portuguese government's financial dealings: wealth was moved out of Portugal and Brazil in the form of gold and diamonds through ambassadors resident in England. The bullion was deposited in the Bank of England, the diamonds sold at London markets.³⁶

Brazilian dependence upon British investment did not change with independence in 1822. Instead of having a close diamond-studded relationship with the British government, the Brazilian government shifted their diamond payments over to the London-based Rothschilds' banking firm. In 1823 Nathan Rothschild loaned Brazil £1.5 million; by 1825, the Brazilians were even deeper in debt to the bank. This dependency was no secret: the poet Heinrich Heine jokingly referred to Rothschild as "the great Rothschild, the great Nathan Rothschild, Nathan the Wise, with whom the Emperor of Brazil has pawned his diamond crown."³⁷

This relationship was made precarious by the uncertainty of the diamond market on the one hand and by real concerns about rough-gem production in Brazil and India, then the only known major sources of the world's diamonds, on the other. By 1800, both contexts exhibited marked downswings in the amount of gemstones they produced and by 1810 it was conceivable that the world's rough diamond supplies had been exhausted and that Portugal would not be able

³⁵ José Vieira Couto, *Memória Sobre a Capitania Das Minas Gerais; Seu Território, Clima E Produ* (1994).

³⁶ Mawe, *A Treatise on Diamonds and Precious Stones; Including Their History, Natural and Commercial. To Which Is Added Some Account of the Best Methods of Cutting and Polishing Them*, 45.

³⁷ As in Niall Ferguson, *The House of Rothschild: Volume I: Money's Prophets, 1798-1848*, (New York: Penguin, 1998), 132. For more about the Rothschild's dealings in Brazil throughout the nineteenth century see 152, Vol II: 292, 294, 345, 347, 354. See also Marika Sherwood, *After Abolition: Britain and the Slave Trade since 1807* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 105-07.

to pay the Diamond Loan.³⁸ John Mawe's intervention into diamond print culture was not haphazard or without stakes, then, but partly borne of this complex situation. A mineral dealer, world traveler and "colonial collector", Mawe physically traversed the diamond world and, in writing about his travels as well as his thoughts on the gem, was the most significant progenitor of knowledge about diamonds for metropolitan audiences in the early nineteenth century. His travels as well as his acts of authorship carved out and promoted "diamond territory" to his readership; his claims to scientific authority legitimized diamonds as articles of natural as well as national value and science as integral to national-imperial welfare.

Professionally, Mawe inhabited a space that was to become increasingly marginalized in the first half of the nineteenth century as academic institutions and the academically-trained asserted their authority over those with amateur and experiential scientific expertise. His career and that of his wife, Sarah Mawe (1767?-1846), demonstrate transnational ties with Europe, an ethos of "colonial collecting" in the name of British supremacy, and a close link between science and commerce. Their professional lives began in a decidedly middling class milieu and through their claims to scientific expertise also grounded in the national-imperial market, the Mawes were able to gain access to and notoriety within the highest echelons of society. Admittedly, in terms of scientific breakthrough, John Mawe was a "small fry", as the earth sciences historian Hugh Torrens has described him. But Torrens argues for the comparative value of Mawe's somewhat pedestrian achievements: "only be demonstrating what was a 'normal' science at any one time, [can we] show the advances made."³⁹ It is precisely the "normalcy" or claims to

³⁸ Godehard Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade*, trans. F. Bradley (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), John Mawe, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil, Particularly in the Gold and Diamond Districts ..., Including a Voyage to the Rio De La Plata, and an Historical Sketch of the Revolution of Buenos Ayres. Illustrated with Engravings* (London: John Murray, 1812).

³⁹ H.S. Torrens, "Under Royal Patronage, the Early Work of John Mawe, 1766-1829, in Geology and the Background of His Travel in Brazil, 1807-1810," in *O Conhecimento Geologico Na America Latina: Trabalhos Do I Coloquio Brasileiro De Historia E Teoria Do Conhecimento Geologico*, ed. M.M. Lopes and S.F. de M. Figueria

normalcy of Mawe's science and its incorporation into the routine of academic-public engagement that is significant for my purposes here.

Sarah's father, Richard Brown (1736-1816), was a moderately-successful marble mason in Derby, and she grew up with an appreciation for practical knowledge about geological formation and mineralogy. She married her father's apprentice, John Mawe, in 1794 and the couple, along with Brown, formed a dealership that sold minerals and "petrifications" in Covent Garden, an area also known for, among other things, its moderately-priced jewelry and gemstone trade. By 1799, the shop was thriving.⁴⁰

Sarah and her father ran the business while John began to cultivate his image as a professional mineralogist based both on masonry expertise and his twenty years' experience traveling in the merchant marine prior to apprenticing in Derby: he had visited St. Petersburg, a major mining and natural science centre in Europe at the time, as well as what would become Morocco, Jamaica, Bombay, Newfoundland, Mozambique, and the Gold Coast. In 1800, he was able to secure a commission from the king of Spain (Charles IV) to collect and arrange a cabinet of mineral specimens from Derbyshire. His brush with royalty as well as his thoughts on earth science were published in *The Mineralogy of Derbyshire* (1802), and as his profile grew, he was asked to take a brief advisory position in the British government, specifically drawing up plans of how to best explore the mineral resources of New South Wales and Scotland.⁴¹ Despite

(Campinas, 1990). You will not, for example, find him or Sarah Mawe listed in the *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, (1970), but you will also not see James Tennant, Nevil Story-Maskelyne, or William Pole, other more academically-enfranchised scientists, there. Sir David Brewster is the only diamond scientist I will treat here that is listed in the DSB. See J. Henniker Heaton, 1848-1914, *Imperial Penny Postage [Microform] : Speech at Manchester on May 2nd 1892 (1892)* (1892).

⁴⁰ H.S. Torrens, "Mawe, John (1766-1829)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). The address of the shop was 5 Tavistock Street. Prior to the establishment of the London location, the Browns and Mawes owned a marble shop in Derby and could count among their customers Erasmus Darwin and Josiah Wedgwood. See Torrens, "Under Royal Patronage, the Early Work of John Mawe."

⁴¹ *The Mineralogy of Derbyshire* was no page turner and no bestseller. But it did position Mawe as one of the few to publish such an extensive and practical analysis of a particular region, intimately familiar with the issues of resource

harbouring an intense turn-of-the-century brand of Francophobia, Mawe traveled to Paris after the Treaty of Amiens (1802) to take formal classes at the *École des Mines* – a signal of both his determination to be seen as a professional mineral-and-mining expert and the emerging purchase that academic education had in creating this expertise. As his letters to friends indicate, part of the allure of the *École* was to tap into a network of Continental engineering, mining, and geological experts, of which the Freiberg Institute in Saxony was also a major epicenter. This network provided not only peers interested in earth sciences but new customers and suppliers for his London business. In terms of academic study, Mawe could not overcome the language barrier, writing to a friend that he “would rather go on an East India voyage as a sailor...than...learn French” and left Paris without any formal degree.⁴²

He returned to London to find that the shop had flourished in his absence and Mawe’s new set of European colleagues furnished him with an important source of mineral specimens; by 1804 the shop boasted “the largest Variety of Minerals and Shells in Europe.”⁴³ Networks, as the Mawes saw it, were the cornerstone of their operation. John that year published a pamphlet that would later be worked up into *The Voyager’s Companion or Shell Collector’s Pilot* (1821), that was addressed to “the Public, more especially to Sailors and Travellers,” particularly those bound for New World locations or the south seas. An advertisement placed just before the introduction reads, “Should any person be desirous to send a box of shells, &c., to the author, he will pay the charges and make an adequate return in whatever way the consignor may direct.”⁴⁴ The text is infused with further advertisements, in the form of travelogue: “Van Dieman’s Land

extraction and the machinery available. John Mawe and John Mineral Engineer Williams, *The Mineralogy of Derbyshire, Etc* (London, 1802).

⁴² Torrens, "Tennant, James (1808-1881)," 110-11, Torrens, "Mawe, John (1766-1829)," 110-11.

⁴³ Torrens, "Mawe, John (1766-1829)."

⁴⁴ John Mawe, *The Voyager's Companion; or Shell Collector's Pilot; with Instructions ... Where to Find the Finest Shells; Also for Preserving the Skins of Animals. Fourth Edition, Etc.*, Fourth edition. ed. (London: Longman & Co.: London, 1825), Advertisement, 1.

(New Holland) offers a vast field to the naturalist, particularly to the conchologist, zoologist, and entomologist, who would be amply remunerated for whatever they might collect; and I may here state, that, for several years, I paid more than Two Hundred Pounds per annum...to gentlemen who amused themselves, and profited largely, by collecting.’⁴⁵ Not only was Mawe’s intent in *The Voyager’s Companion* to bolster a personal web of exchange, a supply chain for his London operation, but he implied that the pursuit of the natural sciences was intimately linked to Britain’s ability to prosper and compete with other imperial-nations, particularly France.

Through discussing shells in India, he cautioned,

it is still more astonishing, that we have received, from the interior of India, so few land or fresh-water shells, when we consider the extent of our possession in that peninsula, and the number of intelligent officers belonging to our numerous military establishments. The French are much richer in the productions of India: indeed, *their* officers and merchants have at all times paid particular attention to the various departments of natural history.[italics are Mawe’s]’⁴⁶

By way of conclusion, he urged the reader to take an interest in nature - as well as other publications available in the Mawes’ shop – for personal and national benefit:

...it is surely not burthensome to the intellect to distinguish lead ore from copper, or silver from lead, or gold from iron, or diamonds from pebbles.

Permit me to advise the traveler to look into the book of nature, which is always open, and learn what he can. A little information on this head may prove highly advantageous, as the wealth of nations most depends on the produce of their mines. It is earnestly to be recommended, wherever he goes, to bring from thence some specimens of the rocks; and if any other present themselves, he should endeavor to possess himself of them, which he might examine at leisure, with the blow-pipe: the use of this instrument, and the mode of managing it, are fully explained in a small Treatise* intended to accompany the Lessons on Mineralogy.

*The method of detecting whether gold is adulterated is particularly explained. The book will be found useful to those who visit Africa, South America, Chili [sic], &c⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid., 26-7.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 74-75.

From the above quotes, we get a sense of Mawe's commitment to public education, appealing mainly to the middle and aristocratic classes, but also with an eye on an entrepreneurial member of the merchant marine or a soldier stationed abroad. We also get an idea of the kind of education and natural science Mawe thought would interest his readers, or ought to interest his readers; his was not an education-for-education's sake enterprise, but a kind of knowledge dissemination designed to promote resource exploitation abroad alongside his own network of colonial collectors. Mawe makes no effort to distinguish mines on British soil from mines located elsewhere in the world, controlled by Britons – they all contribute to the “wealth of nations” in a fundamental way. The pursuit of personal profit, the scientific study of nature, colonial collecting, and the prosperity of the nation are all directly linked here.

A Voyager's Companion, though not a sensation, went through four editions by 1825 and was available for sale for over three decades, mostly in the Mawes' shop. Mawe's next publication, however, was a work that very much transcended the mineral dealership: *Travels to the Interior of Brazil, Particularly the Gold and Diamond Districts* (1812) was an international bestseller, quickly went through several English editions, and came to be translated into eight other European languages. Famously, it was among the tomes Charles Darwin chose to take with him on the *Beagle*.⁴⁸ Indeed, Mawe's travelogue stood out as the only lengthy public description of the Brazilian diamond mines written in English until 1846, when the colonial collector and botanist George Gardner published his *Travels in the Interior of Brazil, Principally Through the Northern Provinces, and the Gold and Diamond Districts, During the Years 1836-*

⁴⁸ Torrens, "Under Royal Patronage, the Early Work of John Mawe, 1766-1829, in *Geology and the Background of His Travel in Brazil, 1807-1810*." Torrens reports that *Voyager's Companion* was “undoubtedly the most entertaining shell collectors guide of the period.” I can only agree.

1841.⁴⁹ Other than catalogue some fossil remains, Gardner's work did not attempt to supplant Mawe's geological or mineralogical descriptions of the region; instead it was meant to add to it by describing flora and fauna.⁵⁰

While Gardner's narrative was also a bestseller, Mawe's Diamond District narrative was by far the dominant account for the first half of the nineteenth century. As Mary Louise Pratt, among others, has shown, Mawe was one of many European travelers who swarmed to South America in the early nineteenth century. They comprised a "capitalist vanguard," as she terms it, of "scientists, soldiers, and speculators" interested in taking over and developing commercial networks that the colonial actors of Spain and Portugal had been shut out of with the upheavals of both empires. Mostly British, the newcomers plotted out a semi-colonial trajectory for the region through travelogues and scientific treatises that fostered "imperial eyes" in their readers, or promoted images of South America as full of economic potential and ready for the taking. Information about mining was at a particular premium, especially for British investors, and thus there was an impressive market for the writings of traveler-scientists-cum-entrepreneurs.⁵¹ Mawe's account however, was important among these because after it came out the Portuguese government severally curtailed European access to the diamond mines, in part due to the level of

⁴⁹ In 1833, M. Auguste de Saint Hilaire published a travelogue of the Diamond Districts in Brazil but, like Gardner's account, was principally concerned with the botany of the region and the spectacle of the mines, not the diamond science of it. Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade*.

⁵⁰ Until the subfield of paleontology was developed there was a considerable turf war (pun intentional) over which branch of science was best equipped to deal with fossil remains, the earth sciences or biology. George Gardner, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil, Principally through the Northern Provinces, and the Gold and Diamond Districts, During the Years 1836-1841* (New York: AMS Press, 1970, c. 1846).

⁵¹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 146-9. See also Brian Dolan, "Pedagogy through Print: James Sowerby, John Mawe and the problem of colour in early nineteenth-century natural history illustration," *British Journal for the History of Science*, 31 (1998), 275-304; Silvia Figueirôa and Cláudia da Silva, "Enlightened Mineralogists: Mining Knowledge in Colonial Brazil, 1750-1825," *Osiris*, 15 (2001), 174-189.

detail in *Travels*; members of the Portuguese court felt that Mawe had said too much about Portuguese revenue, mining technologies or diamond labour practices.⁵²

The travelogue itself details Mawe's time in Brazil from 1804 to 1810, which he characterizes in the opening pages as a "voyage of commercial experiment."⁵³ The introductory section is devoted to the first five years he spent getting to Rio de Janeiro and negotiating his way into and out of complex alliances with Spanish traders, French invaders, and British and Portuguese forces within the context of the Napoleonic Wars. He was imprisoned a number of times, he had "specimens" confiscated, his plans were continually thwarted, and despite always observing Britons thriving in Rio, he himself was destitute by 1809. Through various connections he had made in Lisbon before the Portuguese court relocated to Brazil in 1808, he offered his services as a mining and mineralogy expert to the Prince Regent (later Juan VI), promising to find ways to increase mine output in Minas Gerais, a crucial source of royal revenue.⁵⁴ It was under royal patronage and with a mind to improving production, then, that Mawe was allowed access to the diamond mines.⁵⁵

The narrative arc of *Travels* begins with descriptions of "civilization" and comfort – his route to Rio de Janeiro, its environs, commerce, politics and people – and slowly edges into the less known, less accessible, and, to his readers presumably more compelling territories of Minas Gerais. He describes first the gold-mining districts and, the climax of the piece, the Diamond

⁵² Torrens, "Mawe, John (1766-1829)."

⁵³ Mawe, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil, Particularly in the Gold and Diamond Districts ..., Including a Voyage to the Rio De La Plata, and an Historical Sketch of the Revolution of Buenos Ayres. Illustrated with Engravings*, iii.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, iii-69. Minas Gerais is the name of the region, it translates to English as "General Mines." I am not using Mawe's spelling of Gerais (Geräis), but rather the form that is accepted today.

⁵⁵ Torrens, "Under Royal Patronage, the Early Work of John Mawe, 1766-1829, in *Geology and the Background of His Travel in Brazil, 1807-1810*." Hugh Torrens' argument is that Mawe actively cultivated royal patronage as a career strategy. Interestingly, Torrens refers to Mawe as a "dealer" rather than a scientist: "Without such dealers scientists would have had great problems in documenting the animal and mineral kingdoms. But the part played by dealers in their essentially symbiotic relationship with scientists has been almost totally ignored." While the point about symbiosis is well-taken, the sharp distinction between "real" science and the market was not germane to this period – Mawe thought of himself as a scientist and passed himself off as one.

Districts. Along the way, Mawe includes dozens of didactic geological and mineralogical descriptions, the most detailed of which concentrate on areas of diamond and gold production.⁵⁶ Punctuating these verbal descriptions were both colour (a novelty at the time) and black-and-white illustrations. They underline the intensely economic project of this scientific reporting, as Mawe collected and conveyed information about only specific, mainly lucrative minerals. Pedagogically, these images promoted an idea that knowing the typologies of carbon crystals (diamonds) was not only useful knowledge, but something of what an educated gentleman-entrepreneur ought to be interested in. In turn, diamonds, in this case, comprised an important pedagogical tool for the dissemination and creation of mineralogical knowledge in this early nineteenth-century treatise.⁵⁷

Mawe continually stressed two points in *Travels*: first, the crucial role he played in the narrative as a quality control expert in the mining trades due to his scientific techniques of substance authentication; and secondly the fundamental ways in which knowledge about machinery and modern mining techniques was necessary for commercial advancement in Brazil. Time and again the reader follows Mawe's intervention into what he describes as a potentially fraudulent situation, time and again all actors involved, apparently, accept his judgment based on scientific authority. In an early instance, he is taken to a would-be silver mine by its owners:

I proceeded to examine the sand and stones I had collected at the supposed silver-mine, but no particle of metal was to be found. I then ordered the men to produce their samples, which I examined both by the blow-pipe and by acids, but no silver appeared. After equivocating very much, they acknowledged that they had rubbed and beaten substances to powder, and when they found specular iron ore they thought it was silver. In one of the samples there certainly was silver, but it appeared to have been filed probably from an old buckle or spoon, or rubbed on a

⁵⁶ Mawe, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil, Particularly in the Gold and Diamond Districts ..., Including a Voyage to the Rio De La Plata, and an Historical Sketch of the Revolution of Buenos Ayres. Illustrated with Engravings*, 71, 79, 125, 31, 50-3, 61, 64, 78, 94, 215-6, etc.

⁵⁷ Brian Dolan, "Pedagogy through Print: James Sowerby, John Mawe and the Problem of Colour in Early Nineteenth-Century Natural History Illustration," *British Journal for the History of Science* 31 (1998).

stone and mixed with a pulverized substance. The farce could no longer be carried on: I charged them, in a most determined manner, with imposture, which, after some hesitation, they confessed....Such impositions are not uncommon in South America....⁵⁸

In this simple anecdote, Mawe, by chance, is able to maintain the integrity of the global economy including the primacy of property value in the system - and by extension Europe's commodity exchange and geopolitical power in terms of bullion and currency control - on a quotidian level. As his unwillingness to prosecute the falsifiers demonstrates, the danger to the system rests not with frauds per se but with its lack of scientific oversight.

In another instance, Mawe is trusted to such an extent that he is taken into the heart of the imperial Portuguese treasury to view its stash of diamonds and evaluate one stone in particular:

A free negro of Villa do Principe...had the assurance to write a letter to the Prince Regent, announcing that he possessed an amazingly large diamond.... As the magnitude which this poor fellow ascribed to his diamond was such as to raise imagination to its highest pitch, an order was immediately dispatched to the commander of Villa do Principe, to send him forthwith to Rio de Janeiro....All persons envied the fortunate negro and...after a journey which occupied about 28 days, he arrived at the capital and was straightaway conveyed to the palace. His happiness was now about to be consummated, in a few moments the hopes which he had for so many years indulged would be realized, and he should be exalted from a low and obscure condition to a state of affluence and distinction....At length he was admitted into the presence; ...and delivered his wonderful gem; His Highness was astonished at its magnitude.... A round diamond nearly a pound in weight filled all with wonder; ...the general opinion of His Highness's servants was, that the treasury was many millions of crowns the richer.... It was shewn to the ministers, among whom an apprehension, and even a doubt, was expressed that a substance so large and round might not prove a real diamond; they, however, sent it to the treasure under guard and it was lodged in the deposit of the jewel-room. On the next day, the Condé de Linhares sent for me, and related all the circumstances which had come to his knowledge respecting this famous jewel, adding, in a low tone of voice, that he had his doubts about its proving a genuine diamond....His Excellency directed me to attend at this office... for permission to see this invaluable gem, in order to determine what it really was....[The gem's] value sunk at the first sight, for before I touched it I was convinced that it was a rounded piece of crystal. It was about an inch and a half in diameter. On examining it, I told the governor it was not a diamond, and to convince him I took

⁵⁸ Mawe, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil, Particularly in the Gold and Diamond Districts ..., Including a Voyage to the Rio De La Plata, and an Historical Sketch of the Revolution of Buenos Ayres. Illustrated with Engravings*, 131.

a diamond of 5 or 6 carats and with it cut a very deep nick in the stone. This was proof positive; a certificate was accordingly made out, stating that it was an inferior substance of little or no value, which I signed.⁵⁹

It is incredible that the Portuguese court, renowned for its fluency in the diamond trade, in possession of a great many rough and cut specimens judging from Mawe's later descriptions of the treasury, and situated in the major diamond-shipping port of Rio de Janeiro, would be dependent upon this British scientist-traveler to deploy a verification test which had been known for close to a thousand years to determine the authenticity of this stone. If events actually occurred in the manner that Mawe describes, larger political and economic issues must have been at stake in having him, in particular, disrepute the gem, but regardless, this is what Mawe either believed himself or would have his readers believe. The onus of controlling the quality of the diamond trade (and the consequences of that vocation) was, he wrote, squarely on his shoulders:

Having now finished my business, I took my leave of the treasurer...It was no agreeable task for a stranger to have to announce that a substance which had been considered as an inestimable addition to the treasures of the state, was in reality, though singular in its appearance, of very trifling value.... The poor negro who had presented it was of course deeply afflicted by this unwelcome news; instead of being accompanied home by an escort, he had to find his way thither as he could, and would, no doubt, have to encounter the ridicule and contempt of those who had of late congratulated him on his good fortune.⁶⁰

Mawe was always at pains to relate the empathy and admiration he felt for African and Afro-Brazilians he observed on his journey, usually in order to make arguments about the inefficiency of Brazilian labor practices or to contrast representations of productive, manly Africans with lazy indigenous- or Luso-Brazilians. While slavery was very much a spectacle on offer in Mawe's travelogue, he walked a very fine line between noting the use of slave labor alongside the internal and external workings of the slave trade and mitigating the exploitative nature of

⁵⁹ Ibid., 139-41.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 141.

Brazilian slavery by stressing how easy diamond work was compared to other forms of mining and, more to the point, how the implementation of scientific mining techniques would further reduce the workers' involvement. To be sure, Mawe did not outline a scenario whereby Brazil could mine without slave labour altogether. Indeed, in a lengthy appendix to the travelogue he detailed and quantified the benefits of improved machinery and the like but concluded that diamonds could not be mined for profit outside a system of such heavily-coerced manual labour.⁶¹ It is a discreet position, but an important one: in his rendering, slavery is a necessary evil for Brazil and by extension British companies operating there. Readers who were either pro- or anti-slavery (or anywhere in between) could take away from his account an assurance that scientific intervention could mitigate Brazilian problems, however they conceived of them.

Only part of Mawe's reasoning for this was spelled out in the language of economics; another part rested on, as he saw it, the inability of Luso-Brazilians and the Portuguese to modernize themselves. British science had a civilizing mission in Brazil. The "Account of a pretended Diamond," related above, maintained a major theme Mawe cultivated throughout the travelogue: the dependence on or need for British technical and scientific expertise and economic networks on the part of the Portuguese-Brazilian establishment in order to maintain its place of global significance. The semi-colonial or informal colonial relationship between Brazil and Britain as well as Portugal and Britain, is, in Mawe's treatise, at once always observed, anticipated, encouraged, or deemed inevitable. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his constant descriptions of mining machinery, a primary objective of his journey alongside the mapping of gold and diamond districts. In one instance, he marvels at the system of aqueducts devised to supply the mines with water for washing *cascalhão*, the gold- and diamond-producing gravel, but deems them primitive and the process liable to be improved by steam-engines. After

⁶¹ Ibid., 315-62.

detailing his thoughts to the mine overseer, he is frustrated by how his many suggestions fall on deaf ears – this is a recurring situation in the memoir.⁶² Only in one instance does he admit that his suggestions were perhaps more trouble than they were worth, when by applying a mercury-condensation system more gold could be extracted, but only by negligible amounts.⁶³ By and large, settlers, he concluded, were simply lazy for cultural and environmental reasons that stemmed from the ease with which natural resources could be exploited in Brazil prior to the nineteenth-century:

The people in general are rendered more averse from habits of regular industry by the continual hopes which they indulge of becoming opulent by some fortunate discovery of mines; these fallacious ideas, which they instill into the minds of their children, strongly prejudice them against labour.... Their education is extremely limited: they are in general total strangers to the sciences, and are very scantily informed on any useful subject.⁶⁴

In this way, Mawe paints the Portuguese as simply ill-equipped to exploit Brazil and unwilling to "modernize" themselves in ways that he deems progressive: scientific instruction and the habits of regular industry. There is no room to imagine that without British intervention, Brazil could maintain its position as a major producer of raw materials.

There is evidence in the travelogue, itself, however, that Mawe absorbed as much information about mining as he was disseminating, perhaps more. Though constantly derogating practices and suggesting "modern" ones, he also made detailed descriptions and careful drawings of Luso-Brazilian machinery. The only technicality that impressed him outright concerned the application of a chemical to the gold-collecting process, an innovation, he recorded, as coming from the African slaves involved in the mining. In a footnote he muses, "This species of sublimation on a small scale interested me greatly. Could it proceed from any glimmering of

⁶² Ibid., 222-7.

⁶³ Mawe, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil, Particularly in the Gold and Diamond Districts ..., Including a Voyage to the Rio De La Plata, and an Historical Sketch of the Revolution of Buenos Ayres. Illustrated with Engravings*, 188.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 254.

science in the minds of the negroes, or was it merely an accidental discovery?"⁶⁵ Though Mawe does not make this connection outright, at an earlier point in the narrative he explains how the majority of incoming slaves to Brazil were from the Gold Coast region of West Africa. If his musing is accurate, this might offer a glimpse of a lesser-acknowledged but significant network of knowledge-circulation that occurred within the webs of Western empire, particularly those empires involved in the Atlantic slave trade: it is entirely possible that gold-miners in West Africa were taken to the Americas and applied their mining knowledge in this Brazilian context. In that vein, Mawe appropriated into British science what could very well have been indigenous African scientific knowledge. Of course, it is entirely possible that this innovation, still coming from the workers, was unique to this site; at any length, Mawe's conveyance of this knowledge still demonstrates how technological information moved through imperial circuits in transnational ways, yet could be taken up in a nationalist rhetoric such as "British science."

But for the lengthy advisory appendix on the economics of diamond mining, the narrative ends with Mawe's return to London in 1810. In his absence, Sarah had not only maintained the shop but expanded it. A rival mineral dealer, Henry Heuland, wrote to a customer in 1808 that soon "Mrs and Mr Maw will be the moon that shines on the Collectors. Indeed that Lady is quite grand now."⁶⁶ Just after *Travels to the Interior of Brazil* (1812) was published, the Mawes moved their business to the Strand in close proximity to Leigh and Sotheby's auction rooms and the East India Office, two important centers for buyers and sellers of minerals and gemstones.⁶⁷ On the heels of his travelogue fame, Mawe published another successful book, *A Treatise on Diamonds* (1813), which, given his fame as the Brazilian mining expert, established him as a leading expert in Britain on diamonds and diamond mining. Academic credentials followed: he

⁶⁵ Ibid., 187-8.

⁶⁶ Torrens, "Tennant, James (1808-1881).", Torrens, "Mawe, John (1766-1829)."

⁶⁷ Ibid.

was elected a member of the Royal Geological Society in 1814 and awarded the diploma of the Jena Mineralogischen Gesellschaft in 1817.⁶⁸

Much more pointedly than *Travels*, *A Treatise on Diamonds and Precious Stones Including Their History – Natural and Commercial* (1813) strove to proclaim the stability of the diamond market and in doing so stabilize it. The publication is a wealth of conflicting information, at once an advertisement for diamonds in general and a serious effort to educate the public about how the diamond market operated. Mawe's legitimacy as a diamond expert rested very much on his reputation as a traveler in Brazil, indeed those are the credentials he continually brings up in the treatise. Just as the title indicates, he discussed the value of the gemstone on two levels, natural and commercial. For Mawe, the commercial (naturally) flowed from the natural: "There are few things in history that at first sight appears so remarkable as the prodigious value, which, by common consent, in all ages, and in all civilized countries, has been attached to the Diamond." Linking diamond appreciation to civilizational development *as well as* universalism, he stated

among ornaments and luxuries it has ever occupied the highest rank. Even Fashion, proverbially capricious as she is has remained steady in this, one of her earliest attachments, during probably three or four thousand years. The fascinating beauty of this gem, depending on its unrivalled brilliancy, was unquestionably the original cause of its attracting admiration, and which still upholds it in universal estimation: notwithstanding the smallness of its size, there is no substance, natural or artificial, that can sustain any comparison with it in this respect.⁶⁹

In this treatment, diamond beauty is natural, pertaining to the stone's unparalleled relationship with light. This relationship is obvious to the civilized, beyond question, and completely static across millennia – to challenge the naturalness of diamond value, then, is to renounce one's humanity, where humanity is reserved for the civilized. The linkage between diamond

⁶⁸ H.S. Torrens, "Under Royal Patronage, the Early Work of John Mawe," 110-111.

⁶⁹ Mawe, *A Treatise on Diamonds and Precious Stones; Including Their History, Natural and Commercial. To Which Is Added Some Account of the Best Methods of Cutting and Polishing Them*, xiii-xiv.

appreciation and light appreciation was a relatively new development in European discourse, beginning in the early modern period, and very much related to – quite literally – the “Enlightenment”.

What was new and significant in his *Treatise*, however, was not merely that diamond value was associated primarily with light, but that because of this it had an intrinsic scientific component as well as aesthetic and economic. Mawe articulated the diamond’s modern scientific usefulness in terms of gemstone quality, which is to say he made the useless seem useful:

The Diamond, without any essential colour of its own, imbibes the pure solar ray, and then reflects it either with undiminished intensity, too white and too vivid to be sustained for more than an instant by the most insensible eye, or decomposed by refraction into those prismatic colours which paint the rainbow and the clouds of morning and of evening. The properties and characters of the Diamond have occupied the attention of chemists, crystallographers, and mineralogists, from the time of Pliny to the present day: the most intelligent of our travellers, into those parts of the world where Diamonds are procured, have also furnished several interesting particulars. It has been the aim of the author in this treatise to condense their remarks...⁷⁰

In drawing out the history of diamond appreciation to the classical period, Mawe also draws out the history of science, in general, though crystallography and its place within modern mineralogy was only emerging as a discipline. The scientific fascination with diamond gemstones is constructed to be timeless, natural. Though not knowing it at the time, Mawe’s conflation of gem-quality diamond value with scientific value would become a staple of public science in Britain, the backbone of diamond science discourse.

For example, Mawe located the value in an ability to reflect light; but not just any light, perfect, pure, natural light. By 1861, this confluence of diamond appreciation with the scientific study of light was canon. William Pole, professor of engineering at University College London and a fellow of the geological society, wrote for the general public:

⁷⁰ Ibid., xvii-xviii.

Shall we turn to the domain of intellect, where surely the gewgaws of ornament should be lightly esteemed? The diamond offers to the philosopher one of the most recondite and subtle problems that have ever engaged the human mind; while the merest tyro in science may find in it the most instructive topics of study... The diamond is one of the most beautiful things in nature. No painter, were he ten times a Turner, could do justice to its effulgence; no poet, were he ten times a Shakespeare, could put its luster into words. *Light* was the first and fairest gift of heaven to man; the diamond is fairer than light itself; it *is* light, only seven times beautified and refined... The minerals we call gems, jewels, “precious” stones, *par excellence*, are the most noble objects of inorganic creation; and the diamond is the queen of them all.⁷¹

Pole not only naturalizes the market and scientific value of diamonds by linking them with light but also heaven and a divine order of being and right. As it is natural for a monarch to rule, in this thinking, so is it natural for the diamond to be esteemed above all other “noble objects of inorganic creation.”

By dwelling on Mawe’s output, I do not want to give the impression that he was some sort of epiphenomenal genius who personally effected an important relationship between science and consumerism. His career, if anything, was deeply embedded within the context in which it operated and the Mawes’ success speaks to not only the relevance of their work but also their abilities to negotiate the cross currents of culture and society in the early nineteenth century, especially in terms of Britain’s relationship to Brazil, the purchase of natural science in respectable society, and the shifting meanings of diamonds to consumers. Importantly, the multiple roles that Mawe occupied as a naturalist interested in diamonds, an ambassador of science to the public, and an entrepreneur interested in bolstering diamond consumption was not at odds with the early nineteenth-century academic establishment, particularly the earth sciences. By and large after the French Revolution the emphasis was on creating geology as an academic discipline wholly different from its antecedent cosmogony, a study devoted to corroborating

⁷¹ William F. R. S. Pole and James Tennant, *Diamonds. ... Extracted from Macmillan's Magazine. ... With a Note on the Imperial State Crown and Its Jewels*, by J. Tennant (London: Privately printed, 1861), 3.

biblical events with geological data.⁷² While Continental earth science institutions were seen to favor big theories about the origins of the Earth and the creation of minerals, in contrast British academic centres such as the prestigious Royal Institution (founded 1799), the Geological Society of London (f. 1807) and the smaller British Mineralogical Society (f. 1799) prided themselves on collecting facts and practical knowledge. To varying degrees, this emphasis was shared throughout British academe with respect to geological and mineralogical pedagogy and it was not until 1851 that the School of Mines in London was opened, in part because a separate school for practical knowledge was not needed until then. Of course, the relative lateness of a British equivalent for the *École des Mines* also indicates how frequent it was for Britons to travel to the Continent for formal mining training; it should also be noted that French and German scientists who favored a more practical approach traveled to London to participate in British societies.⁷³

The Geological Society is an excellent example of early nineteenth-century British earth science in action. John Thackray, an historian at the Geological Museum of London, has described the first president of the Society, George Bellas Greenough, as utterly devoted to facts and “allergic to theorizing.” The Society was socially exclusive by design, but, favoring practical knowledge, entertained a steady stream of “practical men”, typically miners and colonial and traveling collectors, to serve as informants. During his life, John Mawe regularly contributed to the Society’s collection, beginning with his trip to Brazil during which he sent back several reports and diamond specimens.⁷⁴ Sarah Mawe later moved the shop to within three doors of

⁷² Roy Porter, *The Making of Geology*, (London: Cambridge UP, 1977), 11, 89; Porter, “Charles Lyell and the Principles of the History of Geology,” *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 9:2:3 (1976), 91-103.

⁷³ John Thackray, “The Geological Society of London and Its Links with South America,” in *O Conhecimento Geologico Na America Latina: Trabalhos Do I Coloquio Brasileiro De Historia E Teoria Do Conhecimento Geologico*, ed. M.M. Lopes and S.F. de M. Figueria (Campinas, 1990), 11-12.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Somerset House in the Strand where the Society was located between 1828 and 1860.⁷⁵ Again, the Society offered academic legitimacy, as well as buyers and sellers.

As one who married into middling class status, John Mawe was able to make money at a certain kind of science and have influence within aristocratic and royal society. This was equally if not more true for his wife, Sarah, who maintained the shop until 1840, well after John's death in 1828. The Mawes' reputation as mineralogical experts was such that at some point in the early 1830s, Sarah was appointed "Mineralogical Preceptress" to Princess Victoria, vested with giving lessons in "Mineralogy and Conchology" to the future queen. When Sarah died in 1846, a small obituary ran in the *Illustrated London News* that characterized her as an "ingenious lady" and widow of "the celebrated traveler."⁷⁶ As a female mineralogist, Sarah Mawe was not completely unusual for the period; mineralogical collecting, particularly in colonial settings, was a respectable pastime for respectable women. Upon her death, however, the role of "Mineralogical Preceptress" to the royal family was done away with, the royal females' mineralogical education was no longer a priority. This speaks to the success of academic science in professionalizing mineralogy.

The Mawes' business and social success is significant for its rarity. Sir David Brewster, another diamond scientist who will be examined later in this chapter, prior to the 1850s was best known as the inventor of the kaleidoscope. He obtained academic credentials from the University of Edinburgh and spent most of the 1820s and 30s attempting to make money as an author of popular science, simply because, as he was fond of complaining, it was very difficult

⁷⁵ Torrens, "Tennant, James (1808-1881).", Torrens, "Mawe, John (1766-1829)."

⁷⁶ "Mrs. Sarah Mawe," *Illustrated London News*, September 19 1846, 179.

for professional scientists to make a living. He was constantly selling himself as well as his field (optical physics) to the public at large.⁷⁷

But this is not to say that scientists more ensconced within the workings of British intellectualism were not also trying to sell the sciences, particularly the earth sciences, to the public. Scholars like Henry Thomas de la Beche, a geological expert to the government, was a key founder of the Geological Survey of Britain as well as the Museum of Economic Geology in Charing Cross near Mawe's shop. He actively sought to sell geology to the academy, the government, and the public as an importantly atheoretical science, intimately involved with Britain's political economy. The Museum, as well as its coeval counterpart the Museum of Practical Geology on Jermyn Street near Piccadilly, opened in 1835 to steady attendance, and featured a large segment on ornamental stones – the diamond showcase took centre stage in the main hall of the ground floor.⁷⁸ The value of geology was seen in direct correlation to the value of, among other things, diamonds; the validity of one enhanced the validity of the other.

The Geological Museums along with the mineralogical shops came to rely on the celebrity of certain diamonds to entice public interest. Mawe's *Treatise on Diamonds* contained a lengthy descriptive list of "large diamonds of the world." This was not in itself a new phenomenon but, again, brought the promulgation of this kind of diamond celebrity squarely within the bounds of scientific discourse. In addition to simply talking about famous diamonds, the Mawes' networks and proximity to the East India House and Sotheby's gave them access to a number of large diamonds that passed through the metropole, of which they took molds and had replicas made. The Mawes' shop, for example, was the only site in London that had molds of a

⁷⁷ Gardner, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil, Principally through the Northern Provinces, and the Gold and Diamond Districts, During the Years 1836-1841*.

⁷⁸ John Smith Flett, *The First Hundred Years of the Geological Survey of Great Britain*, (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1937), 34-5; *The Geological Museum*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1964), 5-7.

handful of minor diamond celebrities at the time, the Nassock (or Nassuc) Diamonds, which were auctioned at Sotheby's. They sold replicas of these Diamonds, as well as a dozen others, to the British Museum, the two Geological Museums, and other sites around Britain, France and Saxony. By the 1850s, it was usual to see a pantheon of diamond celebrities in replica as part of any given mineralogical display; this remains the case today. Mawe, in particular, took advantage of the "Museum" as a site of commerce calling the shops he opened in Derby and other sites in Britain museums.⁷⁹ In the context of the 1862 London International Exhibition, commentators complained that without a show of gemstones at the entrance, no one was enticed into the mineralogical exhibits; the exhibition organizers had made a huge and obvious error, in the estimation of the critic.⁸⁰

In the same year that Sarah Mawe died, George Gardner published a naturalist travelogue of his time spent in Brazil between 1836 and 1841, complete with a visit to the Gold and Diamond Districts, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil* (1846). Gardner, as Superintendent of the Royal Botanic Gardens of Ceylon, throughout the text calls attention to his credentials as an enfranchised member of British academe: the book is dedicated to Sir William Jackson Hooker, Gardner's mentor and the Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew as well as the Vice-President of the Linnean Society.⁸¹ As I mentioned earlier, while Gardner's main task was to attend to the biology (and biological classification) of Brazil, still he took several opportunities in the text to snub Mawe's previous travelogue by either ignoring it altogether or derogating Mawe's descriptions of Brazilian slavery as sensational.⁸² Gardner's text, popular in his own

⁷⁹ H.S. Torrens, "Under Royal Patronage, the Early Work of John Mawe."

⁸⁰ "The International Exhibition," *Times*, May 5 1862, 9.

⁸¹ Gardner, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil, Principally through the Northern Provinces, and the Gold and Diamond Districts, During the Years 1836-1841*, iv.

⁸² For example, "It was true that [Brazil] had been visited both by German and French Naturalists, but no Englishmen...had penetrated into the interior." *Ibid.*, 2.

time, has found another kind of popularity historiographically and in the classroom as the number of its reprints will attest: his writings are often used as primary sources for mid-century British racism, especially a kind of racism that is informed by the biological sciences and professed to be anti-slavery. He writes,

Previous to my arrival in Brazil, I had been led to believe, from the reports that have been published in England, that the conditions of the slave in that country was the most wretched that could be conceived... I am no advocate for the continuance of slavery; on the contrary, I should rejoice to see it swept from off the face of the earth – but I will never listen to those who represent the Brazilian slave-holder to be a cruel monster. My experience among them has been very great, and but very few wanton acts of cruelty have come under my own observation. The very temperament of the Brazilian is adverse to its general occurrence. They are of a slow and indolent habit, which causes much to be overlooked in a slave, that, by people of a more active and ardent disposition, would be severely punished.... On most of the plantations the slaves are well attended to, and appear to be very happy. Indeed, it is a characteristic of the negro, resulting no doubt from his careless disposition, that he very soon gets reconciled to this condition. I have conversed with slaves in all parts of the country, and have met with but very few who expressed any regret at having been taken from their own country, or a desire to return to it.⁸³

More overtly racist, which to a certain degree indicates the development of racist thought across the period of intense abolitionism in Britain, Gardner's take on Brazilian slavery is, in effect, the same as Mawe's: a necessary evil for the Brazilian economy and not that exploitative. He corroborated Mawe in other ways, particularly in discussing the success of British enterprise in

⁸³ Ibid., 17-18. There are hundreds of quotable passages demonstrating the bluntness of Gardner's racism (18-20): "Slaves, however, are variously inclined; from the very nature of a negro – his well-ascertained deficient intellectual capacity – the want of all education – the knowledge of his position in society, and the almost certainty of his never being able to raise himself above it – we need not wonder that there should be among them some who are restless, impatient of all control, and addicted to every vice. If the intellectual capacity of the negro be contrasted with the native Indian, it will not be difficult, on most points, to decide in favour of the latter. It is no small proof of the deficient mental endowment of the negro, that, even in remote parts of the empire, three or four white men can keep as many as two or three hundred of them in the most perfect state of submission. With the Indian this could never be accomplished, for they too once were allowed to be held as slaves, and even still are, on the northern and western frontier, although contrary to law. The Indian has the animal propensities less fully developed than the negro; hence he is more gently in his disposition, but, at the same time, is much more impatient of restraint. The character and capacity of the negro vary very much in the different nations. Those from the northern parts of Africa are by far the finest races. The slaves of Bahia are more difficult to manage than those of any other part of Brazil. Nearly the whole of the slave population of that place is from the Gold coast. Much have a greater share of mental energy, arising, perhaps, from their near relationship to the Moor and the Arab."

Brazil. While for Mawe it was a teaser for future investment, for Gardner it was merely fact and one that facilitated his travels: in addition to noting several thriving English businesses, he continually went to “English mining establishments” to trade British currency for local currency, trusting them more than Luso-Brazilian financiers.⁸⁴

In terms of the actual workings of Brazilian diamond mining, Gardner had little to report beyond a procedural description much like Mawe’s. His was not an advocacy project for earth science and engineering prowess, nor was it a fact-finding mission on mining techniques. For this reason and the fact that he did not trade on a “diamond expert” status, Gardner is not a diamond scientist per se, but I include him and his work because of its dedication to informing the British public about, as he saw it, the truths of Brazilian slavery. Gardner claimed authoritative knowledge based not only on his scientific training and proclivities because also he experience in colonial spaces, namely Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Regarding the plight of slaves in Brazil he writes, “I have had ample opportunity, since I left South America, for contrasting the condition of the slave of that country, with that of the Coolie in Mauritius and in India, but more particularly in Ceylon; and were I asked to which I would give the preference, I should certainly decide in favour of the former, although, at the same time, I could not but exclaim with Sterne, ‘Still Slavery! Still thou art a bitter draught!’” By drawing direct parallels to Ceylonese “legitimate” labour and in a way meant to close out debate rather than start it, Gardner attempted to diffuse critiques of Brazilian slavery by evoking the unspoken legitimacy of labour and exploitation in the British empire proper.

By attending to both Mawe’s and Gardner’s descriptions of Brazilian slavery, both bestsellers in the metropole, my intention has been to show how naturalist discourse about diamonds functioned on one level to educate the consumer public about diamond slave-labour

⁸⁴ Ibid., 46.

and on another to mitigate the connection between diamonds-as-commercial-products and the horrors of slavery. In the case of Mawe's work, the edifice of British science is held up as a way of redeeming diamond slave-labour even further. In this way, early diamond science attempted to naturalize the consumption of diamonds, the emerging purchase of modern scientific knowledge in Britain, Britain's involvement in Brazil and diamond production there.

In contrast to later scientists, Mawe's envisioning of the diamond world was more on the practical, collecting, and traditionally territorial level. His shop promoted a kind of naturalist cosmopolitanism, with palpable tones of Britain's and Europe's 'civilizing' or 'improving' mission vis-à-vis nature; as science historian Hugh Torrens has described it, "his shop was a resort for men of science from all over the world."⁸⁵ By the 1850s, this "collected" vision of the natural world would operate alongside a new tenor of scientific diamond discourse that captured the imagination of the general public. This was based on the knowledges and collections promulgated by Mawe and others working in Brazil and India that did not require the scientist to leave the metropole and have direct contact with the conditions of gemstone production. It was proselytized by those in the public eye, in high academic positions and with access to high society, and could be characterized by its hyperbole and fantastic "mapping" of the diamond world, in many ways effectively obscuring British involvement in the actual conditions of production even more than earlier treatments mitigated or condoned it. The emphasis on diamonds as worthy articles of value and science as particularly crucial for realizing and maintaining this value, however, remained a consistent thread.

The Great Exhibition of 1851 created an explosion in the number of scientists in the metropole trading off of their expertise in diamonds and seeking to sell science to the public through discussions of diamonds. This was in part due to the controversy over the merit of the

⁸⁵ Torrens, "Tennant, James (1808-1881)."

Koh-i-Noor Diamond, the latest edition to the Crown Jewelry and one that had garnered a tremendous amount of criticism as to its “lack of brilliance.”⁸⁶ After the Exhibition closed, Prince Albert assembled a crew of scientific experts to examine the Diamond and report on how it should be re-cut – importantly, he did *not* look to the various high society jewelers, the Garrards who traded as the Crown Jewellers, or diamond-cutting specialists, he went to scientists first. This speaks to the success of the natural sciences in co-opting diamond knowledge by the 1850s as well as Albert’s scientific proclivities. James Tennant, a geologist and mineralogist, David Brewster, a physicist specializing in optics, William Pole, an engineer, and Nevil Story-Maskelyne, the leading mineralogist at the British Museum who specialized in crystallography, were all invited to render an opinion on the Diamond. The Koh-i-Noor itself was an item of major scientific and public interest: Sebastian Garrard, the “Keeper of Her Majesty’s Jewels”, who housed the Diamond after the Exhibition, was inundated with requests for models of the Diamond from “the Universities, from Geological and other Learned Societies, also from several foreign ambassadors and others,” both before and after it was re-cut. The models the Garrard House made were shown, among other places, in the British Museum until 1881, when they were moved to the Natural History Museum in Kensington, where they can be seen today.⁸⁷

It is striking how easy it is to connect Mawe's legacy of diamond expertise to this mid-century generation of diamond scientists: James Tennant was taken on as an apprentice of the Mawes in 1824 and was heavily involved with the business until his death in 1881, purchasing it from Sarah Mawe in 1840. That year he also inherited her title, “Mineralogist to the Queen.” He

⁸⁶ Mayall Beard, *John Tallis's History and Description of the Crystal Palace and the Exhibition of the World's Industry in 1851*, vol. 1,2,6 (London and New York: John Tallis and Co., 1851), II: 150.

⁸⁷ Royal Archives, Windsor, RA/VIC/ADDLMSS/T/65, R&S Garrard to C.B. Phillips, 25 September 1852. See also RA/VIC/ADDLMSS/T/51, Charles König to Lord Camden, Jan 7 1851: König, as director of geology at the British Museum, discusses how best to make replicas of the Koh-i-Noor based on other plaster casts he had had taken of French diamonds such as the Sancy.

continued to cultivate the shop as a center of diamond expertise, amassing the largest collection of diamond crystals in England by 1849. From 1850 to 1867 he served as a lecturer on practical mineralogy and geology to gentlemen cadets in the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich and later served at King's college.⁸⁸ Tennant, Brewster, Pole, and Story-Maskelyne, attained a level of celebrity for their association with the celebrated Diamond and used it to their advantage – to sell copy in the case of all but Story-Maskelyne and to sell science. As we have already seen, Pole expounded on the virtue of diamonds as heavenly light incarnate publishing for a large audience. Tennant routinely lectured on the need for emigrants to look for diamonds in colonial settings, believing this would strengthen the empire. Brewster, an incredibly prolific and religious scientist-public commentator, celebrated the perfection of diamonds; and Story-Maskelyne, responsible for instituting the mineralogical classification on display at the Natural History Museum, established himself as the leading expert on not only the Koh-i-Noor but the history of diamonds in general.⁸⁹

This group of scientists who would all trade off of their brush with diamond celebrity and establish themselves as experts on diamonds, in many ways posed a different kind of science than Mawe's and the early nineteenth-century brand. While Story-Maskelyne, in particular, still placed a premium on colonial collecting, by and large this group practiced a brand of diamond science that centered the scientist in the metropole, engaging with the grand collections of London museums already in existence instead of in the field. This is not to say that ideas about empire or Britain's power within a global setting dropped out of their discourse, but they shifted

⁸⁸ Torrens, "Tennant, James (1808-1881).", Torrens, "Mawe, John (1766-1829)."

⁸⁹ *Times*, July 19 1852, 8e; C.H. Gibbs-Smith, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Commemorative Album*, (New York: Dover, 1970, c. 1852), 101. Hugh Torrens, "Tennant, James (1808-1881)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford UP, 2004). Nevil Story-Maskelyne Papers, "Lectures on the Mineralogy of Antiquity," Natural History Museum, DF 5001/7; See also DF 5001/1-14; A.E. Gunther, *The Founders of Science at the British Museum, 1753-1900*, (Suffolk: Halesworth Press, 1980), 109-114. See also Henry Alexander Millar and Arthur William Rucker, "Maskelyne, Mervyn Herbert Nevil Story-," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-6).

into an undeniably fantastic, but no less revealing, realm. The wholesale adoption of manufactured diamonds – mined, cut, and polished – as symbols of natural history mingled with the naturalization of respectable diamond consumption in Britain.

While Mawe's and Tennant's "mapping" of the diamond trade was practical and embedded in the economic workings of the imperial-nation, Brewster's work on diamonds traded on hyperbole, evoking ideas of a universal aesthetic, market, and imperial value. He was the best known of the diamond scientists under review here, was an ordained evangelical, and published on topics that discussed humankind's relationship to the divine as revealed through science. He placed a premium on sight as the sense of the mind and the soul, on the study of optics as a religious vocation, and light as a tool of god.⁹⁰ Like Tennant and Mawe, he had to make money off of his scientific expertise to survive, and his ability to command a reading audience was his strength. In the *North British Review*, for scientific and general audiences alike, he wrote a treatise on diamonds and their history in 1852:

Over this globe of ours there rules many a mighty sovereign – on its surface are many rich and powerful empires – many a cloud capt tower and gorgeous palace rises above its plains – many a mass of gold and silver has been wrenched from its bowels – and many a gem of art has arrested the intellectual eye; - but more loved than Sovereigns – more prized than empires – more coveted than gold – more admired than the creations of Raphael, is the sparkling diamond which flashes in the imperial crown or adorns the royal scepter, or adds to beauty its only “foreign aid.” Nor is this an ideal appreciation of its rarity and worth. *It is in truth the very essence of property...*In vain would the vanquished monarch strive to remove his bags of gold, or transport his territorial domains; but a diamond is an empire made portable, with which he might purchase a better kingdom and mount a prouder throne. Had the treasury of Croesus been invested in brilliants he might have founded a nobler Lydia beyond the reach of his Persian invader.⁹¹ [italics are Brewster's]

⁹⁰ David Brewster, *A Treatise on New Philosophical Instruments for Various Purposes in the Arts and Sciences with Experiments on Light and Colours* (Edinburgh: John Murray, 1813), David Sir Brewster, *More Worlds Than One : The Creed of the Philosopher and the Hope of the Christian* ([S.l.]: Murray, 1854), Heaton, *Imperial Penny Postage [Microform] : Speech at Manchester on May 2nd 1892 (1892)*.

⁹¹ David Brewster, "The Diamond – Its History, Properties, and Origin," *The North British Review*, 18, Nov (1852), 234.

The overtures to property (and the underlying anxiety regarding the need to monitor property), especially given the central place that property rights have in the structures of British liberalism, could not be more explicit – in terms of utter fantasy, Brewster argues that to control diamonds is to control the world. Here, he directly translates diamonds, themselves, into territory and empire, effectively placing a particular mineral at the heart of British power. That diamonds ought to be articles of scientific fascination as well as object of value are conflated truisms here. The diamonds themselves contain a nature proclivity for empire, “an empire made portable” that is unquestionable. By the end of this paragraph, Brewster was careful to put Britian's diamond empire into the context of a religious universe by noting that though diamonds rule the earthly domain, they do not have sway in heaven.

Brewster makes this commodification and territorialization of diamonds even more manifest when describing the Koh-i-Noor: "It is difficult to express in words or in numbers the commercial value of the Diamond; but we may truly say that a string of Koh-i-noors, a furlong in length, would purchase the fee-simple of the globe, while a ring engirdling the Arctic Zone would buy up the whole planetary system."⁹² Not only is the world for purchase, but the entire galaxy, with diamonds as the only recognizable currency available in this rhetoric.

Brewster, a disciple of crystallography, was a great friend of Nevil Story-Maskelyne. In looking at the Natural History Museum's relationship, specifically, with diamond discourses, the personality and career of Nevil Story-Maskelyne, Keeper of the Mineralogy Collection from 1857 until 1880 and professor of mineralogy at Oxford, reveals much about Victorian fascination with diamonds. Story-Maskelyne was an important public figure and shaper of this fascination in his own right, setting himself up as one of the foremost ‘diamond experts’ of his day. Unlike

⁹² Ibid., 234.

Tennant, Mawe, and Brewster, he was independently wealthy and the holder of a country estate. Story-Maskelyne began his training as a mineralogist at Oxford and ended his career there as a don; in him we see how diamond appreciation was taken into the heart of academe. Significantly, Story-Maskelyne was a proponent for the close relationship between natural sciences, social sciences, and artistic learning.⁹³

He provided a map of the diamond world of a different kind from Brewster or Mawe, but to the same effects of naturalizing diamond worth and implicating imperial culture in diamond appreciation. His map was to be commercial, geographical and historical; his goal, to draw direct links between British material culture and that of the ancient Roman empire. In a series of public lectures on the mineralogy of antiquity, he reasoned, “the Minerals known to the Ancients and valued by them as gems must be the same as these we possess now. Our task therefore consists in assigning to them the right names given to them in antiquity.”⁹⁴ As I discussed in the context of Mawe’s engagement with Pliny, this easy link with an imperial past that loomed so large over Victorian conceptions of empire was not as simple as Story-Maskelyne made it out to be.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, he employed a blatantly teleological method in evaluating ancient texts that mentioned diamonds. Moreover, he conflated diamond appreciation with civilization, based on the mandate that, as he lectured, “Civilization demands from commerce the supply of luxuries no less than necessities.”⁹⁶ Not only did he argue that diamonds were valued by the Romans in much the same way that Britons valued them in the nineteenth century, but that this was a natural phenomenon associated with higher stages of social development. Instead of favouring diamond

⁹³ “The Collections at the British Museum,” *The Times*, 6 October 1863, 8-9, anonymously written by Story-Maskelyne.

⁹⁴ Nevil Story-Maskelyne, “Lectures on the Mineralogy of Antiquity,” Natural History Museum Archives, DF 5001/7.

⁹⁵ Nevil Story-Maskelyne, “Notes on jewels etc, with extract from Theophrastus, Dioscorides, and Pliny,” Natural History Museum Archives, DF 5001/6; Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade*.

⁹⁶ Nevil Story-Maskelyne. ““Lectures on the Mineralogy of Antiquity,” Natural History Museum Archives, DF 5001/7.

appreciation as a given universal, Story-Maskelyne argued that the "true" and originary appreciation of the mineral was in classical Europe, as noted by Pliny, and exported outwards. In this way, Story-Maskelyne's historical vision of the diamond world directly mimicked a vision of Britain's civilizing mission.⁹⁷

The Keeper believed the collecting of mineral specimens to be vital for the health of the nation, particularly vis-à-vis other European imperial-colonial collectors. In an anonymous letter he wrote to the editor of the *Times* protesting the removal of the natural history collections from the British Museum to the newly-planned Natural History Museum in Kensington, he offered the reading public a comparative analysis of the great natural history collections of the world: London, St. Petersburg, Vienna, Paris, Prague, Washington, Amsterdam, Stockholm, and Saxony. In Story-Maskelyne's mind, the maintenance of the collections was uppermost in maintaining the prowess of British science and commerce in the Western world.⁹⁸

In addition to this, Story-Maskelyne's public hobby was to compile a descriptive list and location of 'celebrities', or large diamonds that had come into the public record. He wrote a multi-chapter manuscript on the history and characteristics of the Koh-i-Noor. The constant rehashing of information about a pantheon of diamond celebrities became a staple of Victorian print culture whenever one famous diamond was referred to. A discursive map of the world based on who had what diamond was continually recreated, as if diamond owning was a premature Scramble for Africa, or other material race. Mineralogical displays featured the Orlov in Russia, the Regent in France, the Piggott in Egypt, the Koh-i-Noor in Britain, and so on,

⁹⁷ Nevil Story-Maskelyne Papers, "Lectures on the Mineralogy of Antiquity," Natural History Museum, DF 5001/7; See also DF 5001/1-14; A.E. Gunther, *The Founders of Science at the British Museum, 1753-1900*, (Suffolk: Halesworth Press, 1980), 109-114. See also Henry Alexander Millar and Arthur William Rucker, "Maskelyne, Mervyn Herbert Nevil Story-," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-6).

⁹⁸ "The Collections at the British Museum," *The Times*, October 6 and 7, 1863, 8-9, and 7-8, respectively, written anonymously by Nevil Story-Maskelyne.

creating a fantastic narrative of the contours of global geopolitical power and Britain's place within it.⁹⁹

The most obvious achievements of Story-Maskelyne's career as Keeper were the unprecedented expansion and concomitant reclassification of the entire collection between 1857 and 1863, ostensibly based on the crystallo-chemical system of Gustav Rose.¹⁰⁰ This technique favored light appreciation, optical analysis, and worked well with cultural ideas of diamonds as the supreme beings of the mineralogical world vis-à-vis plants and animals. Mineralogy, a discipline specifically designed to identify and classify inorganic, naturally-occurring matter, presented a myriad of complications for the scholar who attempted just that, to develop a classificatory system. According to classical texts, Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* chief among them, natural history was divided into three categories: animal, vegetable, and mineral. By the mid-nineteenth century, orthodox zoology and botany employed versions of a Linnean system of classification (kingdoms, families, species, races, genus and so on) based on organisms displaying certain similar and inheritable traits. Yet this system could not be applied to the "Mineral World" – significant traits were much more difficult to define, observe, and place in a hierarchy, the relationship between minerals was incomprehensible, and the isolation of a mineral "individual" (with consistent composition all the way through) was problematic at best. There was no food chain in the mineral world, no high order of species versus low, no obvious comparative unit. The arrangement of the collection that Story-Maskelyne favoured was based on, as he characterized it, "a philosophical method."¹⁰¹ Carbon crystal, then, was given the "monarchical" position in the "kingdom", not based on hardness, as was the case with Pliny, or

⁹⁹ Nevil Story-Maskelyne Papers, Natural History Museum Archives, DF 5001/2-7. It appears that Story-Maskelyne's interest in diamond history and the histories of famous diamonds was sparked by his connection with the re-cutting of the Koh-i-Noor in 1851.

¹⁰⁰ Gunther, *The Founders of Science at the British Museum*, 112.

¹⁰¹ *Times*, Oct. 6 1863, 6.

even solely crystallographic analysis. Diamonds were placed at the top of mineralogical pyramid because Story-Maskelyne believed diamond appreciation to be a cornerstone of civilization, a social ‘norm’ beyond question. It was by and large this arrangement that the British and Natural History Museums reflected for the next century; indeed the Natural History Museum’s mineralogy gallery today bears many of Story-Maskelyne’s disciplinary decisions and philosophical interests. One of those interests was the study of meteorites – which were significant to Story-Maskelyne because they often contained diamonds.¹⁰²

Finally, there was William Pole, engineer and lecturer at University College London, who was good friends with James Tennant and his network of colonial collectors and field scientists. He was less dependent upon his fame as a diamond scientist, to be sure and would become a near-constant advisor to the British, French, and Japanese governments on projects that included reforming domestic railways and London’s water and sewage systems, rifle engineering in the War Office, the surveying of Algeria, and the construction of the Suez Canal.¹⁰³ While I have already discussed Pole’s rhetoric on diamonds and light, he also made direct overtures to the respectability of a modest kind of diamond consumption for men in his intervention into Victorian print culture via *Macmillan’s Magazine*:

For one half of the human race diamonds are delirium – the true eyes of the basilisk: their power over the sex we dare not do more than hint at, and the woman who would profess herself indifferent to their fascination simply belies her feminine nature. As regards the less decorative sex, the diamond forms altogether an exception to the usual idea of the propriety of ornament. A man who bedizens himself with gold or jewels in general is rightly pronounced an empty fop; but the wearing of a fine diamond will only mark its possessor as having a superior taste for what is most admirable and beautiful among the production of nature.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Nevil Story-Maskelyne Papers, Natural History Museum, DF 5001/2-7.

¹⁰³ John Smith Flett, *The First Hundred Years of the Geological Survey of Great Britain*.

¹⁰⁴ Pole and Tennant, *Diamonds. ... Extracted from Macmillan’s Magazine. ... With a Note on the Imperial State Crown and Its Jewels*, by J. Tennant, 3.

This vaguely misogynist passage cuts women out of any intellectual appreciation of diamonds while naturalizing the linkage between femininity and diamond admiration. Pole's rhetoric, here, effectively cuts women out of the role of diamond science, not to mention natural science altogether. It also reveals the space that diamond science allowed men to appreciate diamonds without compromising ideas about their masculinity. Pole links this diamond-as-emblem-of-nature appreciation with respectable male diamond jewelry. This line of thinking, of which Pole was a participant in as well as a proselytizer of, had a very real manifestation in the jewelry market: jewelers included diamonds in the construction of pocket watches, which had the effect of selling diamonds to men and, later in the century, were thought to recommend pocket watches to women. Moreover, as Moira Donald has argued, pocket watches were a way for the "everyman" to personally participate in "modern science", by measuring the everyday.¹⁰⁵ Here, we have the conflation of diamonds, nature, science, masculinity and consumption taken up in a middling class, respectable fashion.

While the Koh-i-Noor can be said to have done something for the profiles of these scientists, the question could be posed: did they play a meaningful role in the makeover of the Koh-i-Noor? In a word: no. Albert's team of experts did not come up with any magic formula for redeeming the gem. Brewster's is the only written assessment that survives. In it he gives the Prince-Consort a numbered list of recommendations, including what was by then obvious to any jewelry connoisseur, "in adopting a new form...one perfectly symmetrical should be preferred." He thought by examining it with a transmitter light, the Diamond's lackluster quality could proven beyond doubt, but again, as the bad press during at the Exhibition attested, this was not in question. By the end of the list, Brewster was forced to concede, "I would prefer the opinion of a

¹⁰⁵ Moira Donald, "The Greatest Necessity for Every Rank of Men': Gender, Clocks and Watches," in *Gender and Material Culture in Historical Perspective*, ed. Moira Donald and Linda Hurcombe (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000). See also *Jeweller and Metalworker* (London), Aug 1 1888, 229.

Diamond Cutter to that of a scientific individual as to the proper mode of placing the facets, and the proper inclination to give them.”¹⁰⁶ The diamond expert could offer little expertise of relevance, and it was professional diamond cutters from Amsterdam who actually devised and oversaw the re-cutting of the gem, despite the veneer of academic diamond science that was constantly alluded to in press reports of the re-cut.¹⁰⁷

Scientific discourse elevated diamond appreciation in the first half of the nineteenth century in ways that recommended diamonds to "respectable" consumers. Through this scientific discourse, metropolitan readers were told of British activities in Brazil but were reminded that diamonds were good for the nation, science helped the nation gain diamonds, and thus British intervention in Brazil was ultimately a progressive measure (for both Brazil and Britain) despite the persistence of slavery there. The association of diamonds with progress, light, modernity, and civilization mingled with prior and concomitant associations of the gemstone with irrationality, the Orient, women, and depraved autocracy. The next chapter explores how the representation of the diamond as progressive and rational was severely challenged in the context of the acquisition and display of the Koh-i-Noor in the Great Exhibition of 1851.

¹⁰⁶ Royal Archives, Windsor, RA/VIC/AddMssT/54, 29 December 1851, "Koh-i-Noor Diamond", David Brewster to the Prince Albert.

¹⁰⁷ *Times*, July 19 1852, 8e. The recutting of the gem will be taken up in detail in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: "Every Great Nation Has Its Diamond": Koh-i-Noor¹

Whereas the discovery and development narratives of the Brazilian- and South African-based diamond commodity chains were familiar and readily available to the reading and exhibition-going public in startling detail, the Victorians preferred to imagine Indian production as essentially ahistorical and unknowable, an orientalist fantasy. As *Jeweller and Metalworker* put it in 1874, "For ages unnumbered India has been famous for wealth in precious stones. Our geographers still speak of it as a land of gold and diamonds; and the popular idea is that its mineral resources are immense and inexhaustible."² The point of the article was to alert readers to the fact that in India "of late years comparatively few diamonds are found, and the few attempts that have been made to reopen the mines have proved unprofitable."³ That this information would still be newsworthy to people involved in the gemstone trades in 1874 -- when Indian production had been virtually negligible for over fifty years -- illustrates just how persistent and pervasive the association of India with diamonds was in the Victorian imagination.

This chapter explores how the imagined connection between India, Britain, and diamond wealth was deployed and debated during the display of the Koh-i-Noor Diamond at the Great Exhibition of 1851. At 105.60 metric carats and measuring 36.00 × 31.90 × 13.04 mm, the Koh-i-Noor is not the largest diamond in the world, nor the clearest, nor the brightest.⁴ It remains, however, one of the most famous pieces of royal material culture in Britain today, as visitors to the Tower of London know. Confiscated on behalf of the British crown from the property of the Punjabi maharajah Duleep Singh in 1849, it has been housed with the crown jewels ever since.

¹ A version of this chapter was published as "Koh-i-Noor: Empire, Diamonds, and the Performance of British Material Culture," *Journal of British Studies*, 48:2 (April 2009), 391-419.

² "The Mines and Minerals of India," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, October 15 1874, 256.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Ian Balfour, *Famous Diamonds*, 3rd ed. ed. (London: Christie's Books, 1997), 172.

It was shown as the property of Queen Victoria for the first time in public during the Great Exhibition of 1851. When the diamond entered public discourse in Britain, the court and colonial government used the biography of the stone to cast British conquest in India in a progressive light. The dominance of this narrative was severely challenged once the Koh-i-Noor went on display: the stone's physique did not conform to exhibition-goers' aesthetic expectations. Easily one of the biggest attractions at the Exhibition, spectators nevertheless found the gemstone to be dull and disappointing. The satirical magazine *Punch* referred to it as the "Mountain of Darkness," making a play on the English translation of Koh-i-Noor as "Mountain of Light."⁵ Following the Exhibition, the Prince Consort had the diamond, then about 186 carats, recut.

Specifically, this chapter examines the appropriation and display of the Koh-i-Noor diamond and its controversial fashioning and refashioning as "the great diamond of England." In the context of the rest of the exhibition, the diamond registered more as an emblem of a frivolous, feminized, and orientalized luxury commodity than as a proper mascot for the "Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations." Controversy ensued: gendered arguments about diamond consumption implicated Victoria in anxieties about the power of the irrational female consumer, easily corrupted by glitter. Spectators and commentators were more apt to read the diamond as an emblem of the seemingly old-fashioned plunder imperialism of late-eighteenth century *nabobs* like Warren Hastings than as a progressive acquisition fit for the figurehead of a modern Britain. The language of mid-nineteenth century imperialism depicted colonial exploitation as ensuring the future of Britain's industrial progress alongside furthering the "civilizing mission." The degree to which the Koh-i-Noor -- and Victoria's public, gendered

⁵ "The Front Row of the Shilling Gallery," *Punch*, July 5 1851, 11.

appropriation of it -- did not seem to fit in with these mid-century "respectable," imperial values set the stage for the stone's recutting. I argue that the Koh-i-Noor's refashioning was an attempt to reconstitute the stone as a gemological component of Britain's civilizing mission, where the weight of British science and machinery were literally brought to bear on the diamond's structure.

This image of diamond-cutting as redemptive or a civilizing process was extended to diamonds in general, bound up in the diamond science discourse I discussed in the previous chapter. Following the 1851 sensation, the remade Koh-i-Noor was displayed at exhibition in London in 1862 but with comparatively little controversy. As before, the gemstone was housed in the east nave of the building but this time was contained within a display put on jointly by the British jewelry house and Dutch diamond-cutting firm that were involved in its recutting. It was shown alongside a newly-unearthed Brazilian "monster diamond," the 125-carat Star of the South, and scores of other diamonds "in every stage of progress, from the rough stone to the finished brilliant."⁶ In this context, it registered as more commodity and less *thing*, more an article of trade and less an archive of imperial acquisition. Its biography, while unique and still of interest, was swallowed up in the basic civilizing narrative of the general diamond commodity chain on display at exhibition. In other words, the stone's "Indianness", though not entirely forgotten (as evident in Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* in 1867), was tempered by being collapsed into the general category of colonial "raw" material made modern and useful for European consumers.

It was this characterization of the Koh-i-Noor as being the recipient of benevolent, progressive intervention (to whatever effect), that Charles Reed, the Liberal educationist, utilized

⁶ "The International Exhibition," *Times*, May 3 1862, 11.

when he deemed the stone "the great diamond of England" in 1866.⁷ He referred to it in a widely circulated new-year address on the education of the poor written in the form of a Sunday School sermon. In it he argued that the integrity of Britain's poor revealed them as proverbial "diamonds in the dust" awaiting educational uplift: "As [all stones] are capable of being cut by the lapidary, and all show a bright surface, so all mental power is capable of development and polishing; and thus we begin at length to see a glimmer of light within the dark prison in which the ruined mind of the poor idiot is enchained." Thus, Reed argued that "God raises diamonds from the dust."⁸ To be sure, some stones shone more brightly than others, but all responded favorably to intervention, however circumscribed the response.

Recent studies of material culture have asked us to appreciate the mutually constitutive condition of things and their contexts as they move through both time and space, shifting from being things, to commodities, to things again and all the while performing different cultural, economic, and ideological work for different audiences. Things could oppress, constrain, and literally weigh a person down; they could also enable the performance of identity, inculcate ideology, and effect a sense of individualism, liberty and empowerment.⁹ Elaine Freedgood has shown that the process of disassociating the product from its conditions of production and distribution, so integral to Marx's explanation of the commodity fetish, was far from complete in the nineteenth century. Instead, Victorian consumers -- of products, spectacles, and ideas -- were in many ways hyper-aware of where things came from and the networks of exploitation that were

⁷ Charles Reed, *Diamonds in the Dust: A New Year's Address for Sunday School* (London: Sunday School Union, 1866), 13.

⁸ *Ibid.*, quotes from 14, 22. G.C. Boase, "Reed, Sir Charles (1819-1881)," rev. M.C. Curthoys, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy2.library.uiuc.edu/view/article/23270>, accessed Feb 17 2009]

⁹ Bill Brown, ed., "Thing Theory," in *Things* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 1-16; Brown, *A Sense of Things: the Object Matter of American Literature* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003); Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan, eds., *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1-8.

in place to deliver these goods. This knowledge inhered in the meanings of things within imperialism and imperial culture.¹⁰ Other writings such as Jennie Batchelor's and Cora Kaplan's recent edited volume *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830* (2007) and Erin Mackie's now classic *Market à la Mode* (1997), have explored how gendered anxieties about things, the market, and consumption have animated the formation of an empire-laden modernity as women have negotiated their way within it.¹¹

Taking my cue from the above literature, in the remainder of this chapter I show how the Koh-i-Noor's past and transmission to Britain as an artifact inhered in its meanings at the Great Exhibition alongside knowledge about diamond production and distribution in general. What is ironic is that this Indian diamond – as well as the very specific chain of events that transported it to London -- was appropriated into British material culture at a time when the actual movement of rough diamonds from India into Britain was virtually negligible. The persist association of diamonds with Indianness, the “orient,” or British imperialism in India, worked to obscure, naturalize, and depoliticize Britain's active involvement in diamond production in Brazil and Brazilian slavery. For example, a popular play in 1852 by Charles Rice, *Harlequin and the Koh-i-Noor; or, the Princess and the Pearl*, merely transferred the structure of Brazilian diamond production (as well as familiar tropes of Brazilian diamond mining travelogues) to an ahistorical Indian context: an Indian slave finds the Koh-i-Noor, survives a number of betrayals, and eventually wins his freedom and the hand of daughter of the King of Golconda.¹² Some commentators, however, refused to allow knowledge about Brazilian production and the

¹⁰ Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006), 12-29.

¹¹ Erin Skye Mackie, *Market a La Mode : Fashion, Commodity, and Gender in the Tatler and the Spectator* (Baltimore ; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

¹² Charles Rice, *Book of the Words of the Opening of the Celebrated Pantomime Entitled Harlequin and the Koh-I-Noor; or, the Princess and the Pearl* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1852).

diamond market in general to be eclipsed by the story of the Koh-i-Noor in 1851. Thus, just as the Star of the South and the Koh-i-Noor were put into competition in the 1862 exhibition, imaginings of the diamond commodity chain as primarily “oriental” competed against knowledge of the Brazil-centric chain. Nevertheless, debates about the Koh-i-Noor set the stage for the diamond's refashioning as a symbol of Britain's moral empire and the appreciation of European-cut diamonds as metonyms of the civilizing mission at home and abroad.

* * *

In order to understand knowledge and fantasy about Indian diamond production in the Victorian period, we must first discuss the history of Indian diamond production in general. The archive for ancient to early modern diamond production in India is limited but extensive enough to document important changes over time and give a sense of mining techniques and market practices throughout the centuries of Indian production. As to the date when India first started producing diamonds for market, economic historian Godehard Lenzen lists the first known written mention of the Indian diamond mines as being in the Sanskrit political treatise *Arthashastra* which was possibly written by Chānakya under the penname Kautilya or Vishnugupta. The authorship and date of the piece is controversial with some scholars identifying it with Chānakya (who lived circa 350–283 BCE) and others arguing that it could not have been written before the second century CE. The text was lost sometime in the twelfth century and was only rediscovered just after the turn of the twentieth century. Eudoxus Cyzici, the Greek explorer who visited India around 120 BCE, also wrote of alluvial diamond mining there. We know that by the time trade routes were established between Rome and India (at the beginning of the Common Era) Indian diamond mining was highly developed, having moved beyond simple alluvial gathering to stage mining techniques. The Sanskrit gemological text

Ratnapariksa by Buddha Bhatta, written before CE 600, is the first detailed mention of the mines and especially valued attributes of the gemstone. Other Sanskrit materials on early Indian production include the astrological treatise *Brhat Samhita* by Varahamihira (6th century CE), and lapidary works such as the *Agastimata*, the *Navratna Pariksa*, and *Agastya Ratnapariksa*, written sometime between the 6th and 13th centuries CE.¹³

In addition to these texts, the archive on Indian diamond mining includes Ahmad ibn Yusuf Al Tifaschi's twelfth-century text on gemology, which remains the distinguished Arabic component of the early archive. Many scholars of Indian diamonds rely on travelogues written by European writers such as Marco Polo (1271-1295), Odorico da Pordenone (1317-1329), Niccolo dei Conti (1415-1440) and Cesare Federici (1563-1581). While the Portuguese physician, Garcia d'Orto, stationed in Goa, wrote a detailed account of the Indian mines and diamond trade in 1565, it is without doubt French merchant Jean Baptiste Tavernier's two volume *Travels in India* (1676) that formed (and still forms) the bulk of knowledge about Indian diamond production before the eighteenth century.¹⁴

In great detail, Tavernier described a system whereby as many as 60,000 miners worked mainly alluvial deposits within a wide area north and northwest of Madras, at the behest of the local rulers who had leased claims from the king of Golconda. Large diamonds were reserved for the local claimholder; exceptional diamonds had to be forwarded to the king. Most English translations of his travelogue use the word "miner" to describe the workers and Tavernier did not use the familiar French word for slave (*l'esclave*) though the nineteenth-century diamond expert

¹³ Godehard Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade*, trans. F. Bradley (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 29-34.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Louis Deulafait, in paraphrasing Tavernier, commonly referred to Indian workers as slaves.¹⁵ In the Victorian orientalist imagination that divided all of India up into kings, courtesans, and slaves, the diamond worker fell into the slave camp; in reality, however harsh the conditions of production for Indian diamonds were, the workers were not slaves in the seventeenth-century European conception of the term. Thus, though Charles Rice's play dramatizes how an Indian slave is able to buy his freedom with the stone that will eventually become the Koh-i-Noor, this is a trope taken from Brazilian travelogues and not indicative of the Indian context.¹⁶

Lenzen reasons that though there was no official decree that kept the majority of diamonds within India, a system of purposely low production levels and "filters" worked to ensure that few diamonds moved beyond a regional scale before the mid-seventeenth century: diamonds were in high demand, production control by Indian rulers was the norm, and local elites tended to purchase the stones first, leaving only a few parcels for Arab merchants to circulate – very few were taken to Europe and the diamond trade between India and China consisted of industrial-quality stones used for jade engraving.¹⁷

By at least 1660, what many believe to be just after the zenith of Indian production, this dynamic had shifted: Anglo-Dutch-Jewish and Jewish-Portuguese traders based out of Madras and Goa were buying roughs from Golconda and directing them to Amsterdam, London, and

¹⁵ See Louis Dieulafait, *Diamonds and Precious Stones* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Company, 1874), Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Les Six Voyages De Jean Baptiste Tavernier En Turquie, En Perse, Et Aux Indes...* (Paris: G. Clouzier, 1676), Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Les Six Voyages De Monsieur Jean-Baptiste Tavernier ... En Turquie, En Perse, Et Aux Indes, Pendant L'espace De Quarante Ans & Par Toutes Les Routes Que L'on Peut Tenir : Accompagnez D'observations Particulieres Sur La Qualite, La Religion, Le Gouvernement, Les Coutumes & Le Commerce De Chaque Pais*, Nouvelle ed. ed. (Rouen: Eustache Herault, 1713), Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Collections of Travels through Turkey into Persia and the East-Indies...* trans. J. Phillips and E. Everard (2 vol. London, 1684), Jean Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India*, trans. Valentine Ball (London: Macmillan, 1889, c. 1676).

¹⁶ Rice, *Book of the Words of the Opening of the Celebrated Pantomine Entitled Harlequin and the Koh-I-Noor; or, the Princess and the Pearl*. For one example of the Brazilian trope, see John Mawe, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil, Particularly in the Gold and Diamond Districts ..., Including a Voyage to the Rio De La Plata, and an Historical Sketch of the Revolution of Buenos Ayres. Illustrated with Engravings* (London: John Murray, 1812).

¹⁷ Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade*, 26-110.

Lisbon. While the Dutch East India Company became involved in the trade, the British EIC turned a blind eye to it, preferring not to make an issue out of this trade that by-passed the monopoly -- in part because EIC servants used the traders to move their own private wealth out of India but also because it would have been counterproductive to police.¹⁸ Thus, for the high period of Indian production, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the East India Companies of the British, Dutch, Portuguese and French did not control the Golconda areas of the Deccan where the mines were situated. Portuguese incursion into Goa purposefully did not disturb the ruler of Golconda's operations there; instead buyers, European or otherwise, operating in a private capacity traded in rough diamonds through Indian dealers who had been commissioned by the court of Golconda. As Gedalia Yogev has shown, trade to Europe from India was conducted mostly by transnational businesses built around family ties in the Sephardic Jewish community. Such as was the case with the Prager-Salomons' business, male family members were situated in major centers throughout the diamond world (Bombay, Calcutta, Lisbon, Constantinople, Cairo, Amsterdam, Paris, London, Rio de Janeiro, and even St. Petersburg) and stones would be transported through networks of trust and family connection.¹⁹

As Indian production fell beginning in the 1780s, many buyers simply migrated to Brazil. Lyon Prager was among the eighteenth century traders who chose to stay in India. As early as 1790 he wrote to his uncle, Israel Levin Salomon complaining of low yields and the poor quality of stones available and continued this theme until 1796. The business, which had always traded

¹⁸ Gedalia Yogev, *Diamonds and Coral : Anglo-Dutch Jews and Eighteenth-Century Trade* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), 82-3.

¹⁹ Jonathan Irvine Israel, *The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World, 1606-1661* (Oxford Oxfordshire: Clarendon Press, 1982), Jonathan Irvine Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford England New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1989), Jonathan Irvine Israel, *Empires and Entrepôts : The Dutch, the Spanish Monarchy, and the Jews, 1585-1713* (London, U.K. ; Roncevert, WV: Hambledon Press, 1990), Jonathan Irvine Israel, *The Anglo-Dutch Moment : Essays on the Glorious Revolution and Its World Impact* (Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Yogev, *Diamonds and Coral : Anglo-Dutch Jews and Eighteenth-Century Trade*. This eighteenth century pattern of trade is something I take up in Chapter 1.

in a diverse array of commodities, dropped rough diamonds from its inventory and most likely switched its specialty to opium and the trade between Britain, India and China.²⁰

This is not to say that buyers such as the Pragers were the only conduits of rough diamonds to Europe. The British East India Company was keenly aware that its officers and servants routinely made expeditions to the Deccan to purchase precious stones before sailing back to Europe; they encouraged it as an efficient way to transmit wealth to the metropole.²¹ Publications such as Henry Draper Steel's *The India Officer's and Trader's Pocket-Guide, in Purchasing the Drugs and Spices of Asia and the East-Indies With Practical Directions for the Choice of Diamonds* (1789), which was standard issue to incoming EIC officers, attests to this.²² Steel's work does not seek to educate its readers as to the natural science of diamonds, rather it is concerned with how the Indian market operated and how a layperson could best negotiate it. The manual informs about the criteria stones were judged on by traders (colour, cleanness, and shape).²³

In terms of production, however, between 1677 and the beginning of the nineteenth century the East India Company maintained only a passive interest in the conditions of diamond mining in the Deccan. Their surveillance amounts to a collection of travelogues, often published

²⁰ The Pragers have left the most comprehensive records of 18th century diamond trading available and form the basis of Gedalia Yogev's research. Yogev, *Diamonds and Coral: Anglo-Dutch Jews and Eighteenth-Century Trade*. See National Archives, PRO C111/1-14 and C111/146, especially C111/14. See also British Library, OIOC, Mss Eur F218/52 and Mss Eur F218/56 for instances of Salomon facilitating Robert Clive's diamond buying and remittances. For other records of Clive's diamond buying, see Mss Eur F218/89 and 90.

²¹ Bruce. P Lenman, "The East India Company and the Trade in Non-Metallic Precious Materials from Sir Thomas Roe to Diamond Pitt," in *The Worlds of the East India Company*, ed. H. V. Bowen, Margarette Lincoln, and Nigel Rigby (Rochester: The Boydell Press, 2002).

²² The Company had many restrictions on what could be brought back to Britain: "The company do not permit to be exported, in private trade, cloth or any sorts of woollen goods, copper, warlike stores, clocks, toys, or other articles ornamented with jewels and bullion." Henry Draper Steel, *The India Officer's and Trader's Pocket-Guide, in Purchasing the Drugs and Spices of Asia and the East-Indies: With Practical Directions for the Choice of Diamonds, and an Accurate Account of the Chinese Touch- Needles. ... Compiled from Authority by H. D. S*, Second edition. ed. (London:: printed for D. Steel,... 1789), 2. The association of diamonds with India will be taken up in more detail in Chapter 3 in the context of the Koh-i-Noor Diamond. See also British Library, OIOC, IOR/L/AG/50/5/5.

²³ Ibid.

in Europe first, often made by Portuguese travelers. If knowledge about Indian mining directly informed Brazilian systems or vice-versa it would have been circulated through Portuguese imperial networks.²⁴ British interest in Golconda rose only in proportion to French activity in the area: in 1755, the EIC Select Committee in Bombay was alerted about the preponderance of “French Influence at Golcondah”, which was feared because “the advantages accruing to the French from these acquisitions should they continue to hold them, and the disadvantages threatening the English Nation from them, are almost too obvious to be insisted on.”

Undoubtedly the EIC was more worried about the cloth trade and naval military strategy than diamonds at this point, as both of these concerns were voiced latter in the correspondence.²⁵ In 1796, as Indian production was faltering, a Dr. Heyne, a private citizen, offered his naturalist expertise to the Company to explore the Deccan and local diamond-finding practices for a fee. While Heyne made a full report of his observations and theories on geological and gemstone formation, the Company found most useful his descriptions of local iron-smelting practices that employed a chemical treatment unknown in Europe. Just as Mawe’s observations of local knowledge were taken up into imperial networks and became part of metropolitan science, so too were Heyne’s.²⁶

In terms of diamonds, Heyne’s report argued that the area could easily produce a steady supply of impressive stones. Over and again, he drove home the point that large diamonds were found everyday at his visited mining sites and that local itinerant-labouring groups possessed arcane knowledge of how to find deposits that required further study.²⁷ This was perhaps a ploy

²⁴ See BL, OIOC, IOR G/40/26/1, “*Philosophical Transactions* Vol XII, AD 1677, pp 907 et seq: Description of the Diamond Mines.”

²⁵ BL, OIOC, IOR/H/94, January 15 1755, letter to Richard Bouchier, President of the Select Committee at Bombay from George Pigot et. al.

²⁶ For Heynes report see BL, OIOC, IOR/F/4/1/613, Samulcottah August 6 1796.

²⁷ BL, OIOC, IOR/F/4/1/613, Samulcottah August 6 1796. See also IOR/F/4/275/6149.

to ensure continued sponsorship from the Company for Heyne's work (a scenario that did not pan out in the short-term) but the report took on a life of its own in the context of the Company's decision to annex much of what would be known as the "Ceded Districts" (Hyderabad) between 1799 and 1806. Colonel Thomas Munro, who would later become the Governor of Madras, spearheaded much of this expansion despite many EIC fears that the Company was simply taking on useless, expensive territory, the Deccan in general being agriculturally unproductive. By way of responding to critics, Munro began a vigorous letter-writing campaign asking his superiors for a better compensation package for delivering such a lucrative area to the Company. Heyne's report, ten years old by that time, was dragged out as proof of Munro's claims, and only then did the EIC begin to seriously consider involving itself in diamond production.²⁸ Munro's case for "renumeration of services" was denied, but the Directors launched a fact-finding mission to the Ceded Districts to see if his opinion of the diamond potential was correct. They asked Dr. Heyne, who was by then a Company botanist, to revisit the area; the findings of his 1808 report were remarkably consistent with 1796 findings.²⁹

By 1815, a full-scale, nineteenth-century version of the cost-benefit analysis was complete: the report argued that the Company simply did not have the local authority to control labour in the area, the vital component to maintaining a profit in the business of diamond production. Instead, the report urged the Company to consider renting out plots to the traditional Indian mine operators at modest profit. This was pursued for a year before a large number of

²⁸ BL, OIOC, IOR F/4/261/5826, May 4 1808, Colonel Thomas Munro to the East India Company Directors.

²⁹ BL, OIOC, IOR/F/4/275/6149, Fort St George, Dec 24 1807-Oct 24 1808.

legal cases sprang up involving disputes between rival renters, a level of administrative commitment that the EIC was simply not interested in maintaining.³⁰

The Company never seriously considered involving themselves in diamond production again, though one episode is instructive because it reveals the assumptions Britons had about the necessary conditions for heavily coerced labor in order to make diamond mining profitable – before the diamond discoveries in South Africa in 1867. In 1817, a Dr. Christie, a surgeon in the Ceded Districts, wrote to the EIC’s Board of Directors with a plan, using knowledge about Brazilian mining to justify his ideas:

The Government of Brazil employs all its convicts and many slaves in digging and searching for Diamonds. If the Convicts in the Ceded Districts are employed upon this kind of work, it is very certain that the present expenses...will be lessened, nay may be entirely saved, and the Diamond Mines of these Districts turned to the advantage of Government....

It is hardly necessary to expatiate upon the value and estimation in which Diamonds are held everywhere. In England in particular, where the manufacture of this gem employs a numerous class of ingenious and industrious artists, and where the legislature on that account encourages the importation free of all duty; and although the Kingdom of Brazil has hitherto received the chief benefit by its Diamond revenue, yet it cannot be doubted that the Ceded Districts in this valuable article may be also rendered no inconsiderable source of revenue to Government, provided the mines are worked by convicts....

The Ceded Districts have also produced very valuable stones but the Natives either from design or ignorance, pretend to know little about ancient times, or what was discovered under the Hindoo and Mausuman Governments. It is reserved for present research and attention to bring to light the mineralogical resources these extensive Districts.³¹

Dr. Christie asked that if the Company were to implement his plan, he would receive a percentage of the profit. His proposal is revealing on a number of levels. First and foremost for

³⁰ BL, OIOC, IOR/F/4/540/13001, Extract Proceedings of the Board of Revenue at Fort St. George, February 1814 – February 1816. IOR/F/4/676/18769, Information Relative to the Renting out the Diamond Mines in the Ceded Districts.

³¹ BL, OIOC, IOR/F/4/676/18769, Information Relative to the renting out the Diamond Mines in the Ceded Districts, Jan 9 1817.

our purposes here, it is instructive that he implicated “present research” and mineralogy in discovering and reaping what he deemed crucial lost or purposefully hidden knowledge about diamond production, yet his proposal is essentially about creating and controlling cheap a labour force. Science is not the determining factor in the profitability of diamond mining, though the spectre of adding to mineralogical knowledge is held out as a meaningful bonus. Christie also approaches the Board as if it knew nothing of diamond mining or Britain’s place in the market and completely dismissed any gains that might be made in gathering indigenous knowledge about it. Instead he recommended Brazilian systems as a model for Company operations in India: rather than Indian practices being adopted in Brazil through British networks, there is more evidence to suggest that the flow of information in this regard went the other way.

In response, the Board decided:

The Board...would not consider it advisable to employ persons who have been already convicted of Thefts and other Crimes in places where (if the mines are worth working) there will be every inducement to steal, and who, if discovered would not be placed in a worse situation than they are in at present.

Mr. Christy’s [sic] plans, if adopted, would not be altogether free from that expense which it was his professed object to curtail. On a perusal of his proposal, it will be observed that there must be an establishment of Peons to watch the Convicts, an establishment of Searchers to discover the strata, and another establishment of Peons to watch the Searchers. These are expenses for which no certain return could be expected.³²

This is a somewhat chilling response considering that the brief and dismissive schematic outlined above is essentially how diamond mining came to be carried out in South Africa, complete with heavily-coerced and convict labourers housed in compounds. What made the idea of such a system laughable in India in the 1810s and a harsh reality in South Africa in the 1880s is the topic of Chapters 3 and 4. Regardless, though India was fabled to be the land of diamonds

³² BL, OIOC, IOR/F/4/676/18769, Information Relative to the renting out the Diamond Mines in the Ceded Districts, Extract from the Proceedings of the board of Revenue under June 28 1819.

in the British imperial imagination, the EIC considered the business of diamond production to be a losing one and not worth its attention.

To return to the EIC's interest in using India's diamonds to move wealth out of India, the process by which this was done was deceptively simple, indicative of the diamonds facility for transport. Servants of the company simply purchased diamonds with Indian rupees at the mines themselves or through an agent; the diamonds were shipped to Britain via EIC ships, and were then sold on the London market to the profit their owner. Tillman Nechtman has detailed how controversial a practice that was in Britain – partly because the diamonds themselves were problematic but more so because of the kind of social mobility diamond wealth afforded the *nouveau riche* of the late eighteenth century, the nabobs.³³ As Nechtman writes, "Transmitted back to Britain through the speculative channels of the diamond trade, nabobish wealth seemed insubstantial, foreign, and uncomfortably novel to domestic Britons, who focused their attention on Indian fortunes as a metonymic symbol of the larger concerns surrounding the growth of British imperialism in India precisely because Indian diamonds were the most readily visible evidence of the economic, political, and social imbrication of empire and nation in late eighteenth-century Britain."³⁴ Those who viewed the EIC as a threat to the nation, viewed diamonds as a threat to the valuation of Britain's traditional material wealth: land. In short, many believed that nabobish wealth posed a threat to the stability of the nation and that nabobs, themselves, had gained their wealth through the nefarious means of plunder imperialism. As Horace Walpole quipped, in the context of the Warren Hastings trial, "Innocence does not pave its way with diamonds, nor has a quarry of them on its estate."³⁵ Indeed, many felt that there was

³³ Tillman W. Nechtman, "A Jewel in the Crown? Indian Wealth in Domestic Britain in the Late Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41, no. 1 (2007).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

³⁵ As in *Ibid.*, 80.

something too "wildly democratic" about the movement of diamonds back to London that enabled the nabob's rise in society. The presence of diamonds in British society signalled the influence of the EIC in British politics. As William Pitt the Elder warned parliament, "the riches of Asia have been poured in upon us, and brought with them not only Asiatic luxury, but, I fear Asiatic principles of government."³⁶

Thus, the Indian-based diamond commodity chain that was alive in the British imagination prior to the Koh-i-Noor's confiscation in India was partly orientalist fantasy and partly predicated upon the fear of nabob influence and wealth remembered from the turn of the nineteenth century. Diamond production was known to be arduous and expensive, the labor it demanded to be under heavy duress; diamond wealth was suspect, hardly an indication of innocence or honor. This was the context into which Lord Dalhousie sought to insert what he hoped would become the central gemstone in his monarch's crown.

* * *

In January, 1848, James Andrew Broun-Ramsay, the future first Marquis of Dalhousie, arrived in India to take up his dual post as Governor-General of India and Governor of Bengal. He had fallen out of favor in the House of Lords, was frustrated with the disintegration of the Conservative party, and was disillusioned with party politics in general. At thirty-five years of age, he was the youngest Governor-General ever appointed, and he was determined to make his mark as a superb administrator. Three months after his arrival, Dalhousie prepared to back the East India Company's army in its efforts to quash Sikh rebellions in the northwest; one year later, he had officially annexed the Punjab as British territory in India and put the region under his own

³⁶ As in *Ibid.*, 77.

administration.³⁷ With the seizure of Lahore, the British took control of the maharajah's treasury, a vast collection of precious metal and gemstone artifacts. Within this treasury was housed the Koh-i-Noor and it was Dalhousie who decided to send the diamond to England to become the property of the queen.³⁸

This was a controversial move. While the governor-general was rewarded for his actions with the title of "Marquis," he sustained heavy criticism from the East India Company's Court of Directors who claimed that they had been robbed of a valuable diamond and the chance to present the piece to Victoria themselves. In parliament, Tories, led by the former governor-general of India Lord Ellenborough, attacked him for not remitting all the treasure to the queen.³⁹ According to usual practice, the Lahore treasury in its entirety was considered war booty won by the EIC and therefore the Directors could sell or give away pieces as bonuses to its servants as they saw fit.⁴⁰ Instead of following this, the Governor-General took extraordinary measures to ensure that the Koh-i-Noor would be reserved from the general category of booty. He staged a *darbar* or ceremonial meeting with the defeated twelve-year-old maharajah Duleep Singh, compelling Singh to offer the diamond directly to the queen as a token of submission. The Directors were informed of this development two weeks after the fact:

In liquidation of the accumulated debt due to this government by the state of Lahore, and for the expenses of the war I have confiscated the property of the state to the use of the Hon'ble East India Company. From this confiscation, however, I have excluded the Koh-i-noor which in token of submission has been surrendered by the Maharajah of Lahore to the Queen of England. If the policy which has now been declared, shall be confirmed I am confident you will sanction

³⁷ Balfour, *Famous Diamonds*, 167.; Barbara Metcalf and Thomas Metcalf, *A Concise History of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 93-7.

³⁸ See India Office Records (IOR), IOR/L/PS/11/296/5115, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collection (APAC), British Library (BL). This file was produced by the East India Company as a result of their own inquest into how the Koh-i-Noor was appropriated by the Crown in the late 1850s. It contains copies of earlier memoranda sent out to the Court of Directors by Dalhousie, correspondence he had with underlings, as well as the research about the stone that was conducted on his behalf.

³⁹ "Document 37-A, Simla, October 8 1851", *ibid.*, 72.

⁴⁰ See the India Office Records for the Deccan booty settlement of 1828: IOR, IOR/L/AG/17/2/4, APAC, BL.

my having thus set apart the Koh-i-noor as a historical memorial of conquest and that the Hon'ble Court of Directors will cordially approve the act which placed the Gem of the Moghuls in the Crown of Britain.⁴¹

The Governor-General had no qualms about pressuring the child-ruler. The maharajah did not consent to the cataloguing and appropriation of his entire treasury or to the auctioning of most pieces; but, in the logic of the EIC's administration, no consent was necessary. In all likelihood, Singh would have lost the diamond to some British jurisdiction regardless of Dalhousie's intervention. In the governor-general's official memory of the ceremony he characterized the boy as "endued with an intelligence beyond his years, and [he] cannot be supposed to have been ignorant of the purpose for which the Durbar was now convened."⁴²

While the maharajah's part in the exchange is still open to debate, there can be no doubt that he parlayed a career out of that event and his (mostly) close relationship with Victoria thereafter. In 1852, the teenager was painted by George Beechey wearing a miniature of Victoria around his neck. Two years later, he traveled to England, met with the queen, and again sat for a portrait, this time by Franz Winterhalter, who also incorporated the diamond-studded miniature of Victoria into the painting. Singh was the first person outside of the Royal Family (and, presumably the Crown Jewelers) to view the Koh-i-Noor after its recutting. In 1854, during one of the sittings for the Winterhalter portrait, Victoria famously showed him the diamond again and, much to the delight of the queen and the British press, the deposed sovereign reenacted the handover of the gemstone as a token of his submission.⁴³

⁴¹ "Document 2: Governor General's Despatch to Secret Committee, No. 20 of April 7, 1849," in *The History of the Koh-i-Noor, Darya-i-Noor and Taimur's Ruby*, compiled by Bhai Nahar Singh and Kirpal Singh, (New Delhi, 1985), 4-25.

⁴² Inquiry into Koh-i-Noor's confiscation file, IOR, August 26 1854, IOR, IOR/L/PS/11/296/5115, APAC, BL.

⁴³ Michael Alexander and Sushila Anand, *Queen Victoria's Maharajah : Duleep Singh, 1838-93* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), 46-9. Singh's and Victoria's relationship was profoundly complex and went through many stages of estrangement and reconciliation as the maharajah struggled to come to terms with himself

The young maharajah fairly basked in this role of chivalrous subject, charming the British press and Court. One could argue that as the recut Koh-i-Noor was a symbol of Britain's civilizing mission in India, Singh was perhaps seen as a living complement to the stone: he was baptized in 1853, received a British education and lived much of his life in Britain. In various ways he exemplified the elite Indian "go-between" Thomas Babington Macaulay had called for in his infamous 1835 "Minute on Education in India", a text often viewed as the most overt, albeit secular, articulation of the civilizing mission in British imperialism before 1857.

Macaulay urged that,

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.⁴⁴

As the "redeemed" upper-level Indian, Singh, in tandem with the recut Koh-i-Noor, performed an important symbolic function on an empire-wide scale: the maharajah and the diamond could be seen as "vehicles" for disseminating the promise of imperial intervention. Unlike the diamond, however, Singh was capable of rebellion. In 1858 and 1882 he renewed his claim on the Koh-i-Noor, arguing that it had been unjustly taken without compensation, criticized British rule in India, and made a sustained effort in the 1880s to reinstate himself as ruler of the Punjab.⁴⁵ While his politics cannot be reduced down to being about the ownership of a diamond,

and his role in imperial Britain and India. Unfortunately, an in-depth analysis of this falls outside the scope of this paper. For more on the Winterhalter portrait see Brian Keith Axel, *The Nation's Tortured Body: Violence, Representation, and the Formation of a Sikh "Diaspora"* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 49-58.

⁴⁴ As in Antoinette Burton, ed., *Politics and Empire in Victorian Britain: A Reader* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 20.

⁴⁵ "The Claims of an Indian Prince," *Times*, August 31 1882, 7.

this was what the press generally took away from his protests.⁴⁶ The maharajah's indelible association with the Koh-i-Noor both enabled and constrained his public persona.

By 1854, privately, Dalhousie was outraged that of all people, it was Duleep Singh who was famous for giving the stone to Victoria. Characterizing the teenager's grandstanding in London as "arrant humbug," the bitter Governor-General wrote, "had I been within a thousand miles of him he would not have dared to utter such a piece of trickery."⁴⁷ From the moment Dalhousie reserved the diamond for the Crown, he had imagined himself as the hero of the annexation of the Punjab and appropriator of the Koh-i-Noor, the agent-extraordinaire of the material and symbolic conquest of India. A staunch monarchist who had been deeply alarmed by republican uprisings in Continental Europe, the Governor-General exalted in the idea of aggrandizing his monarch as well as furthering his own career. After entering Lahore in 1849, he wrote to an underling, "It is not every day that an officer of their Government adds four millions of subjects to the British Empire, and places the historical jewel of the Mogul Emperors in the Crown of his own Sovereign. This I have done. Do not think I unduly exult."⁴⁸

From the above it is clear that what compelled Dalhousie to reserve the Koh-i-Noor, in particular, was not its physical makeup, but the stone's biography, and the way that British conquest in India could be written into it. The Lahore treasury itself, regardless of the Koh-i-Noor, was impressive, including the Darya-i-Noor diamond ("Sea of Light"), a piece reputed to be the "largest and most beautiful diamond ever in Bengal" and of "superior brilliancy and purity of color to the Koh-i-Noor" and Taimur's ruby. The quantity of the collection was also reputed to be immense; one estimate placed the treasury at "little short of a million pounds" exclusive of the Koh-i-Noor. Officers recording the inventory ran rings along strings "dozen by dozen, like so

⁴⁶ Alexander and Anand, *Queen Victoria's Maharajah : Duleep Singh, 1838-93*, 94, 136, 45, 78, 278-9.

⁴⁷ "Document 42 (Private Letters): Government House, August 26 1854," *History of the Koh-i-Noor*, 78.

⁴⁸ "Document 1: Private Letters, Camp Ferozepore, March 30 1849," *History of the Koh-i-Noor*, 3.

many buttons.”⁴⁹ There were other, physically more impressive pieces Dalhousie could have chosen to send to Victoria; instead, he chose the piece with the most lore. His personal diary recites a history of the diamond that subtly adds Dalhousie into the narrative, vindicates the annexation of the Punjab as government-sanctioned (which was doubtful) and showcases Victoria's acquisition of the stone as its redemptive biographical endpoint or "death":

The Koh-i-Nur [sic] has ever been the symbol of conquest. The Emperor of Delhi had it in his Peacock Throne. Nadir Shah seized it by right of conquest from the Emperor. Thence it passed into the hands of the King of Kabul. While Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk was king, Ranjit Singh exorted [sic] the diamond by gross violence and cruelty. And now when, as the result of unprovoked war, the British Government has conquered the kingdom of the Punjab, and has resolved to add it to the territories of the British Empire in India, I have a right to compel the Maharaja of Lahore, in token of his submission, to surrender the jewel to the Queen, that it may find its final and fitting resting-place in the crown of Britain. And there it shall shine, and shine, too, with purest ray serene. For there is not one of those who have held it since its original possessor, who can boast so just a title to its possession as the Queen of England can claim after two bloody and unprovoked wars.⁵⁰

The Governor-General's memorandum to the Company's Court of Directors reinforced this characterization of the diamond as a symbol of British conquest: "I am confident you will sanction my having thus set apart the Koh-i-noor as a historical memorial of conquest and that the Hon'ble Court of Directors will cordially approve the act which placed the Gem of the Moghuls [sic] in the Crown of Britain."⁵¹

Dalhousie invoked the idea that the artifact was to function as an archival piece, a “memorial of conquest” and just, "proper" imperial expansion. To his mind, it would be *the* relic featured in all subsequent representations of his national-imperial monarch. The stone's quality was secondary; after all, the gem was arguably inferior to the Darya-i-Noor. The Crown, literally

⁴⁹ "Document 8: Chapter VI: Lady Login's Recollections (1820-1904), Court Life and Camp Life," *History of the Koh-i-Noor*, 31.

⁵⁰ "Document 6: The Life of the Marquis of Dalhousie, Lee-Warner, Vol. I," *History of the Koh-i-Noor*, 158.

⁵¹ "Document 2," *History of the Koh-i-Noor*, 25.

and figuratively, would acquire an ornament of supposedly startling material value and cultural-historical significance -- in *both* India and Britain. The relic linked the two, inextricably, in a static arrangement of dominance and submission.

The underlying motif of stasis, evidenced in Dalhousie's characterization of the Crown as the Koh-i-Noor's final resting place, would also have been encoded for audiences in the artifact's identity as a diamond.⁵² For centuries, in Western and Arabic discourse, a diamond's principal quality was its hardness, the word "diamond" coming from the ancient Greek *adamas* which may have come from the Arabic *al Mas* or *almas*, all meaning indomitable.⁵³ It was not until the fifteenth century that European discourse began to include positive valuations of the diamond based on reflectivity, color, and beauty. By the mid-nineteenth century, the hardness factor was still a diamond's defining feature in British discourse but this was channeled through aesthetic expectations about beauty. Victorian readers were still shocked by scientific experiments that proved diamonds, being crystallized carbon and chemically similar to coal, would burn (contrary to classical descriptions of them).⁵⁴ In this way, Dalhousie's allusions to the permanence of British dominance over India being symbolized in Victoria's appropriation of the Koh-i-Noor would have been reinforced by dominant ideas about diamonds in general. While the lore of the stone was central to the Governor-General's project, the stone's identity as a diamond also furthered his case, though this was never made explicit.

Dalhousie saw to it that Victoria and Albert were peppered with tales of the diamond's worth and past. Along with the gem, the Marquis sent back to England a complete history of the

⁵² Arndt Mersmann, "'Diamonds are Forever' – Appropriations of the Koh-i-Noor: An Object Biography," *Journal for the Study of British Cultures* 8, no. 2 (2001): 175-191.

⁵³ Samar Najm Abul Huda, translator and commentator, *Arab Roots of Gemology: Ahmad ibn Yusuf Al Tifaschi's Best Thoughts on the Best of Stones* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1998), 270.

⁵⁴ David Brewster, "The diamond – Its History, Properties, and Origin," *The North British Review* 18, (Nov. 1852): 186-234.

diamond and the “vicissitudes through which [it] has passed,” assuring the queen of its inestimable value through an anecdote that would become a newspaper favorite:

Runjeet Sing sent a message to Wufa Begum, the wife of Shah Sooja, from whom he had taken the gem, to ask her its value. She replied, “If a strong man were to throw four stones, one north, one south, one east, one west, and a fifth stone up into the air, and if the space between them were to be filled with gold, all would not equal the value of the Koh-i-noor.”⁵⁵

Here the stone's pricelessness – or imaginary exorbitant price – was highlighted alongside its value as an historical artifact. At this moment, there was little if any tension between these two characterizations, and there is no evidence to suggest that the royal family ever contemplated rejecting the diamond.⁵⁶

From at least the time of George IV's coronation in 1821, the Court had sought a large, preferably famous diamond for the monarch to wear, likely to keep pace with the other leaders of Europe who themselves had large, famous diamonds available to them for public display. The restored French monarchy had absorbed Napoleon Bonaparte's collection, which included the Pitt diamond, Catherine II had acquired the Orlov for Russian use, and the Portuguese royals had access to several large gems, for instance. Parliament was reluctant to finance such a purchase and despite being offered large stones on occasion, the British royal family chose not to purchase one with its own money.⁵⁷ Perhaps the gift of the Koh-i-Noor was exactly the kind of exchange Crown and government were looking for; Prince Albert was especially delighted by the timing of

⁵⁵ “Lord Dalhousie, Governor-General of India, to Queen Victoria, Simla, 15th May 1850,” in *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, vol. II, ed. A.C. Benson et al., (London: John Murray, 1907), 286-7.

⁵⁶ When many other gemstones from the Lahore treasury were shown to the queen by members of the East India Company in 1851, she recorded in her diary how impressed she was with Taimur's Ruby: “[it] is the largest in the world, therefore even more remarkable than the Koh-i-noor! I am very happy that the British Crown will possess these jewels, for I shall certainly make them Crown Jewels.” C.R. Fay, *Palace of Industry, 1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 71.

⁵⁷ A.M.B., *The Story of Garrads: Goldsmiths and Jewellers to Six Sovereigns in Three Centuries, 1721-1911*, (London, 1912), 94-99; George Fox, *An Account of the firm of Rundell, Bridge and Company, the Crown Jewellers and Goldsmiths on Ludgate Hill*, unpublished manuscript, written between 1843-1846, Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, 8.

the tribute, being so personally involved in organizing the Great Exhibition. The diamond's inclusion in the exhibition was almost automatic. Still bitter over the loss of the diamond, one EIC board member could look back in 1854 and grumble that what was still so startling about Victoria's absorption of the stone was not that Dalhousie had offered it to the queen but that she had accepted it.⁵⁸ In 1850, however, there were no such recriminations voiced.

Albert began publicizing the Koh-i-Noor alongside the upcoming Exhibition. He asked Dalhousie for more information to feed to the press, and the Governor-General provided by commissioning researchers not only to comb written records of the diamond but to go out into the "bazaars of India regarding the traditions existing among the people connected with the great diamond."⁵⁹ These efforts failed to produce the continuous narrative that the Prince and the Governor-General were perhaps hoping for. Instead, Theophilus Metcalfe, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Northwest provinces in India, delivered two narratives, what Metcalfe termed the "Traditional" and the "Historical" versions. The "Traditional" was based on oral interviews with the "oldest Jewellers in the City of Delhi, as handed down from family to family" and supposed the diamond to have been mined some five thousand years before, "in the time of Krishna." Found by a *zamindar*, or land administrator, it had become the property of the "Rajah Kuns." From there it had changed hands through war and takeover, eventually ending up in the possession of the "Rajah of Oojain in the Malwa Territory, who had become master of the whole of Hindoostan." Changing hands again during the "Mohamedan invasion", the diamond eventually had become the property of early Mughal/Mongol emperor Timur (Timoor or Tamerlane), and it had passed down through the Mughals to the early eighteenth-century ruler

⁵⁸ "East India House," *Times*, September 28 1854, 5.

⁵⁹ Nevil Story-Maskelyne, "On the Koh-i-Noor diamond," unpublished manuscript, DF5001/4, 15, Story-Maskelyne Papers, Natural History Museum Archives (NHMA).

Mohammed Shah, who had worn it in his turban. The "Traditional" version gained in momentum and detail as the characters became more familiar to listeners:

On Nadir Shah's visit to Delhi the Emperor and he exchanged Turbans, and thus it became the property of the latter. While others again affirm that Mohummud Shah gave the diamond to effect his restoration to power as Emperor of Hindoostan. On the murder of Nadir Shah [of Persia] by his own tribe, Ahmed Shah Dooranee became possessed of the Kingdom of Khoorasan and of the Koh-i-noor, and at his death it descended successfully to his [four] sons Timoor, Shah-Zuman, Shah [Mahmud] and Shah Shooja-ool-Moolk and from the latter was forcibly taken by Ranjeet Singh.⁶⁰

From Ranjit Singh, the diamond passed to his youngest son, Duleep, and then to Victoria. The "Historical" account, coming second in Metcalfe's report, filled in more details of Mughal emperors who were celebrities of pre-Raj Mughal India, namely Babur and Humayun, based on passages from a written account of the "History of the reign of the Great Ukber." In this version, instead of being an inheritance from Timur, the Mughals came into contact with the stone through Humayun's administrative turn in Agra. There a local jeweler, who oversaw the cutting of the stone, valued it at "half the amount of the sum daily expended in the whole land." Humayun presented it to his father, Babur, who was emperor at that time, but he declined the gift. The same source related another anecdote:

When Hoomayoon Badshah (Humayun) was seriously ill his father Babur Shah consulted some physicians regarding his case -- Meer Abool Bukker, a learned man, represented that he had ascertained from former Sages that when the Physicians despaired of the recovery of any patient the most valuable thing in the possession of the invalid should be given in charity and a blessing solicited from the Almighty. The Emperor Babur observed that in his opinion he himself was the most precious, and that he would consecrate himself. The standers by however intimated that by God's mercy the Prince would recover and that the meaning of the sages was that the most valuable article of property should be offered up, and consequently, that the Emperor Babur Shah should offer the diamond which had be taken in the wars with Sooltan Ibraheem. Babur Shah replied that no treasure on Earth could be put in comparison with his beloved son,

⁶⁰ "Document 44: Theophilus Metcalfe, Lt. Governor of NW Provs, Delhi, to Sir Henry Elliot, Secretary to the Government of India, January 7 1850," *History of the Koh-i-Noor*, 80-81.

and that he would offer himself as a Sacrifice to obtain his recovery. Hoomayoon recovered, and the Jewel remained with the descendants of Timoor until the reign of Mohummud Shah.⁶¹

That Metcalfe did not further resolve the two narratives into a master is significant. The first depicts a violent past, lusty and turbulent; the second offers a picture of relative refinement, religiosity and peculiar negotiation. In a way, these ambivalent narratives, both of which were taken up by the press, serve as a microcosm for the ambivalent approaches the British had to India's past and present. In *Ideologies of the Raj*, Thomas Metcalf shows that the British viewed India's Mughal past with a modicum of respect in light of impressive cultural works of splendor (like the Taj Mahal) but also derogated it as irrationally violent, opulent, and haphazard.⁶² The diamond was constructed to embody this ambivalent ideology; the discourses about it reveal as much about British attitudes towards the Indian past and their intervention into it as about the material culture itself.

Other reports added to Metcalfe's collection of narratives, including the tale of how the stone got its name: upon acquiring it in 1739, the Persian leader Nadir Shah was said to have exclaimed "Koh-i-Noor!" or "Mountain of Light!"⁶³ A statement taken from Lahore elder Bhaie Mahoo Singh, who was ten years of age when he attended "Shah Shoojo-ool-Moolk in Cabul", the possessor of the diamond prior to Ranjit Singh, recounted the negotiations that took place between the Shah and Singh over the stone. His account is rich in details that include references to the Shah's harem, how Singh had the gem worked into his turban and then paraded on the back of an elephant through Kabul, the incredible security around the diamond during the march back to India, its new setting in an armband, and how Singh wore the armband during all official meetings, including those with British officers. Another informant recounted a narrative similar

⁶¹ Ibid., 81-82.

⁶² Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 80-92.

⁶³ "Report on the Past of the Koh-i-Noor," IOR, IOR/L/PS/11/209/5115, APAC, BL.

to the “Historical” above, a version featuring Ranjit Singh on his deathbed and his retinue trying to decide whether or not to send the diamond to the “temple of Juggurnath, as an offering to Krishna.” The stone was not sent and Singh died, leaving his dynasty in peril, as the narrative went.⁶⁴

These facets of the diamond's biography, generated by Dalhousie's promptings, entered British print culture, mixing with information that had already been available to the public. Prior to 1849, the Koh-i-Noor had entered the British imaginary through descriptions of maharajah Ranjit Singh's attire during a *darbar* with European officials in 1838 and general allusions to the stone's inclusion in the Peacock Throne of the Mughals, an artifact that had been recorded in Jean-Baptiste Tavernier's seventeenth-century travelogue of India.⁶⁵ Tavernier wrote that he had seen a giant diamond connected with Shah Jahan's Peacock Throne, a 780 carat stone that was mined in “Kollur,” shaped down to 280 carats and presented to Shah Jahan around 1656.⁶⁶ As this diamond had since been lost, many commentators speculated that it could have been cut in two, one half being made into what became the Orlov diamond and the other the Koh-i-Noor.⁶⁷ To be sure, however, prior to the late 1840s, the Koh-i-Noor was not a central piece in British imaginings of India but merely one object in a pantheon of Indian artifacts of interest. One of the first visual images of the stone in British print culture, Figure 2.1, was probably a sketch of it that ran alongside those of other jewels in the Lahore treasury in *The Illustrated London News* as part of the newspaper's in-depth coverage of the Anglo-Sikh war beginning in 1848. [Figure 2.1] The caption of the sketch reads: "Runjeet's Singh's diamond – the 'Mountain of Light'" and the

⁶⁴ “Document 46: Major MacGregor, Deputy Commissioner Lahore to B. Melvill, Secretary to the Court of Administration for the Affairs of the Punjab, April 20 1850,” *History of the Koh-i-Noor*, 84-90; “The Koh-i-Noor,” *The Era* (London), October 20 1839, 41.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*; “Runjeet Singh,” *Times*, November 12 1838, 3; Story-Maskelyne, “On the Koh-i-Noor diamond,” 7, 21-39.

⁶⁶ Tavernier, *Travels in India*, Appendix-I.

⁶⁷ Story-Maskelyne, “On the Koh-i-Noor diamond,” 39-97; Balfour, *Famous Diamonds*, 152-67.

accompanying text cautions readers that it is "a mistake to suppose this diamond to be the largest and most precious in the world, for it is surpassed by several."⁶⁸

Once it became general knowledge that the diamond would become part of the Crown Jewelry and the Exhibition to open May 1, 1851, however, interest in the stone increased exponentially. A widespread recitation and codifying of its biography began, fed not only by Dalhousie's "official" research but by story-telling spawned outside of the Court's and colonial government's control. A rumor, perhaps started by the *Delhi Gazette* and quickly taken up by the *Illustrated London News*, had it that the diamond was cursed: all who possessed it would run into ruin as evidenced most forcefully by the "tragedy" of Singh's ruling line.⁶⁹ The curse rumor infuriated Dalhousie, particularly after receiving a note from Victoria, herself, who was anxious about the curse. He went into action constructing the diamond as a benevolent talisman, writing, "when Shah Shoojah, from whom it was taken, was afterwards asked... 'what was the value of the Koh-i-Noor,' he replied, 'Its value is Good Fortune; for whoever possesses it has been superior to all his enemies,'...I sent the Queen a narrative of this."⁷⁰ But the newspapers did him one better by articulating a different antidote: the queen's status as a female rendered her exempt from a curse ill-disposed towards "oriental", male despots. This, discursively, set the diamond in the same context as the feminine body of the monarch and made this proximal relationship a necessity for counteracting the effects of the "Indian" curse. As the *ILN* had it, via the *Delhi Gazette*, "The mischievous superstition attaching to the possession of this unique and invaluable

⁶⁸ "The Koh-i-Noor diamond," *Illustrated London News*, May 26 1849, 332. See also "The Koh-i-Noor," *Illustrated London News*, December 23 1848, 397.

⁶⁹ "Koh-i-Noor," *Illustrated London News*, December 23 1848, 397, "The Koh-i-Noor diamond," May 26 1849, 332. For the *Times's* coverage see: Feb. 5 1850, 6; June 17 1850, 6; July 1 1850, 4; May 2 1851, 5; July 19 1852, 8; July 27 1852, 7; Aug. 28 1852, 5; Sept. 12 1852, 5. See also *Punch*, "The Koh-i-Noor a Real 'Mountain of Light!'" April 19 1851, 165; Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*, (London: Random House, 2001, c. 1868), preface: xxiii.

⁷⁰ "Document 6," *History of the Koh-i-Noor*, 28.

diamond might be utterly crushed by this retributive consignment."⁷¹ Years later, in 1865, C.W. King brought up the curse with regards to the Indian "Mutiny"-Rebellion "attribut[ing] the great mutiny of 1857 to its malignant influence."⁷² King's book was a resounding success, despite its many technical fallacies, and his recollection of the curse speaks to the enduring cultural purchase various facets of the invented lore commanded.

The curse (as well as the controversy the stone engendered) informed Wilkie Collins' construction of the fictional monster diamond at the center of his novel *The Moonstone* (1868). Collins drew on the Koh-i-Noor and the Orlov diamond, both famously from India, as inspiration for his detective story about a diamond robbery.⁷³ The novel grapples with how imperial-colonial events in India created and affected a private household in Britain in unsettling ways, again underlining the diamond's lingering and fraught connection with British colonialism.⁷⁴ This reveals not only the diamond's uneasy place in British culture post-1851 but also the shifting and complex discourse on British imperialism in general in the Victorian period.

Another tale about the Koh-i-Noor's time between the Lahore treasury and the queen's possession upset the Governor-General and East India Company Directors alike. As the story went, John Lawrence, a member of the Company's Court of Directors, took possession of the stone after it was taken from the Lahore treasury. Being preoccupied with matters concerning the takeover of the Punjab, Lawrence dropped the stone into his waistcoat pocket and forgot about it. Six weeks later, the Governor-General asked to see the diamond. As the story went,

⁷¹ *Illustrated London News*, December 23 1848, 397. The *ILN* was particularly involved in covering the Anglo-Sikh War, publishing one of the first pictures of the Koh-i-Noor available to metropolitan audiences. See *ILN*, January 27 1849, 52, 56-57; February 24 1849, 117-118; March 10 1849, 145-146, 161-166; April 7 1849, 230; April 28 1849, 265-266. For the engraving, see "The Koh-i-Noor diamond," May 26 1849, 332.

⁷² *Times*, October 14 1865, 6; C.W. King, *The Natural History, Ancient and Modern, of Precious Stones and Gems, and of the Precious Metals* (London, 1865).

⁷³ Collins, *Moonstone*, xxiii; Mersmann, "Diamonds are Forever," 186.

⁷⁴ Melissa Free, "Dirty Linen: Legacies of Empire in Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 48, no. 4 (2006): 340-371.

...with [his] heart in his mouth [Lawrence] sent for his old bearer and said to him: "Have you got a small box which was in my waistcoat pocket some time ago?" "Yes Sahib," the man replied, "...I found it and put it in one of your boxes." "Bring it here," said the Sahib. Upon this the older bearer went to a broken down tin box and produced the little one from it. "Open it" said John Lawrence, "and see what is inside?" He watched the man anxiously enough as each fold of the small rags was taken off and great was his relief when the precious gem appeared. The bearer seemed unconscious of the treasure which he had in his keeping. "There is nothing here, Sahib!" he said, "but a bit of glass."⁷⁵

The EIC launched an inquest into the story which produced sworn statements that the stone and pocket incident had never happened and that the diamond had been in perfect safety as it traveled to England.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the anecdote of the "forgotten treasure" persisted. Periodicals related the "event" as a quirky story that contrasted humorously with the sordid, intense, and exotic details of the diamond's "Indian" past. It trivialized not only the meaning of the gem in Indian discourse and the violence of the conquest of Lahore on behalf of the Company, but the meaning of the gem in the market economy as well, being priceless and yet entirely forgettable. Just as Victorians could argue that the Empire had been acquired haphazardly, "in a fit of absence of mind", so too had the diamond come to England just as lightly.

As much as anecdotes like the ones above worked to move the diamond beyond simple association with markets, money, and the *business* of empire, explications of the stone's market value were never absent from this Koh-i-Noor discourse. It was never allowed to completely or simply register as a *thing*. Descriptions of the diamond's physical makeup, mostly having to do with its size and beauty or reflective quality, however hyperbolic, eventuated in a "priceless" valuation that was estimated at somewhere between £500,000 and £3,000,000.⁷⁷ While certainly

⁷⁵ N.B. Sen, *The Glorious History of Koh-i-Noor* (New Delhi: New Book Society of India, 1970), 114; see also Balfour, *Famous Diamonds*, 168-9.

⁷⁶ Inquiry into the confiscation of the Koh-i-Noor, IOR, IOR/L/PS/11/296/5115, APAC, BL.

⁷⁷ John Tallis, *Tallis's History and Description of the Crystal Palace and the Exhibition of the World's Industry in 1851* (London, 1852), II:240; *The Daily News*, May 2 1851, 5; *The Observer*, May 18 1851, 4. One estimate puts

this price range was an exorbitant one for any Briton to imagine, it nevertheless gave the diamond a specific value, a place within the political economy of mid-Victorian Britain as well as within the diamond market in general. Descriptions of its physicality could be highly exaggerated, not only to the point of characterizing the diamond as the largest in existence, something even the Governor-General did not try to persuade anyone of, but there was even speculation as to whether or not the “Koh-i-Noor,” translated as “Mountain of Light,” actually emitted light of its own accord. All of the speculations as to what the diamond looked like, what it would cost, how it came to be Victoria's, and what it meant to India, were printed and reprinted to such a degree that curiosity about the diamond was at a fever pitch prior to the opening of the Exhibition. Expectations of grandeur for the item could not have been higher, and the “exotic” and “dramatic” history of the Koh-i-Noor was something that “most people [would] know”, as Lady Login, the wife of the board member entrusted with carrying the stone to London, recollected.⁷⁸

On the Opening Day of the Great Exhibition, the first of May, 1851, spectators rushed to the east nave of the Crystal Palace for their first glimpse of the Koh-i-Noor, which was being shown “in a large gold bird-cage.”⁷⁹ They had endured the long opening ceremony, complete with Victoria, Albert and other members of the royal family making a preliminary tour of the fair. Commentators of the day linked the monarch, the gemstone and the glass building that housed the Exhibition: the *Times*' coverage emphasized the grandeur of the Crystal Palace, how it “was like the Koh-i-Noor itself”, and how Victoria and the loyalty she inspired reflected and

that at between £42,000,000 and £250,000,000 in terms 2007's retail price index.

<http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/result.php>

⁷⁸ “Document 8,” *History of the Koh-i-Noor*, 30-38.

⁷⁹ Fay, *Palace of Industry*, 81.

enhanced this grandeur.⁸⁰ The Palace was acknowledged to be a triumph of British architecture and craftsmanship, a fitting envelope for an event meant to celebrate the strengths of British industry. For its part, the *Examiner* played with the "Mountain of Light" moniker, arguing that it was a "superb description" for both the diamond and building, and reflected in Victoria's countenance.⁸¹ Enhancing these associations, the queen wore, as the *Times* reported, "a dress of pink watered silk, brocaded with silver, trimmed with pink ribands and blonde, and ornamented with diamonds. Diamonds and feathers formed the head dress."⁸²

Victoria's tour of the Exhibition began with an inspection of the Koh-i-Noor, celebrating her association with the stone and its prominence at the fair. While Dalhousie was adamant that the diamond be valued as a straightforward symbol of conquest, the celebration of outright conquest was associated with an eighteenth-century brand of imperialism, one that had been discredited in favor of the rise of moral empire. As Thomas Richards has discussed, Victoria's challenge at the Exhibition was to strike a balance between her symbolic status as a facilitator of British industry, "proper" empire, and progress and her identity as a female shopper-consumer involved in what Richards argues was the launch of British consumer society. Her consumer choices were under intense scrutiny.⁸³

Given this, the narrative of Singh's submissive durbar and "gift-giving" of the jewel was crucial. As Pierre Bourdieu argues, the gift exchange economy – while still very much an exchange of value -- serves to mask the violence inherent in exchange between unequal bodies of power, violence that is usually more apparent in market economy exchange. In other words, the

⁸⁰ *Times*, May 2 1851, 4-5.

⁸¹ "The Great Exhibition," *The Examiner*, May 3 1851, 280.

⁸² *Times*, May 2 1851, 5.

⁸³ Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 51-57.

giving and receiving of a gift masks the inequality of power within the exchange.⁸⁴ As a gift between Duleep Singh and Queen Victoria, the exchange of the Koh-i-Noor could mask the monetary circumstances of the conquest of Lahore on a symbolic level, much more than if the diamond was seized by the East India Company or Dalhousie on behalf of the queen. Though the Koh-i-Noor was a diamond of great worth, then, this was constructed to be secondary to its value as a symbolic, archival piece. Dalhousie's role in the matter was necessarily eclipsed (much to his outrage) in favor of a more palatable narrative, and one that the young maharajah was willing to support.

As Victoria inspected the newest addition to the Crown Jewelry, however, this romanticized history of Singh's submission was already subject to debate. By May 1851, the East India Company had renewed its claims on the Koh-i-Noor, arguing that Singh's durbar was a sham and that Dalhousie had no right to reserve the stone for the queen. Indeed, all of Dalhousie's actions were under review as the takeover of Lahore was being investigated by Parliament throughout the time of the Exhibition. As the *Times* reported, it was ironic that with "a hundred thousand eyes staring at the precious jewel with such unsated interest," the circumstances of how the Koh-i-Noor came into Victoria's possession were blurred at best: "fifty times at least every morning are questions asked as to the capture, sale, purchase, or conveyance of this priceless treasure. Nobody appears to know exactly how it passed from the jewel-room of Lahore to its present resting place – whether it became British property by seizure or forfeit, or whether it fell to the Queen by tribute or right."⁸⁵

There was no clear narrative available for spectators to grasp onto and, as Arndt Mersmann has shown, the physical layout of the Koh-i-Noor's place within the Exhibition raised

⁸⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 112-127.

⁸⁵ *The Times*, May 27 1851, 5.

even more questions. The cage was close enough to the India exhibit to draw associations between the diamond and the general East India Company display in which other jewels in the Lahore treasury were shown, but it was not a part of it. Though technically housed in the British area of the Palace, the cage was also removed from direct associations with those exhibits as well.⁸⁶ If anything, the only visual clue as to where and to whom the exhibit belonged was found on the top of the cage, where the gilded bars met: a golden crown reminded onlookers that the contents were royal property. The stone was undeniably associated first and foremost with the Crown.

A connection was made between Victoria and the Koh-i-Noor over the tremendous security that surrounded both. Before the event opened, rumors abounded about threats made by “Chartists” or a “French or German Socialist” that an attempt would be made on the queen's life or to steal the Koh-i-Noor.⁸⁷ The *Times* feared that these threats might cause the queen to withdraw from the opening ceremonies and doom the Exhibition.⁸⁸ When the opening ceremony went off without incident, anxieties about the monarch's safety seemed overblown: in jest, *Punch* included a full-page cartoon of “Her Majesty... Surrounded by 'Horrible Conspirators and Assassins,” who included her husband, their small children, and adoring ladies in the audience.⁸⁹

The security measures that were in effect to protect the Koh-i-Noor received almost as much attention as the stone itself at the beginning of the Exhibition. Though put in the same register as the monarch, the diamond still maintained its connection with India as *The Daily*

⁸⁶ Mersmann, “Diamonds are Forever,” 180-3.

⁸⁷ *Times*, April 17 1851, 5; “False Alarms,” *The Examiner* (London), May 3 1851, 275; Yvonne French, *The Great Exhibition: 1851* (London: Harvill, 1950), 229; *Punch*, May 19 1851, 240; *Punch*, “The Alarmists Dream,” June 14 1851, 245.

⁸⁸ *Times*, April 17 1851, 5.

⁸⁹ *Punch*, May 17 1851, 193.

News reported that "no human hand must touch this wonder of the east."⁹⁰ While long descriptions of the cage and the stone's protection overnight were typical in newspaper coverage of the Exhibition, *The Spectator* provides perhaps the most lurid account of the Koh-i-Noor's lodging:

While yet in the transept, there is what looks a gigantic brazen parrot cage. It's the iron cage that restrains and protects the famed "Koh-i-Noor" or "Mountain of Light" diamond. The solid bars of iron are gilded. The diamond is supported in the air by two small golden hands... It is about the size of a very small egg, hollowed on one side: on each side are two smaller diamonds. At night and on the touching of a spring by the custodian, these precious gems sink into a massive iron box of impregnable strength...it is understood that ever so slight a touch of the glass shade which covers the Diamonds within the great iron cage would cause the machine to collapse like the leaves of the sensitive plant, and plunge the gems into the cavernous retreat till the authorities should summon them forth again with their privileged key.⁹¹

The remarkably sexual overtones of "impregnability," a "cavernous retreat," and the phallic "privileged key" of authority are unmistakable in the above quote, feminizing and sexualizing the diamonds and implying that their "virtue" remains intact through the security measures that both "restrain" and "protect" the gems.

Feminizing the Koh-i-Noor, diamonds in general, and the appreciation of them, in order to derogate both the diamond as a thing and diamonds as a commodity, was more common once it became open knowledge that the fabled stone was not living up to expectations. The glaziers had constructed the Crystal Palace so that if the sun was out, the nave would be lit up by sunlight. A pleasing concept, this practice did nothing to enhance the diamond on days that the sun did not shine, which turned out to be most of the time in London during the spring and summer of 1851. For the opening month of the exhibition, as throngs of people clamored to see the stone, the diamond was unlit, causing many to find it dull. Some thought it might have been

⁹⁰ "The Building and the Ceremony," *The Daily News*, May 2 1851, 5.

⁹¹ *The Spectator*, May 10 1851, 446. For more on the cage, see *Observer*, May 5 1851, 2; *The Daily News*, May 2 1851, 5; "The Great Exhibition," *John Bull*, May 10 1851, 298.

a reproduction, because the "authentic" diamond in the public imaginary sparkled on an unparalleled level. As Exhibition historian Yvonne French relates, diamond experts themselves were unsure of the diamond's authenticity; two juries were convinced that the Koh-i-Noor on display was only a paste imitation.⁹² Eventually the display was changed so that gas lights lit up the cage, revealing the stone on a black velvet cushion. As one Exhibition reviewer and aesthete, John Tallis, wrote, exhibition-goers were in danger of being duped:

On the right, and nearly at the entrance of the foreign nave, you observe a crowd, curious and eager, flocking about a great parrot-cage with gilded bars. Within that is placed on a cushion the *Koh-i-Noor*. This diamond supplies, in the history of Central Asia, the place of the golden fleece, and has occasioned more than one bloody war....To ordinary eyes it is nothing more than an egg-shaped lump of glass. They may show us what they please and call it Koh-i-Noor. On ordinary days, that is, the shilling days, it is exposed in its great cage, ornamented with a policeman, and they rely on the sun to cause it to sparkle; but on the Friday and Saturday it puts on its best dress; it is arrayed in a tent of red cloth, and the interior is supplied with a dozen little jets of gas, which throw their light on the god of the temple. Unhappily, the Koh-i-Noor does not sparkle even then. Thus the most curious thing is not the divinity, but the worshippers.⁹³

The *Examiner* noted that excited fairgoers who had made their way to the nave "speedily turned away from the Koh-i-Noor in evident disappointment," and a startlingly similar phrase was used by the *Observer*.⁹⁴ By July, the *Examiner* had all but given up on the gem, reporting that, "the poor Koh-i-Noor is literally on its last legs" as the display was changed yet again to better compliment the diamond.⁹⁵ *Punch* quipped that the Koh-i-Noor was "sick" and related that Mr. Punch had heard a "stupid Frenchman" say that the diamond gave "'about much light as the sun in England.'" An accompanying quip had it "the less it is seen, the more it is appreciated."⁹⁶

⁹² French, *Great Exhibition*, 229.

⁹³ Tallis, Tallis, II: 150.

⁹⁴ *The Examiner*, June 14 1851, 378; *Observer*, May 18 1851, 4.

⁹⁵ *The Examiner*, July 5 1851, 427.

⁹⁶ "The Front Row of the Shilling Gallery," *Punch*, July 5 1851, 10.

Punch never missed an opportunity to satirize the situation and through its pages we see the most detailed criticisms of diamonds and luxury consumption in general as well as the acquisition of the Koh-i-Noor. Picking up on the thread of diamond appreciation being frivolous, silly, and feminized, the magazine published the invective "What I Remark'd at the Exhibition," which dismissed the Koh-i-Noor display as merely the one "the ladies would go the first thing."⁹⁷ A cartoon, Figure 2.2, visually reinforces this point, as it depicts primarily women interested in getting a view of the diamond's cage. [Figure 2.2] The accompanying text asks: "Do you see what a crowd hems in the monster bird-cage? – which bird-cage many a fine lady would give up her pew in church to be able to hang up in her drawing room. What a number of cats (on two legs) there would be jumping up after it, to be sure!"⁹⁸ Two men occupy a central position in the cartoon, one shown talking to a lady, and another hemmed in by two women with his arm around one of them. Elsewhere other men are pictured touching the women near them. It is possible that here the cartoonist encoded a commentary on how women were vulnerable to male advances in the crush of people around the gemstone, the ladies' attention directed to the diamond, their defenses down. Visually, the arc of the diamond's cage compliments the arc of the ladies' skirts, allowing for a commentary on the protection of the "diamond within", recalling *The Spectator's* sexualized narrative of the Koh-i-Noor's security discussed above.

Erin Mackie has shown how the hoopskirt in the eighteenth century was a lightning rod for anxieties about female sexuality and desire (one could conceal a pregnancy by wearing a hoopskirt) and power in the public sphere, especially with respect to commodity consumption. The hoopskirt spawned invectives against the "shamelessly conspicuous" amount of space women took up in public when wearing one: "Ten thousand eyes were fixt on her alone." For

⁹⁷ "What I Remark'd at the Exhibition," *Punch*, May 10 1851, 189.

⁹⁸ "The Front Row of the Shilling Gallery," *Punch*, July 5 1851, 10.

this, the skirt was repeatedly derogated as frivolous and vain, the height of improper, feminized consumption.⁹⁹ The parallels between hoopskirt discourse and gendered commentaries on the Koh-i-Noor's gilded cage and female audience is striking: it is entirely possible to read Figure 2.2 as depicting the Koh-i-Noor enabling females to indulge themselves in gauche luxury consumption, consuming the spectacle of the diamond; the diamond as being inappropriately vain and central to Exhibition; and the spectacle facilitating "dangerous" sexualities.

The way the Koh-i-Noor spectacle encouraged females to desire diamonds was belabored in "diamond Dialogues", a fictional dialogue between the two policemen stationed next to the stone. Says Policeman A1, "Behold them here. Women -- moths; diamond -- candle!" Policeman B2 replies, "I say, did you ever see a cat, all alone, watching a canary, or a bowl of gold-fish? Well, then, just look at that old lady lookin' at the diamond! If her eyes don't turn green and yellow, and if she don't run the tip of her tongue round her mouth as if she was already tastin' the Mountain!"¹⁰⁰ Association of women with diamonds and the Koh-i-Noor, either as consumers of spectacle or literal consumers of diamonds, ran in juxtaposition to articles like "Ballad for Old-Fashioned Farmers: on the Great Exhibition" which contained the verse, "I hears a vast deal, and I s'pose I shall moor,/ About that famous diamond the gurt Koh-i-Noor,/ That's wuth nigh a million, as folks do relate;/ But what's that with wheat down below thirty-eight?"¹⁰¹ The contrast derogated the appropriation of the Koh-i-Noor as frivolous and feminized, production of wheat as masculine and rational. Indeed, *Punch* was not the only publication to underline the absurdity of how the diamond simultaneously registered on symbolic and economic levels: as early as Opening Day, *The Daily News* quipped that the stone, "to the uninitiated

⁹⁹ Mackie, *Market a la Mode*, 104-143, quote from 111.

¹⁰⁰ "Diamond Dialogues," *Punch*, June 17 1851, 244.

¹⁰¹ "Ballad for Old-Fashioned Farmers: on the Great Exhibition," *Punch*, May 17 1851, 212.

observer, [is] a very inadequate representation of two millions of money."¹⁰² Another *Punch* cartoon illustrates this "uninitiated observer" as a gentleman from the country, apparently unused to metropolitan diamond fashion. [figure 2.3.] Figure 2.3, "A Gentleman from the Country Mistakes the Crystal sent by the Duke of Devonshire for the Koh-i-Noor diamond," depicts how the appearance of the diamond did not live up to the hyperbolic descriptions of it at large in the public's imagination and hints at the elitism and whimsicality of diamond fashion in general.¹⁰³

Repeatedly, *Punch* played with the idea of the diamond trade as feminine, superfluous, and ultimately incongruous with the goals of the Exhibition, which were to promote industry and progress. It deployed the ironic motif of comparing diamonds to coal throughout the exhibition. Both substances were composed of carbon, but in the logic of satirizing, coal stood for masculinized, working-class production, and diamond stood for feminized, aristocratic consumption. The irony that the "Mountain of Light" did not emit light but that coal, when put to private and industrial use did - literally and in terms of driving industrial progress - was too good to pass up for many contemporary commentators, as the motif was taken up by John Tallis as well. [Figure 2.4] Figure 2.4, "The Black diamond – the Real Mountain of Light!!!" depicts *Punch's* take on the matter, that the most important commodity the crowds should be made to appreciate was the industrial potential of coal.¹⁰⁴ Always interested in lampooning the aristocracy, the magazine noted when gas (another form of carbon) was used to light the diamond, "the Koh-i-noors of society only shine with the borrowed light of those working beneath them in station!"¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² *The Daily News*, May 2 1851, 5.

¹⁰³ *Punch*, May 17 1851, 200.

¹⁰⁴ *Punch*, June 14 1851, 252; Tallis, Tallis, II:158, 240.

¹⁰⁵ "The Front Row of the Shilling Gallery," *Punch*, July 5 1851, 10.

The magazine made the contrast between carbon forms again in a fictional encounter, "Coal and the Koh-i-Noor," where the diamond, in the form of an "Indian maid" converses with a male "Coal Gnome." As the conversation progresses, the Koh-i-Noor, symbolizing the diamond trade as well as the famous stone, presents a number of traits associated with the feminine: her movement (and power) is localized, she is petulant and makes war easily, she is beautiful and passively accepts praise but eventually withers and retires. In contrast, the Coal Gnome travels the world, forging the "chariot wheel" of Peace, and guides looms, builds palaces, and grinds grain. He easily outlasts the diamond and creates while she destroys, an outright negation of the female reproductive capacity and a rehearsal of the stereotype of the voracious, consuming woman.¹⁰⁶ Mr. Punch took pains to warn his readers that dependency on Indian consumer goods (diamonds, in this case) was not a financially stable course of action, that investment should instead be made in British industry, and that this would power the nation-empire much more effectively. In the logic of gendered colonialism and orientalism, as Lata Mani has shown, the Indian representative's identity as a maid would have immediately signaled readers that she was an overdetermined symbol of entrenched traditionalism, unprogressive and timeless.¹⁰⁷ For Mr. Punch, the Koh-i-Noor was the "Mountain of Darkness" on a number of levels.¹⁰⁸

Through *Punch's* dismissal of the stone, we can see how in the context of the Exhibition the Koh-i-Noor registered not as the next best introduction to British imperial material culture but a throwback to an eighteenth-century brand of imperial plunder and frivolous diamond consumption. Mr. Punch refused to let his readers forget that the stone was essentially war

¹⁰⁶ "Coal and Koh-i-Noor," *Punch*, November 15 1851, 198.

¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of women, women's bodies, and womanhood being at the center of debates about the "traditional" versus the "modern" in colonial India, see Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

¹⁰⁸ "The Front Row of the Shilling Gallery," *Punch*, July 5 1851, 11.

booty. At the end of "diamond Dialogues" Policeman B2 asks with regards to the Koh-i-Noor, "What, did we buy and pay for it?" A1 replies, "Bought it with the brave blood of armies, and the gold of soldiers' pay! Paid I don't know how much in blood, and gold, and gunpowder, and bayonet cold iron."¹⁰⁹

Punch's critique of diamonds and the diamond trade was also directed towards the realities of British involvement in the trade in the 1850s. By then, Indian raw diamond production was negligible – the Indian diamonds that came to Britain in the nineteenth century were sporadically gained through EIC war booty settlements.¹¹⁰ The majority of the diamonds that poured into London markets to be distributed throughout Europe and the world came from Brazil. Since 1802, the British government along with private investors had been heavily involved in handling diamond extraction in Minas Gerais, the "diamond fields" of Brazil. It was open knowledge that slave labor was still used in the fields; the fact that Britons were still involved in the African slave trade, supplying and managing some of this labor, was known but sublimated in public discourse.¹¹¹ What place did Victoria's performative consumption of a large diamond, arguably an emblem of slave labor, imperial plunder, and dangerous female desires, have at an Exhibition devoted to progress, industry, and science?

The ironic or tragic juxtaposition of coal or black diamonds as symbols of production, labor, and masculinity versus white diamonds as symbols of consumption, aristocracy, and femininity found wider salience in Victorian culture beyond the pages of *Punch*. For example,

¹⁰⁹ "Diamond Dialogues," *Punch*, June 17 1851, 244.

¹¹⁰ "Jewels for Sale," APAC, MSS Eur E293/272, BL.

¹¹¹ Harry Bernstein, *The Brazilian Diamond in Contracts, Contraband and Capital* (London: University Press of America, 1986), Marshall C. Eakin, *British Enterprise in Brazil : The St. John D'el Rey Mining Company and the Morro Velho Gold Mine, 1830-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), George Gardner, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil, Principally through the Northern Provinces, and the Gold and Diamond Districts, During the Years 1836-1841* (New York: AMS Press, 1970, c. 1846), Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade*, Marika Sherwood, "Britain, the Slave Trade and Slavery, 1808-1843," *Race & Class* 46, no. 2 (2004).

one of the more popular plays by Gilbert Arthur A Beckett, *The Babes in the Wood; or Harlequin Robin Hood and his Merry Men*, was first performed in Covent Garden as the Christmas Pantomime in 1867. It featured a character named “Black Diamond, *alias* the Coal King, who might, with equal propriety, have been denominated Old King Coal” and who lived in a “subterranean abode.” Black Diamond is enamored with “Brilliantina, the Diamond Queen” who lives in the Grand Pas des Bijoux: “I love the Diamond Queen, though me she’s slighting,/ Because I’m black and don’t appear in whiting.” Given the public’s knowledge of Brazilian labor practices, juxtaposition of black versus white diamonds encoded a racialized dimension, subtly naturalizing the idea that gem-quality diamonds were mined by African workers and creating a color line between worker-producers and consumers, alongside the class and gender differences that were inscribed. The doomed pair, described by *The Times* reviewer as “doubtful allies,” also represent the folly of interracial and interclass desire and sexuality, as time and again Robin Hood and Maid Marion are forced to overcome obstacles the respective Diamonds have unknowingly created.¹¹² Just months before this play was performed for the first time, French engineers unveiled the “diamond boring machine,” a machine that used “black diamonds,” or what we would call today industrial diamonds, to bore through bedrock.¹¹³ Prior to 1850, “black diamond” also meant that something was false or counterfeit; “Irish diamonds” was another term used in that regard.¹¹⁴ Thus, “blackness” and “whiteness” in diamond discourse took on a

¹¹² “Covent Garden,” *Times*, December 27 1867, 7. Gilbert Arthur A Beckett was the son of Gilbert Abbott A Beckett, also a playwright and a frequent contributor to *Punch* in the 1850s. It is entirely possible that A Beckett, senior, authored some of Mr. Punch’s critiques of the Koh-i-Noor. Katherine Mullin, “A Beckett, Gilbert Arthur (1837-1891),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004); Paul Schlicke, “A Beckett, Gilbert Abbott (1811-1856),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004).

¹¹³ “Diamond Boring Machines,” *Times*, April 23, 1867, 6.

¹¹⁴ See Irish diamond play in BL. What today we would refer to as “black diamonds,” as in gem-quality black diamonds, were a brief fad in Paris in 1867, worn by the empress. See “The Great French Exhibition,” *The Leeds Mercury*, February 26 1867.

number of meanings that were linked with unequal status, though gender, race, class, and “true” character.

Perhaps most unsettling for contemporaries was not, then, the failure of the diamond, but its success. Recalling Tallis' quip, "the most curious thing is not the divinity, but the worshippers."¹¹⁵ While *Punch* simply dismissed the "worshippers" as women unable to control their consumptive desires, it was the only publication to identify the spectators as solely female. *The Observer* decided the public's attraction to the stone was "owing to some talismanic influence it possesses...and this it has continued since the day the Exhibition opened, the central sun, round which a crowd of worshipping satellites revolve."¹¹⁶ For Tallis, the answer was in the class of the viewers: on shilling days, people ran to see the Koh-i-Noor, again and again, because of their low, unrefined taste. Their acceptance of the stone was in keeping with the "uncivilized" Indians who also idol-worshipped; indeed, it was the "Oriental" cut that was blamed for the stone's inability to gratify "British" taste. To Tallis, Mr. Punch, and others, the horror of the Koh-i-Noor at the Exhibition was that an "Oriental" aesthetic and product, absorbed into Britain via blatant plunder imperialism was being hyper-valuated at a venue designed to celebrate Western industrial achievement and Whiggish progress.

By the close of the Exhibition and despite all efforts to improve its display, the Koh-i-Noor, while succeeding in attracting spectators, had obviously failed to live up to expectations and do the kind of cultural work the royal family had intended it to do. This even before Victoria had had a chance to wear it on her person, in a crown or other piece. It was a decidedly unfashionable ornament inextricably linked with one of the most prominent taste-makers in the country, not to mention the figurehead of the nation-empire. As historians of fashion have made

¹¹⁵ Tallis, Tallis, II: 150.

¹¹⁶ *The Observer*, May 18 1851, 4.

clear, the stakes for women in power to appear in fashion were tremendously high, as to appear *out* of fashion was to invite criticism about the legitimacy of their status and their belonging in a certain social echelon.¹¹⁷ While this was an issue for anyone in Britain, for Victoria, whose body and attire was under such intense scrutiny, performing her (albeit unique) attachment to society was integral to her project of becoming a popular monarch with the bourgeoisie and seeing the monarchy through republican challenges.¹¹⁸

As to the diamond itself, consumption discourse, as Erin Mackie has explored, constructed women to be "colonized" by the commodities they consumed; it was a horrifying thought that this unworthy Indian object could make Victoria its subject.¹¹⁹ In a similar vein, Marcia Pointon argues that while it was a marker of femininity to receive jewelry as gifts "at the same time, being a recipient of jewels carried obligations and gave rise to possibilities and to dangers."¹²⁰ Dalhousie automatically assumed the relationship with India that was being articulated through Victoria's appropriation of Koh-i-Noor was a simple narrative of British dominance, but the cultural discourses of fashion, jewelry giving (and wearing), and female consumption created a much more ambiguous reading of the diamond exchange, one that went beyond the context of the Exhibition.

Prince Albert responded to the Koh-i-Noor's negative press by having the stone recut. I argue that this refashioning of the gemstone, carefully staged to incorporate British science and technology though secretly dependant upon Dutch expertise, was an attempt to reposition the artifact in British material culture as a symbol of the civilizing mission in India and at home. The diamond would be redeemed, supposedly, by cutting regular facets into its face, rendering a

¹¹⁷ Batchelor and Kaplan, *Women and Material Culture*, 2-7.

¹¹⁸ Richard Williams, *The Contentious Crown: Public Discussion of the British Monarchy in the Reign of Queen Victoria*, (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1997).

¹¹⁹ Mackie, *Market a la Mode*, 47.

¹²⁰ Marcia Pointon, "Women and their Jewels," in *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830*, 12.

symmetrical, highly-reflective object of consistent coloring and transparency. Ellen Kennedy Johnson's work on the fashion for Chinese wallpaper in Britain shows how the appreciation of authentic Chinese wallpaper in the eighteenth century gave way to a taste for "rational," neoclassical print designs. Aesthetically, Europeans came to appreciate "orderly" designs as rationality, order, and progress began to be seen as particularly Western values.¹²¹

The same was true for diamonds. Early modern Indian lapidaries cut gemstones so as to preserve size and weight. Between 1750 and 1850, almost all diamonds coming from India to Europe -- the famous Pitt (Regent) diamond, the Hope, and the Sancy -- were recut to enhance brilliancy, the "brilliant" fashion being a mathematically symmetrical pattern of facets designed to maximize reflectivity at the expense of the stone's size. Many of these recuts received a great deal of attention when they happened.¹²² The Koh-i-Noor was only the latest monster diamond to be restyled. However, the recutting of the Koh-i-Noor became a celebrated part of the diamond's biography in a way that set it apart from other famous diamond "makeovers." For example, in Louis Dieulafait's 1871 book on diamonds and precious stones, a bestseller in England, France, and the United States, the author only includes "before" and "after" engravings of the Koh-i-Noor, as seen in Figures 2.5 and 2.6.¹²³ [figures 2.5 and 2.6] Not only does Dieulafait's engraving underscore the point above about imposing symmetry and regularity on the diamond, it is important to note that both the "before" and "after" images at first glance show a diamond of about the same size. In point of fact, the recut reduced the Koh-i-Noor by about forty percent. This reduction was seen as the cost of redeeming the stone.

¹²¹ Ellen Kennedy Johnson, "'The Taste for Bringing the Outside in': Nationalism, Gender and Landscape Wallpaper (1700-1825)," in *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830*, 124-7.

¹²² See Balfour, *Famous Diamonds*, 228-30, 124-35. Susan Ronald, *The Sancy Blood Diamond: Power, Greed, and the Cursed History of One of the World's Most Coveted Gems* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005), 206-18. Interestingly, the Orlov was not recut in this way.

¹²³ Dieulafait, *Diamonds and Precious Stones*, 95, 98. Dieulafait discusses the cutting of the Star of the South from Brazil, but that stone was cut from its rough state.

As soon as the Exhibition ended, Albert began his quest to refashion the diamond by contacting a handful of academic British scientists. Sir David Brewster, the renowned physicist, sent his six-point report on the Koh-i-Noor to the Prince. It began, "as this diamond is, in its present state, useless as an ornamental Gem, it possesses only a historical value." The trick to redeeming the stone, in Brewster's reasoning, would be to reduce its size and change its form without losing its "historical character." While the scientist went back and forth on what cuts would be appropriate and vaguely urged a move towards symmetry, ultimately he recommended that the Prince consult a diamond-cutter.¹²⁴

Other scientists Albert turned to included Nevil Story-Maskelyne, head of Geology and Mineralogy at the British Museum, and crystallographers James Tennant and Walter Mitchell. Brewster, Tennant and Story-Maskelyne, in particular, became Britain's leading authorities on the Koh-i-Noor, its physique, history, and place within the Crown Jewelry.¹²⁵ The Crown-sponsored effort by academic science to strategize the diamond's recut, though of little use when it came down to the actual act, is significant in that it reveals how the diamond's reputation was to be rehabilitated and reconfigured to symbolize progress, rationality, and British modernity. Still maintaining its Indian heritage and associations, somehow the offensive "oriental" cut would be modified, improved upon, and in a word, civilized. If successful, the "new" gemstone would allow Victoria to be bound up in imperial discourse in positive ways, rehabilitating diamond consumption for a modern era and a modern monarchy, and modeling "proper", Western diamond aesthetics for those Koh-i-Noor "worshippers" who had in themselves *exhibited* poor taste at the Exhibition.

¹²⁴ "Koh-i-Noor diamond," Sir David Brewster to Prince Albert, December 29 1851, Royal Archives, RA VIC/ADDT/54. Used with permission of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

¹²⁵ Story-Maskelyne, DF 5001/1-11, Story-Maskelyne Papers, NHMA.

Albert's recourse to British science and the idea that the diamond could be changed to reflect English taste and still maintain its Indianness recalls Macaulay's overtures to the progressive qualities of Western science and culture. Brewster's insistence that the diamond's Indian history be somehow kept intact illuminates how the gem could register in British material culture as an article of British imperialism in India. Through civilizing it via a complete structural intervention, the stone would no longer be associated with an out-dated imperialism of plunder and instead could stand in as a member of Macaulay's enlightened (both figuratively and literally) class. Moreover, the "work" the gem would be doing would be to model a perfect, useful kind of subjecthood for all of India. This could mitigate the charge of frivolity inherent in discourse about diamonds and jewelry at large. As Pointon argues, if jewelry could be shown to be useful it would not be regarded as an ostentatious vanity piece.¹²⁶ The question remained: could this be done?

After turning to the scientists, Albert consulted the diamond-cutters. Several refused to be involved because they felt the gem would be irreparably damaged in the process. The Prince was undeterred; he was willing to sacrifice the diamond in the hopes that it could be redeemed. After several weeks, the Coster firm in Amsterdam agreed to produce a recutting strategy, one that they (erroneously) promised would not reduce the weight of the stone in any significant manner.¹²⁷

Beginning on 16 July, 1852 and lasting for "thirty-eight days of twelve hours each", the diamond was recut.¹²⁸ Led by the *Times*, the London press followed the process intently, spurred on by the flow of scientists and aristocrat-celebrities who visited the Crown Jewelers, Messrs. Garrard of Panton-street, to observe the cutting. Chief among them, and the person who guided

¹²⁶ Pointon, "Women and their Jewels," 24.

¹²⁷ *Times*, July 19 1852, 8.

¹²⁸ Dieulafait, *Diamonds and Precious Stones*, 98.

the machine through its first cut, was the aged Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington.¹²⁹ The Garrards agreed the Duke would be a fine mascot for the endeavor -- if the diamond was damaged in the first cut, all could be blamed on a very old man who was the vanquisher of Napoleon Bonaparte and beyond reproach. On the other hand, the Duke was also associated with military successes in India, having fought Tipu Sultan and orchestrating the British takeover of the Deccan. For his part, Wellesley was fascinated by the process and attended several meetings leading up to the event, becoming a more-than-willing "dook" or diamond-holder for the initial process. The recut was set up to be a triumph of Western science; the diamond was constructed to be raw material, under- or improperly worked by "oriental" artistry. "Superior," masculinized Western mathematics, machinery and aesthetics were deployed to *properly* extract the spectacular worth from this "Mountain of Light."¹³⁰

As it had been throughout the Great Exhibition, *Punch* was there to lampoon the highly-staged cutting process. [Figure 2.7] Figure 2.7 depicts a sickly-looking Koh-i-Noor dressed in "oriental" garb being led to "the requisite machinery" by the "Dook" of Wellington, as "eminent scientific men watching proceedings" oversee the Dutch artists who are actually doing the work. A woman in the background notes that the diamond has not looked good since "he made that Exhibition of hisself" in Hyde Park. Mr. Punch characterized the process as surgery: "we hardly know how to describe the nature of the operation, unless we compare it to the removal of cataract from the Mountain, so as to bring out the eye of the Koh-i-Noor into a state of brilliancy." He made fun of the scientists – "*savants*" – who were ultimately useless having to rely on Dutchmen

¹²⁹ *Times*, July 19 1852, 8.

¹³⁰ Grahame Clark, *Symbols of Excellence: Precious Materials as Expressions of Status* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 86.

and professed to caring more about Mr. Garrard (who broke his leg one day during the recut) instead of the progress of the diamond.¹³¹

The Costers' claims to cut the diamond without diminishing its weight were repeated in the London press throughout the recutting process. By the time the operation was complete, the ridiculousness of these claims was plain: the diamond was significantly smaller than when it had arrived in England. While this was, in fact, typical of the costs of Western diamond-cutting strategies, the loss of a 186 carat diamond was shocking to many; so shocking that it came to eclipse assurances by those journalists who attended the (re)unveiling that the profound restyling left it "unsurpassed by any other of above ground, in type, lustre and beauty."¹³² Questions were raised as to whether or not the recut had been such a success as the diamond still was not as brilliant as expected of the "Mountain of Light." As Mr. Punch related, "After all this fuss had been made, and expense gone to, a discussion arose as to whether the patient really is itself after all – whether the Koh-i-Noor is the Koh-i-Noor? – a query that seems to us a little like taking off a man's leg, and then proceeding to ask whether he is the individual in whose case amputation is required."¹³³

While still an article of intense interest, the public received the "new" Koh-i-Noor with mixed reactions. It was still a major attraction at any exhibition in which it appeared, beginning with the Dublin Exhibition in 1853 and continuing through the World's Fair in London in 1862 where it was shown alongside another famous diamond, The Star of the South. The cultural work the diamond did in the context of the 1851 Great Exhibition was at cross-purposes, was multivalent, complex, and easily subverted with counter-arguments.

¹³¹ "The Poor Old Koh-i-Noor Again!" *Punch*, August 7 1852, 54.

¹³² *Times*, July 19 1852, 8; July 27 1852, 7; Aug. 28 1852, 5; September 11 1852, 5.

¹³³ "The Poor Old Koh-i-Noor Again!" *Punch*, August 7 1852, 54.

Post-1851, however, exhibitionists labored to depoliticize the piece and present crowds with a clear narrative and literal pathways both to and from the monster diamonds, pathways that encouraged them to “read,” for example, monster diamonds in the context of the jewelers and diamond-cutters’ craft and the national economic prosperity of Britain, the empire, and its allies, namely Holland. The way the Koh-i-Noor was shown in 1862, for example, was completely different than 1851: the Koh-i-Noor, “first and foremost in historic celebrity” as the *Daily News* characterized it, attracted a similar level of attention as it had received in 1851 but in a considerably different register.¹³⁴ Whereas in the Great Exhibition the stone was shown as a relic of conquest, with little or no clarity about how that conquest should be read by onlookers, in 1862 it was placed within an easily-digestible context of diamond appreciation in general and particular appreciation for European diamond-cutting. Recitations of the diamond’s Indian past, ubiquitous in 1851, were subdued a decade later. The meaning of diamonds at the Exhibition as a whole shifted between the two events: if 1851 was about (controversially) the Koh-i-Noor and India, 1862 was about (uncontroversially) diamond-cutting and Amsterdam.

This owed much to the exhibitors of the two monster diamonds who, unlike the Crown in 1851, had a massive, direct interest in diamond sales. Messrs. Garrard, the famous crown jewelers of London, oversaw the Koh-i-Noor’s display in the central nave in 1862, where the Diamond was shown alongside other pieces the house had created from gemstones in the Lahore treasury. From there, onlookers were encouraged to enter the jewelery section of the Exhibition proper, beginning with the Garrard’s case, or move towards the Star of the South’s exhibit, also in the nave, which had been staged by the Coster diamond-cutting firm of Amsterdam at the head of the Netherlands Court. The *Times* reported, soon after opening day,

¹³⁴ “Gems and Jewels of the International Exhibition,” *Daily News*, September 9 1862, 3

The Koh-i-Noor will not be alone in its glory this time, for a great rival, exhibited by M. Coster and said to be worth a million sterling, has come in from Amsterdam, and also made its appearance yesterday. This is "the Star of the South," a single brilliant of immense size, and weighing no less than 125 carats....Around the stand on which [it] is shown is a most interesting collection of diamonds from various mines, in every stage of progress, from the rough stone to the finished brilliant, and a brief printed description at the foot of each makes the whole method of cutting and polishing as clear as if the process, now only practiced at Amsterdam, took place before the eyes of the visitor.¹³⁵

The Dutch exhibit and the Star of the South were bound together: "To see the pride of Holland – that is, her diamonds – the visitor must step for a moment out of the Dutch Court into the nave. He will be at once instructed as to where the famous 'Star of the South' is shining by the crowd and the attendant policeman."¹³⁶ Elsewhere in the machine annex of the building, Mr. Anerhaan of the Coster firm gave demonstrations to onlookers: "He not only works, but explains with most exemplary patience and clearness the art of diamond cutting to the throng of visitors who constantly besiege his stand."¹³⁷

The "rivalry" between the two monster diamonds was a minor talking point of the exhibition and served as a convenient way for commentators to package their descriptions of the jewelry and gemstone content of the Crystal Palace. The Star of the South was a larger rock, about twenty carats heavier than the Koh-i-Noor. It was "new," having been mined after 1851 in Brazil, recently cut by Coster, and was owned by a syndicate of merchants based in Paris, London, and Lisbon that was looking to sell the stone. At certain angles, it gave off a reddish or yellowish light. This caused more than one critic to compare it unfavorably to the light given off

¹³⁵ "The International Exhibition," *Times*, May 3 1862, 11.

¹³⁶ "Our Way Through the Exhibition," *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, June 21 1862, 398.

¹³⁷ "Gems and Jewels of the International Exhibition," *Daily News*, September 9 1862, 3.

by the Koh-i-Noor, characterized as the older, classic stone which had been entirely redeemed by its re-cut, also famously performed by Coster.¹³⁸ As the *Daily News* quipped,

In the nave we found that the comparative merits of the Koh-i-Noor and the "Star of the South" had already risen into a party question. The partisans of the former said it was of the purest water, but the exhibitor of the latter affirmed that his gem had the most fire, adding, the truly British proof of excellence, that it was worth a million. He did not say whether florins or pounds sterling... The "Star of the South" is certainly a wonderful brilliant, but it has a yellow tinge, whilst the sparkle of the Koh-i-Noor is purely prismatic... There is much to be said on both sides, and the debate may go on very harmlessly until October next.¹³⁹

The *Aberdeen Journal* sided with "the ancient Koh-i-Noor, the Eastern history of which is a thousand years of ever-recurring disaster, and which looks more gorgeous in its setting than in the half-cut form in which it has made all its public appearances till now."¹⁴⁰ Of course, the recut Koh-i-Noor had been shown in public before 1862 but ignoring this fact no doubt made for better copy.¹⁴¹ That the Coster firm had seen to the cutting of both monster diamonds dissipated most of the stakes alive in comparing the two gemstones, if anything it refocused all attention on diamond cutting.

This emphasis on diamond-cutting rationalized the diamond extravaganza within the "Festival of Industry" as a whole and recommended diamonds as articles of interest to

¹³⁸ "The International Exhibition," *Birmingham Daily Post*, August 7 1862.

¹³⁹ "The International Exhibition," *Daily News*, May 5 1862.

¹⁴⁰ "The Festival of Industry," *The Aberdeen Journal*, May 14 1862.

¹⁴¹ Another low-level issue was a rumor circulated by apparently one of warders at the Tower of London that the Koh-i-Noor on display at the Exhibition was not the real Diamond, the real Diamond being on display in the Tower. See "The International Exhibition," *The Daily News*, August 29 1862 and September 15 1862; The Star of the South was taken off exhibition in late August, 1862 for reasons that are unclear. See "The International Exhibition," *The Daily News*, August 27 and 29, 1862. The Star was also displayed in 1867 as the syndicate continued to look for buyers. The *Birmingham Daily Post* quipped "As the price of the bauble, however, would prove a serious obstacle event to a joint-stock company of Indian nabobs, it is scarcely probably that any of the fair frequenters of the Court of St. James will be enabled to sport the gem in her coronet at the next 'drawing room,' unless the suggestion of a London contemporary for the formation of a club of duchesses to purchase the stone with a common fund, and allow each member to wear it in turn, be promptly adopted. "The International Exhibition: The Foreign Courts – Holland & Belgium," *The Birmingham Daily Post*, August 7 1862. It was reportedly offered for sale to an unnamed Indian Prince and was later purchased by Khande Rao, Gaekwar of Baroda in Gujarat in the late 1860s for two million francs, or about £80,000. Reportedly, it was still in the Rao family in the 1930s and may now possibly be owned by Rustomjee Jamsetjee of Mumbai. Balfour, *Famous Diamonds*, 255-57.

workers.¹⁴² While commentators could dismiss the two monster diamonds as diverting but ultimately unimportant, as the *Penny Illustrated* put it,

A thousand workmen could not earn [the Star of the South's] price, let them work a year for this Hardship. Capital being hoarded labour, the workman who looks at this dazzling gem may wonder as he counts up the labour that lies hoarded within the facets of this twinkling carbon star. Yet these diamonds yields employment also. At Amsterdam thousands and thousands of men live by the polishing of diamonds in diamond-mills; and the skill required to cut and polish the diamond is exquisite.¹⁴³

It was the artistic skill and technical talent of diamond-cutting that overshadowed the superciliousness of diamond appreciation (and value) derogated in other exhibitions. The *Daily News* put a finer point on the importance of diamond-cutting, offering a triumphalist history of the development of the mathematical "brilliant cut" from the 15th century to the present in ways that not only underscored the technical savvy of European cutters but placed them (and European diamond aesthetics) far above "Oriental" efforts. "Although the Orientals have been gem cutters and polishers from time immemorial," quipped the commentator, "they have never learnt the art of bringing out the beauties of their stones. Their cutting lacks symmetry, without which there can be no beauty of form, and they are altogether ignorant of the methods of displaying the optical powers of the gems to their best advantage."¹⁴⁴ The (erroneous) history of diamond-cutting was placed in a narrative of Western progress: "Before the time of Cardinal Mazarin [who was rumored to have invented the brilliant cut], the ladies of the French court adorned themselves with jewels of colored stones and pearls, sometimes attaching a diamond to the centre of the clasp of their necklaces. After the beauties of the brilliant were known, diamonds

¹⁴² For a dismissal of the monster diamonds see, "The International Exhibition," *The Belfast News-Letter*, May 8 1862: "I must, for the future, proceed to draw your attention to objects of more universal importance than 'Koh-i-Noor's' and 'Stars of the South!'"

¹⁴³ "Our Way Through the Exhibition," *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, June 21 1862, 398.

¹⁴⁴ "Gems and Jewels of the International Exhibition," *Daily News*, September 9 1862, 3.

became the fashion and have ever since been esteemed above all other jewels."¹⁴⁵ Even in 1867, in the context of the Paris Universalle where the Koh-i-Noor was not shown, the commentator for the *Daily News* felt it necessary to rehearse the narrative of the diamond's showing and recutting in 1851-52, to argue the good works of exhibition culture:

Messrs. Garrard took Runjeet Sing's [sic] main ornament in hand, and got light into it, but reduced its weight one-third. These discussions and doings are among the important uses of exhibitions. They are proceeding here in the Champ de Mars as they proceeded in Hyde-park, when [monster diamonds] were objects of intense interest, not only to the ladies who could just say that it was 'a love,' and think how it would become them, but to men of science and men of taste.¹⁴⁶

Still, though the Koh-i-Noor registered in this progressive, civilizing vein of diamond and exhibition discourse, it was not completely redeemed, the confusion about its desirability still inhered in the meaning of the object. As Brewster had warned, some of the symbolic value was lost in the "makeover". King wrote in 1865 that the recutting was

a most ill-advised proceeding, which has deprived the stone of all its historical and mineralogical value; for as a specimen of a monster diamond whose native weight and form had been as little as possible diminished by art... it was unrivalled in Europe; and giving in their stead a bad-shaped, shallow brilliant, of but inferior water, and only 102.5 carats.¹⁴⁷

Replicas of the gemstone became attractions, beginning with the glass mock-up on display at the British Museum (care of Story-Maskelyne). The practice of displaying replicas moved beyond museums into the market proper – jewelers such as Bond Street's Edwin Streeter sported replicas of a pantheon of famous diamonds, the Koh-i-Noor among them, as did Harrod's department store. Significantly, whether it was on exhibition itself, or in replica form, the "new" Koh-i-Noor was displayed alongside replicas of the "original" stone, indicating how the recutting process was

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ "The Paris Exhibition," *Daily News*, May 28 1867.

¹⁴⁷ "Precious Stones and Antique Gems," *Times*, October 14 1865, 6.

part of the attraction.¹⁴⁸ In this way, the controversy over the diamond and its Indian past were never excluded from public memory; rather the complexity of the situation in 1851 continued to inhere in the meanings of the stone long after it had been accepted as a part of the Crown jewelry.

The unease with which the Koh-i-Noor was greeted after its recutting can again be explained by the diamond's resonance as a symbol of the relationship between Britain and India. By the mid-1850s, British imperialism and culture had moved away from Macaulay's formulation of the civilizing mission, if, indeed, Macaulay's vision had ever been dominant when it was delivered in 1835. The success of the abolitionist movement in the 1830s had, in many ways, both signaled and set the stage for the widespread adoption of a decidedly evangelical brand of moral empire that went hand-in-hand with the increasing prevalence of racial attitudes. Perhaps missionaries such as David Livingstone and Robert Moffat, who began their work in southern Africa in the 1840s, were more fitting mascots for the mid-century civilizing mission than the Koh-i-Noor.¹⁴⁹ The Indian Rebellion or "Mutiny" of 1857-8 is typically seen as the watershed moment when British attitudes towards India shifted to becoming entirely dismissive of the idea that India and Indians could achieve "proper" modernity and progressive civilization.¹⁵⁰ We can see in this earlier moment of 1851-2, through uneasy reactions to the Koh-i-Noor that this shift was beginning in British ideology before the Indian rebellion later in the decade. Doubts abounded as to whether the diamond could be completely "civilized" *and* maintain its Indian history.

¹⁴⁸ "To Asscler, 4 December 1909," Story-Maskelyne Papers, DF10/50, Pk1, NHMA.

¹⁴⁹ Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002), 208-9, 370-1; H.L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 41-76.

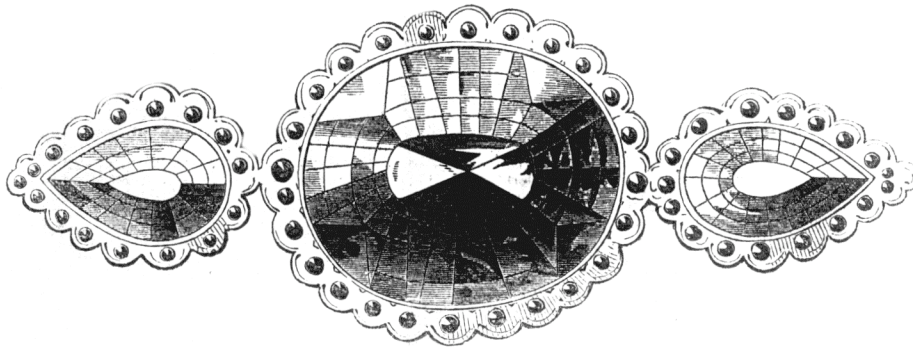
¹⁵⁰ Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, 5.

The vicissitudes of the Koh-i-Noor as it came to be in the possession of the British monarchy, was shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851, recut and shown again at the London Exhibition of 1862 show the multivalent registers that diamonds operated on in mid-Victorian society. Was a large diamond a “Western” or “Eastern” piece of material culture, could recutting it effect a transformation from one hemisphere to the other, was a transformation necessary or even desirable, and were matters of consumption and beauty appropriate priorities for the consolidation of British imperial power both at home and abroad? The ambivalence with which British crowds, aesthetes, and the monarchy embraced the Koh-i-Noor, predicated upon the diamond’s association with India and British colonialism, betrayed how unstable the meaning of diamonds in British was circa 1851. While most Indian sources of rough diamonds had long been exhausted by 1851, diamonds retained a strong association with “the East” – despite the fact that most of the diamonds that entered Britain in the 1850s and ’60 came from Brazil. It was not until diamonds were discovered in South Africa in 1867 and De Beers Consolidated Mines Limited came to monopolize the market that the meaning of the gemstone as a metonym of British imperial power gained widespread acceptance.

The invocation of Britain's imperial identity to activate the monarchy was not a strategy reserved for the era of high imperialism in the 1870s and 80s but was used much earlier in the century – to complex and unforeseen effects. Never again did Victoria accept or purchase a famous large diamond, though many were offered to her including the 245 carat Jubilee diamond from South Africa, ostensibly designed for her diamond Jubilee of 1897. As for the Koh-i-Noor, perhaps the official royal history of the English Regalia puts it best: "No King of England has worn it, and it has never been set in a sovereign’s crown."¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Martin Holmes and H.D.W. Sitwell, *The English Regalia* (London: Her Majesty's Stationers, 1972), 41.

Figures



RUNJEET SINGH'S DIAMOND—"THE MOUNTAIN OF LIGHT."

Fig 2.1 : The *Illustrated London News*' 1849 depiction of the Koh-i-Noor as how Ranjit Singh wore it



Fig 2.2: *Punch*'s cartoon of the crowds interested in the Koh-i-Noor at the 1851 Great Exhibition



Fig 2.3: *Punch*: "A gentleman from the Country mistakes the Crystal sent by the Duke of Devonshire for the Koh-i-Noor Diamond"

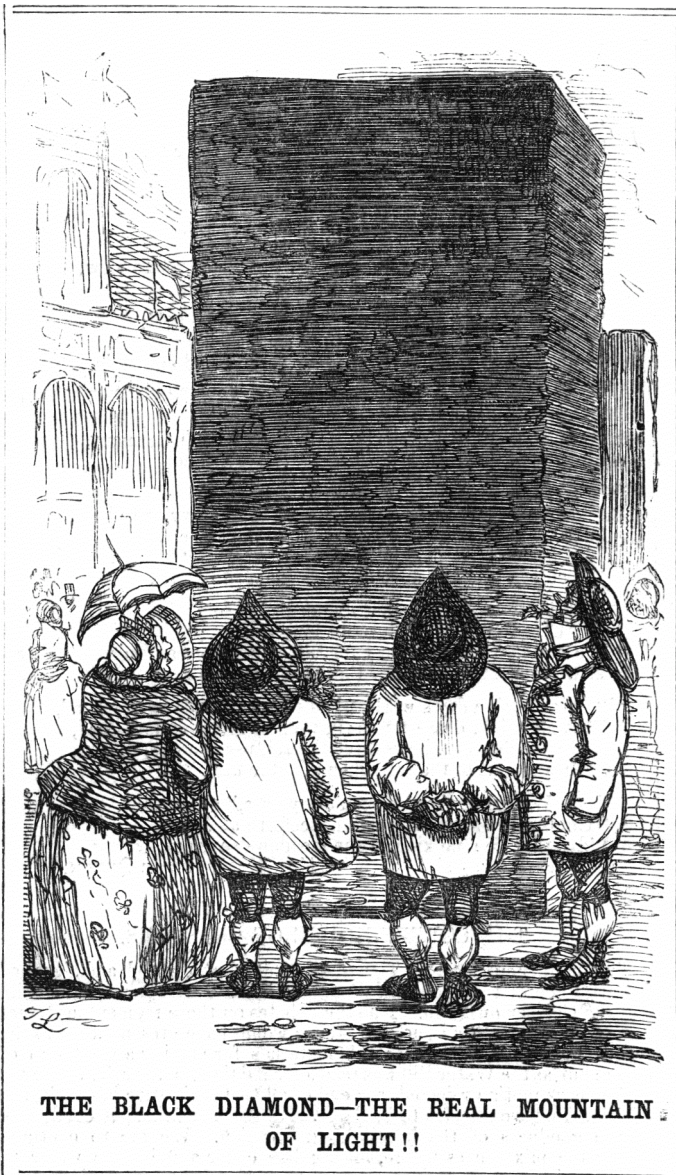


Fig 2.4: *Punch*: "The Black Diamond – The Real Mountain of Light!!" A commentary on coal versus diamond.

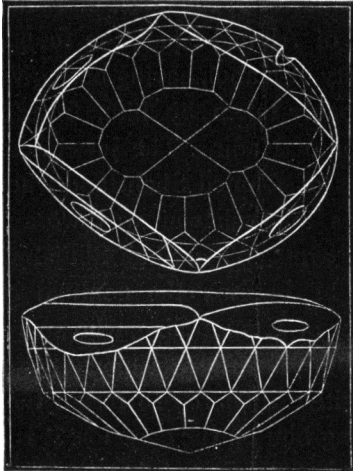


Fig 2.5: Dieulafoy's depiction of the Koh-i-Noor in 1851 before re-cutting

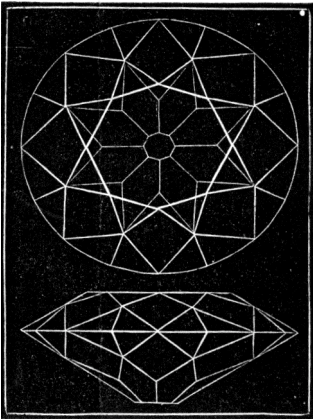


Fig 2.6: Dieulafoy's depiction of the Koh-i-Noor after re-cutting in 1852



THE POOR OLD KOH-I-NOOR AGAIN !

1. THE KOH-I-NOOR

2 2. THE DUTCH ARTISTS.

3 3 3. THE REQUISITE MACHINERY.

4. THE "DOOK" MANIFESTING GREAT INTEREST IN THE PRECIOUS GEM.

5 5 5. EMINENT SCIENTIFIC MEN WATCHING PROCEEDINGS.

Fig 2.7: A *Punch* satire of the performance of the recutting of the Koh-i-Noor, complete with caricatures of the "Dook" of Wellington, "eminent scientific men," and a personification of the Koh-i-Noor as an orientalized old man.

Chapter 3: The Rush: Moving Diamonds After 1867

Chapters 3 and 4 focus, respectively, on how the commodity chain was reinvented once diamonds were discovered in southern Africa in 1867 and how South African supply and distribution segments came to be monopolized in the late 1880s. An explosion in the number of producers, traders, cutters, manufacturers, retailers, and customers in the early days of the Diamond Fields made for a complex chain of supply between Africa and Europe, especially when we consider that the movement of diamonds was contingent on the rise and maintenance of other kinds of movements and supply, from labor to commodities to capital. This complexity was gradually eroded as a handful of mining companies, and the De Beers Consolidated Mining Company in particular, asserted control over many kinds of movement on the Fields in an effort to control the diamond trade. What was a complex and, for some, democratic commodity chain in the early 1870s became very streamlined and exclusive by 1889. These structural changes in the diamond trade were mutually constitutive with a shift in the cultural meaning of diamonds for the buying public: once prized for unlimited portability, the value of diamonds as markers of privilege came to rest upon the British government's and the De Beers Company's ability to control diamond traffic within Africa, between Africa and Europe, as well as within Europe.

This chapter will discuss the early days of diamond diggings in southern Africa and the various kinds of movement that facilitated and were engendered by the commodity chain that developed in the early 1870s. The development of the chain illustrates how deeply any commodity chain is intertwined with other chains and movements on local and transnational scales and cannot be studied in isolation. This early period is often characterized as a democratic and democratizing moment for diamonds and the diamond trade, as more stones were available to more consumers via an unprecedented number of producers and distributors. But, as this

chapter explores, from the start there were interests at work determined to control the trade by firstly limiting who could mine, sell, and own diamonds, and secondly controlling access to other goods, services, and occupations that supported the trade. In other words, however complex the system was in the early days, to characterize it as "democratic" is a massive overstatement that only serves to highlight how powerful De Beers was in the 1890s.

For writers interested in mining, technology, diamonds, and notorious companies, the series of discoveries made in the late 1860s in what would become Kimberley, South Africa represent a watershed moment for the diamond trade. Up until then, the world had only known of alluvial crystallized carbon deposits -- that is, diamonds found in ancient river beds. These resources could be mined relatively simply: they required large amounts of labor and water to haul and wash diamondiferous soil but needed little in the way of machinery or infrastructure. The number of gemstones they yielded was usually lower than what the market could absorb, there were few "monster diamond" finds amongst the riverbed debris, and it was relatively easy to curtail production if prices dropped. The diamond deposits in South Africa, however, were an entirely different proposition: initial alluvial mining gave way to the discovery of "pipes" of crystallized carbon that yielded unprecedented numbers of gemstones and required evermore invasive, life-threatening, and mechanized strategies to extract them. South African production eclipsed Brazilian and Indian production almost immediately. To illustrate, even in the "early rush" of relatively unorganized, individual digging projects, the southern African Diamond Fields produced at least four carats for every one taken from Minas Geraes. Brazil averaged an output of 200,000 carats per year between 1845 and 1870; in contrast, in 1872 the Cape reportedly produced over a million carats. By the late 1880s, South African production had increased more than three-fold and was still rising: in 1887, the Cape Colony *officially* exported

3,598,930 carats valued at £4,242,470, an amount that represented over half of the Colony's total export capital.¹ Because of this high production, many authors barely acknowledge the diamond trade before 1867, and hence the rise of diamond appreciation on a wide scale is simply conflated with the rise of De Beers and African mining in general. This is a common trait of popular literature on the subject, which caters to audiences intrigued by the diamond cartel and present-day issues about blood diamonds, African politics, and neo-colonialism.²

Historiographically, the rise of diamond mining in southern Africa after 1867 is well-trodden territory. For imperial business historians such as Colin Newbury and African labor historians such as William Worger and Robert Turrell, the development of the Diamond Fields represents a unique opportunity to view the intersection of colonial policy and business interests. Their three monographs, all published in the late 1980s, form the standard works of the field, and given that each scholar had access to archives that are now by-and-large closed to researchers, it is unlikely that future scholars will supplant their work. Newbury's *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947* (1989) builds off of and reevaluates laudatory histories of the De Beers company and its major directors, particularly Cecil Rhodes and Ernest Oppenheimer. His project is to evaluate context and agency in the creation and maintenance of the monopoly; he finds that diamond merchants had much more say in developments than previously thought and exposes the formation of De Beers as a

¹ Robert Vicat Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, African Studies Series ; 54 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 10. See also 4, 9.

² Popular trade publications include Matthew Hart, *Diamond: The History of a Cold-Blooded Love Affair* (New York: Plume, 2001), Stefan Kanfer, *The Last Empire: De Beers, Diamonds, and the World* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1993), Martin Meredith, *Diamonds, Gold, and War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), Janine Roberts, *Glitter and Greed: The Secret World of the Diamond Cartel*, Revised ed. (New York: Disinformation, 2007), Tom Zoellner, *The Heartless Stone: A Journey through the World of Diamonds, Deceit, and Desire* (New York: St. Martin's, 2006).

multinational enterprise rather than a strictly Rhodes-centric, South African affair.³ Worger's *South Africa's City of Diamonds: Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895* (1987) and Turrell's *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890* (1987), take a different approach, and show how mining interests and practice largely grew to become the interests and practice of the colonial government. These studies convincingly implicate diamond mining in the formation of racist labor, justice, and political systems in South Africa – creating the conditions that ultimately led to apartheid.⁴ Each of these three, albeit with different emphases and slightly different periodizations, provide a detailed, continuous narrative of the rise of the Diamond Fields from the initial diamond discoveries between 1866 and 1869, the major "rush" to the Fields in 1870, the British empire's annexation of Griqualand West (what would become Kimberley and its surrounding environs) in 1871, the demise of independent diggings and the rise of joint-stock mining companies after 1872, the bitter competition between a handful of powerful companies in the 1880s, the strikes by white mineworkers in 1883 and '84 that eventually led to the establishment of closed compound mining in 1885, and how the De Beers Mining Company came to absorb the majority of its rivals and control the trade by about 1889.

The rise of the Diamond Fields also, of course, figures predominantly in broad national histories of South Africa, popular and academic alike. Leonard Thompson's standard and beloved textbook, *A History of South Africa* (2000) is only one example of this literature; the chapter meant to explain the period from 1870 to 1910 is simply entitled, "Diamonds, Gold, and

³ Colin Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 5. For a classic Rhodes-centric account, see Gardner F. Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa, Vol. 1* (New York: BF Buck & Company, 1905), "The Moving Men," 268-96.

⁴ Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, William H. Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, Yale Historical Publications. Miscellany. 135 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

British Imperialism."⁵ Another is Martin Meredith's popular *Diamonds, Gold, and War: the British, the Boers, and the Making of South Africa* (2007).⁶ But perhaps the most dramatic, and certainly the quirkiest, instance of how Diamond Fields history is written as formative national history is *Diamond Fever: South African Diamond History* (1974), compiled by South African radio personality and historian Marian Robertson. Robertson ferreted out any archival document having to do with diamond discoveries between 1866 and 1869 in a quest to establish exactly who did what to “discover” the diamond fields, the stakes of her project being to reveal agency and truth in the events leading up to the rush of 1870, “the pivotal year on which turned the fortunes not only of the Cape Colony but of the whole of South Africa.”⁷ Passionate about corroborating founding national narratives, Robertson views the late 1860s finds as “fate, like some fairy godmother...waving a wand. Never could such a valuable mineral have made its presence known to a country at a more appropriate time.”⁸ Certainly Thompson's and Meredith's efforts steer clear of the patriotism-linked-with-diamond appreciation in which Robertson revels, but each national history seems to rest, in part, on diamond history, and is definitely marketed as such.

Given this literature, it is not my intention to provide yet another comprehensive narrative of the rise of diamond mining in South Africa, nor De Beers, nor colonial policy towards De Beers, nor the biography of Cecil Rhodes, nor how diamond mining built South Africa. Instead, the goal of this chapter is to read across these literatures and link them up to information about the refinement, distribution, and consumption of diamonds in order to describe the reinvention of the diamond commodity chain after 1867 -- In other words, to describe the movement of

⁵ Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 3rd edition, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 110-153.

⁶ Meredith, *Diamonds, Gold, and War*.

⁷ Marian Robertson, *Diamond Fever, 1866-69* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1974), 14.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

diamonds from southern Africa to Europe. This chapter focuses largely on the early digging days and the myriad factors that facilitated diamond movement. One of the purposes of this dissertation is to illustrate how, following world systems theory, commodity chains are not simply one-dimensional structures but rather webs of interests that, in moving a commodity from one place to the next also incorporate, engender, and – importantly -- disable, other movements, commodity chains, and special interests.⁹ In keeping with that purpose, this chapter not only follows diamond movement but other kinds of mobility (and immobility) that were instrumental in creating the commodity chain.

Another priority of the chapter is to discuss how this complex, mundane, structural constellation of movement affected diamond appreciation in this period, revealing, again, how the material conditions of the trade inhered in the cultural meaning of diamonds. The early period of the diamond finds is often seen as a "rush" to the area, an explosion of movement, not only of diamonds themselves, but people, things, and capital associated with the diamond trade. Everyone seemed to be able to take part in the diamond trade and as gemstone prices fell, more and more people could fancy themselves diamond owners. The theme of mobility, or portability, was an asset particularly associated with diamonds prior to the South African finds. As Sir David Brewster had it in 1852, the diamond

is in truth the very essence of property. It is riches condensed and wealth secured – too small to be seen by the midnight burglar – too easily hid to be seized by the tyrant – and too quickly carried away to be wrested from the patriot exile, or torn from the hunted outlaw. In vain would the vanquished monarch strive to remove his bags of gold, or transport his territorial domains; -- but a diamond is an empire made portable, with which he might purchase a better kingdom and mount a prouder throne.¹⁰

⁹ Jennifer Bair, "Global Commodity Chains: Genealogy and Review," in *Frontiers of Commodity Chain Research*, ed. Jennifer Bair (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 7.

¹⁰ David Sir Brewster, "The Diamond - Its History, Properties, and Origins," *North British Review* 18 (1852): 234. For other discussions of the efficacy of diamonds for their portability see Harry Emanuel, *Diamonds and Precious Stones : Their History, Value and Distinguishing Characteristics, with Simple Tests for Their Identification*, 2nd ed. (London: John Camden Hotten, 1867), xi.; Neville Story-Maskelyne, "Lectures on the mineralogy of antiquity," DF

While Brewster might have been referring to the tendency for Continental aristocracy to flee to Britain during revolutions with their jewelry wealth intact, the attractiveness of diamond portability went far beyond this elite application. As John Plotz has argued in his book *Portable Property* (2008), a "preoccupation with portability in the mid-Victorian period is manifested in diamond tales as nowhere else."¹¹ There was a certain egalitarian zeal alive in Victorian discourse about diamond movement, both fictional and non-fictional, from narratives of Brazilian slaves smuggling stones and purchasing their freedom, to the seemingly haphazard circulation of the Koh-i-Noor and other "monster" gemstones that flowed to Europe, to lowly East India Company servants coming into possession of fabled treasure-troves and returning with them to Britain as powerful nabobs, to surprise and hidden inheritances, to random gemstones turning up in the bodies of fish and birds, to the "street Arab" who finds lost diamonds in a gutter, to the pawnbroker who is offered the Prince of Wales' diamond ring by an East End prostitute, to dozens upon dozens of real and imagined "diamond heist" stories, and, of course, to the adventurer/pro prospector who recovers previously unknown riches in Africa.¹² There was something romantic, dangerous, and efficacious in how easy it was for *anyone* to carry and conceal diamond wealth, and how that wealth could then facilitate dramatic shifts in social standing and freedom of movement for the carrier.

5001/7, Story-Maskelyne Papers, Natural History Museum Archives (NHMA); "Oriental and English Jewellery," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, April 1 1890, 113.

¹¹ John Plotz, *Portable Property: Victorian Culture on the Move* (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 25.

¹² See, for example, "Pawnbroker to His Royal Highness: the Prince of Wales," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, October 15 1890, 336; "A Diamond in a Turkey's Claw," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, February 1 1894; "Watch in a Belly of a Shark," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 15 1874, 164; "Diamonds Smuggled in the Breast Hair of a Newfoundlander Dog," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 1 1886, 188; Charles Reed, *Diamonds in the Dust: A New Year's Address for Sunday School* (London: Sunday School Union, 1866).; novels such Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (New York: Random House, 2001, c. 1868), Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2001, c. 1890), H. Rider Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* (London: Cassell, 1885).; Arthur Griffiths, "Jewel Robberies," in *Mysteries of Police and Crime: A General Survey of Wrongdoing and Its Pursuit* (London: Cassell & Company, Ltd, 1899), Tillman W. Nechtman, "A Jewel in the Crown? Indian Wealth in Domestic Britain in the Late Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41, no. 1 (2007).

Moreover, diamonds were uniquely valued for their ability to be commodity, currency, and individual artifact (i.e. *thing*), all at once, in ways that compounded their worth in society. As Plotz posits, "were they not also potentially implicated in the ordinary flow of exchange, they never would have become portable repositories of meaning."¹³ The contrast between diamond and gold wealth Brewster makes above hints at the unique place loose diamonds had in the matriculation of commodities flowing in and out of Britain in the nineteenth century. Long had British customs considered diamonds – cut or rough – to be on the same level as bullion and thus not subject to duty or declaration at the Custom House, entirely unlike "pearls, emeralds, rubies and all other precious stones and jewellery."¹⁴ Under this law, East India Company employees were encouraged to "remit" Indian diamonds to Britain instead of heavy bullion or other cumbersome goods that took up individual luggage allowances.¹⁵ Facilitating diamond movement was an efficient way to move wealth out of India and as such was one technology, among many, of colonial exploitation.

While British laissez-faire customs law certainly facilitated this traffic, it also reflected the reality that it was impossible for any government body to effectively monitor the trade: a boatload of gold was easy to follow compared to the equivalent in diamond wealth that had been sewn into a garment. Another factor that recommended diamonds as currency was that fact that

¹³ Plotz, *Portable Property : Victorian Culture on the Move*, 16.

¹⁴ "Importation of diamonds and other precious stones: Customs procedures," 1858, CUST 33/404, National Archives (NA), London.

¹⁵ Henry Draper Steel, *The India Officer's and Trader's Pocket-Guide, in Purchasing the Drugs and Spices of Asia and the East-Indies: With Practical Directions for the Choice of Diamonds, and an Accurate Account of the Chinese Touch- Needles. ... Compiled from Authority by H. D. S.*, Second edition. ed. (London:: printed for D. Steel,... 1789), 1-2, 91-6. See also Bruce. P Lenman, "The East India Company and the Trade in Non-Metallic Precious Materials from Sir Thomas Roe to Diamond Pitt," in *The Worlds of the East India Company*, ed. H. V. Bowen, Margarete Lincoln, and Nigel Rigby (Rochester: The Boydell Press, 2002), Nechtman, "A Jewel in the Crown? Indian Wealth in Domestic Britain in the Late Eighteenth Century." For primary collections associated with diamond remittances from India and other such traffic involving Lord Robert Clive see India Office Select Materials (IOSM), Private Papers, Verelst Collection, Mss Eur F218/89, 19, 28, and Mss Eur F218/90, 25, 33, Asia Pacific and Africa Collections (APAC), British Library (BL). For Harry Verelst's transactions see "Burses of diamonds purchased by Chamier, 1767-68" Mss Eur F218/52, esp f 11-13 and Mss Eur F218/56 May 17-28 1771.

unlike proper bullion, diamonds did not need to be made into coins or smaller units to enter the market: both rough and cut gemstones had a number of metropolitan traders and London banks, particularly after 1867, accepted diamonds for deposit.¹⁶ Of course, those looking to recommend diamonds as articles of value exaggerated the ease with which any seller could dispose of them, particularly in times of crisis: Harry Emanuel, jeweler to the middle classes, wrote in the 1860s, "in Paris, during the great Revolution of 1789-96, diamonds doubled their previous value, and even now, in foreign countries, many personages of note make a practice of keeping them in their possession in case of emergency."¹⁷ If anything, the price of diamonds plummeted during the French Revolution because so many were being sold; Emanuel was also spreading misinformation when he said, "we observe a large increase in their price in the United States of America at the present time."¹⁸ Regardless of market realities, there was a belief that diamonds would function as a universal currency in a national or personal emergency, and even the word "currency" is instructive in how these rocks were appreciated for their portability: from the Latin *currere*, meaning "to run," the Middle English *curraunt* meaning "in circulation," and the noun and adjectival form of current meaning "flow" or "flowing."¹⁹

The seeming impossibility of fully policing the flow of diamonds from the Brazilian mines to Europe, in particular, was also constant in Victorian discourse. George Gardner, in his Brazilian travelogue, estimated that there was as much revenue generated from the "illicit" market in gemstones than the sanctioned market and dismissed that as simply being the nature of the diamond business. He also intoned that "illicit" profit was a mitigating factor for the use of Brazilian slave labor in the mines, the proverbial "ghost in the machine" that allowed

¹⁶ Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 74-8.

¹⁷ Emanuel, *Diamonds and Precious Stones : Their History, Value and Distinguishing Characteristics, with Simple Tests for Their Identification*, ix.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁹ See "Importation," CUST 33/404, NA.

enterprising slaves to purchase their freedom.²⁰ In this logic, diamond mobility served a corrective function to social injustice, the idea that in what was an uncontrollable and thus quasi-free trade, an "invisible hand" operated to see that diamonds ended up in the possession of the deserving. In the context of the diamond rush in 1867, there was the idea that an enterprising and lucky digger could find fortune on the Fields, a way that colonial adventurism would ensure that hard-workers could advance in society.²¹

Thus, the meaning and appreciation of diamonds in Victorian culture was predicated on their portability, their efficacy as currency, *and* the rise in social status they could effect when sold and properly displayed, or, to put it another way, the mobility they could enable. Looking at canonical fiction like Anthony Trollope's *The Eustace Diamonds* and Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone*, Plotz argues that diamonds were

boundary-troublers. In their persistent refusal to turn either into pure liquidity or pure bearers of sentimental value, they can function as a byword both for the apotheosis of sublimely unique beauty...and for the supreme concretization of monetary value. In that doubleness lies their problematic status – and their enduring allure.²²

The stakes, then, for controlling diamond movement -- the very thing that the De Beers production and supply syndicates sought to do and what will be the major focus of Chapter 4 – were enmeshed in the meaning and valuation, material and cultural, of diamonds in European society.

The remainder of this chapter details the diamond commodity chain after 1867 and into the early 1870s. It begins with the "producer" segment of the chain by exploring three themes in the establishment of the Diamond Fields: the movement of discovery narratives and scientific

²⁰ George Gardner, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil, Principally through the Northern Provinces, and the Gold and Diamond Districts, During the Years 1836-1841* (New York: AMS Press, 1970, c. 1846), 465-66.

²¹ See, for example, "The Diamond Fields of South Africa," *Jewish Chronicle*, September 20 1872, 340.

²² Plotz, *Portable Property : Victorian Culture on the Move*, 25.

ideas about diamonds in inland South Africa between the Cape and London; the movement of people through the area that constituted the "diamond rush" and created the political and social structure of Kimberley; and how diamond production was intimately bound up in the supply of other key commodities and services to this remote area of southern Africa. All of these trends were interrelated. The circulation of discovery narratives compelled migration to the area while London scientists' disavowal of African diamonds also discouraged migration and investment schemes. Concomitantly, fluctuations in population and the demographic makeup of the region created demands for certain commodities, services, and political structures on the Fields that enabled some groups to own mines, achieve relatively favorable labor conditions, or gain a modicum of economic autonomy at the expense of others. Between 1867 and 1869 control of the Fields rested in the hands of a few African chiefs; after 1869, the number of independent diamond producers exploded into the thousands, giving the Diamond Fields an international reputation for lucrative opportunity for anyone who could travel to the region.

The next segment examines the "rough" stone trade that moved diamonds from Kimberley to Cape Town to London. Just as the production segment in the early 1870s was constituted by thousands of independent miners, so too was the rough trade. It incorporated dozens of large buyers working for European jewelry houses as well as hundreds of *kopje-wallopers* or independent traders, many of whom had no experience with the diamond trade before coming to South Africa and barely earned a living on the Fields. The opportunity to buy and sell diamonds seemed ubiquitous and non-exclusive: this openness translated into the London markets with giant auctions for both rough and cut stones held at department stores like Debenham's. Even the method of sending stones to London – via the Post Office, or for larger shipments by "depositing" them in banks that had London branches like the Standard -- was

relatively inexpensive and open to all. Indeed, the Post Office handled the majority of diamond shipments, cut, rough, and set in jewelry, throughout the chain.

After being sold in the rough, European jewelry houses had the diamonds shipped to Amsterdam or Antwerp for cutting. The early 1870s were a boom time for diamond cutting in Amsterdam and the number of independent cutters in the city swelled, creating tension between established factories and other businesses in the area. While the majority of cut stones went to Paris buyers to sell to Continental jewelers, London buyers sold cut stones to manufacturing jewelers in Birmingham, who enjoyed their own boom and increase in numbers in the 1870s. The Birmingham jewelers sold their wares to retail jewelers in London and throughout the empire. Finally, diamonds, cut and set, were sold to customers by retail jewelers. Throughout the 1870s, the price of diamonds, rough and cut, dropped dramatically, giving more customers more opportunities to buy diamond jewelry than ever before. The chapter ends with a discussion of this moment of early African production as the democratization of diamond ownership.

* * *

As Edward Said reminds us in *Beginnings* (1975), when and where a story begins encodes the narrative arc of the whole piece.²³ The vast majority of literature about the diamond industry in the nineteenth century begins with the European discovery of diamonds in an area near the Orange River as the singular event that tips off everything after it: the colonization of inland southern Africa, the rise of a diamond monopoly, the rise of South Africa as a significant colony within the British empire, an explosion in Western diamond consumption, the Boer Wars, and so on. While a priority of this dissertation has been to rationalize the rise of De Beers within a longer *durée* of diamond consumption and British imperialism, to wholly subvert the South African discoveries as a formative diamond or national-imperial milestone obscures the

²³ Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975).

significant change that took place with the rise of South African mining, not only in Africa but throughout the commodity chain. The rise of Kimberley inherited both changes and continuities: it was predicated upon economic webs and assumptions about culture and colonialism that were alive in earlier diamond networks while at the same time, the meaning of diamonds and the structure of the chain was reinvented to accommodate South African production.

Given these stakes of the narrative, I begin my discussion of the production segment of the commodity chain with both the discoveries themselves and a look at the "discovery narratives" that arose and circulated alongside various "Eureka" diamonds. The movement of rough diamonds out of southern Africa was contingent upon a number of other networks that operated on regional, imperial, and global scales. In order to activate interests that were not necessarily existent in South Africa, belief in the discoveries was as important and as highly contested as disputes about ownership of the deposits themselves. Convincing consumers and investors in Europe as well as inspiring the minds of the imperial and Cape Colony governments was critical. As I discussed in Chapter 1, London-based diamond science was at the forefront of authenticating, or as some saw it, debunking, discovery narratives in ways that again show how academic science was deeply enmeshed in the market. In terms of the theme of mobility in this chapter, diamond discovery narratives not only inspired people to move to Africa but inherited a specific kind of movement in which the unknown became known. In this late Victorian context, the act of making known carried with it all manner of civilizing discourse: transforming the raw to the refined, the useless to the useful, the natural to the modern, the static to the dynamic, and perhaps most revealing, thrusting what is characterized as the local into imperial(izing) and global(izing) networks. Thus, the discovery narrative tipped off the rise of Kimberley in both cultural and material ways.

Moving the Diamond Science Establishment

The "discovery" of diamonds in southern Africa in the late 1860s is best qualified as not one but a series of finds that were met with skepticism and about which there was much misinformation. It was hardly a singular, auspicious moment of discovery. Moreover, there is some physical evidence to suggest that the Khoisan peoples of southern Africa exploited diamonds near the Orange River decades before colonists did, and instead of valuing the stones for ornamental purposes, they used them to create carving and digging tools.²⁴ Random African stones entered the written record before 1866 and it is possible that a few locals, colonists and Africans, were excavating alluvial deposits and selling the stones at the Cape prior to the official "discoveries" of the late '60s. Two quirky anecdotes hint at this possibility: in 1852, Captain McGeough-Bond-Shelton purchased a rough diamond in Cape Town and was immediately shipwrecked off the Cape. While he was waiting to be rescued, a shark tore off a leg of his trousers but just missed the section of his pants into which the diamond had been sewn. He returned to London, had the diamond cut, and apparently gave the gem to his new wife as a pendant. Likewise, in 1858, Bloemfontein Ranger, Captain E.S. Hanger, obtained another rough diamond in South Africa, had it cut in Amsterdam, and sold it to the Countess of Charlemont who deposited it in her bank.²⁵

In contrast to these rocks of mundane (pace the shark attack) market transactions, the 10-carat stone known today as the "Eureka Diamond" (currently housed in the Cape Parliament as a gift from De Beers Consolidated) came to official prominence through *both* scientific networks that linked colonial, amateur earth scientists to metropolitan academics and transnational networks of people in the business of trading gemstones. Sometime in 1866, the Van Niekerk

²⁴ Ian Balfour, *Famous Diamonds*, 3rd ed. ed. (London: Christie's Books, 1997), 97.

²⁵ *Ibid.* The Countess of Charlemont was Elizabeth Jane Caulfeild of Northern Ireland. She is perhaps most well-known for attending a synagogue in Belfast and eventually converting to Judaism.

family, Boer farmers, found a 10-carat diamond on or near their homestead. The *Times* printed the story of its "discovery" in a September 30, 1867 article:

People are prospecting in all direction in the neighbourhood of Colesberg in search of diamonds... The first stone was picked up by a little girl of Hopetown. Her father is a labourer on the farm of Mr. Schalk van Niekerok. She took the diamond to her mother and the latter, thinking it only a pretty stone, returned it to the child to play with. Niekerok happened to see it glitter, offered to buy it off the girl, but she gave it to him, saying laughingly, who ever heard of selling a stone.²⁶

Itinerant trader John O'Reilly visited the Niekerk, obtained the stone, and showed it to the Cape Colonial Secretary Richard Southey. Southey showed it to three of his friends whom he knew to be interested in gemstones: local physician and amateur geologist Dr. William Guybon Atherstone; the French Consul and sometimes-gemtrader Ernest Hériette; and Louis Hond, a diamond cutter.²⁷ On their advice, the stone was sent to London for authentication as well as for reasons of publicity: it was a certification of authenticity from the metropole that they were after, and the novelty of an African diamond would be sure to attract buyers. Once in London, it was examined by a number of high profile academics and jewelers, including the Garrard Brothers who had been responsible for recutting the Koh-i-Noor in 1852. It was pronounced a diamond and eventually cut and sold; a glass replica of it called "The Cape Diamond" was put on display

²⁶ "Diamonds at the Cape," *Times*, September 30 1867, 9. For another version of the "found by a child" story, see Charles Alfred Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account* (London: Horace Cox, 1872), 1-2.

²⁷ As Robertson asks, what was a diamond-cutter doing in Cape Town *prior* to the diamond discoveries? He became a major investor on the Diamond Fields. Robertson, *Diamond Fever, 1866-69*, 41, Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 3. For a more in-depth look at Atherstone as a man of science (especially for medicine, geology, and botany, the classic interests of "colonial collectors"), see Alan Cohen, "William Guybon Atherstone: South African Medical Practitioner, Botanist and Geologist," *Journal of Medical Biography* 10, no. 4 (2002), Alan Cohen, "Atherstone, William Guybon (1814-1898)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online edn, May 2006 (Sept 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/61103>. For evidence of how Atherstone has been enshrined in South African history as a "British pioneer", see "South Africa," *Times*, May 25 1920, 28. See also "The Cape of Good Hope," *Times*, March 27 1871, 6.

in the Paris Exhibition of 1867. Eventually it did attract a buyer: Sir Philip Wodehouse, Governor of Bombay from 1872 to 1877, who paid £500 for it.²⁸

Only in retrospect has the Eureka Diamond come to be meaningful and, contrary to the "Eureka" moniker, did not elicit any special attention in 1867. Ian Balfour of Christie's auction house characterized its teleological appreciation: "If the Eureka were to be displayed alongside many of the most celebrated diamonds it would probably attract comparatively little attention from an aesthetic point of view... Historically, however, its importance cannot be over-emphasized."²⁹ Wodehouse was certainly not the first buyer to whom the stone was offered. The Garrards arranged for Queen Victoria to see it but she declined the purchase, fearing that its African origin indicated poor quality or lack of authenticity. Indeed, as a specimen it was (and is) unimpressive and to some, off-color (one reason, perhaps, why a glass mock-up was exhibited instead of the actual rock), and in the context of the Paris Exhibition, it barely raised an eyebrow.³⁰ Australia, likewise, had presented diamonds in a number of exhibitions from 1851 onwards to very little effect, and it was not until the 1880s that Europe began to take Australian diamond production seriously.³¹ The mere fact of a slightly large diamond being found

²⁸ Robertson, *Diamond Fever, 1866-69*, 33-50, 65. Five hundred pounds is the amount the Garrards certified the stone to be worth. Cohen, "William Guybon Atherstone: South African Medical Practitioner, Botanist and Geologist," 227.

²⁹ Balfour, *Famous Diamonds*, 102.

³⁰ Charlotte Gere, John Culme, and William Summers, *Garrard: The Crown Jewellers for 150 Years, 1843-1993* (London: Quartet, 1993), 106-7. For example, while other famous diamonds are mentioned, the Cape Diamond is not mentioned in Hain Friswell, "Goldsmith's Work, Silver, and Jewellery," in *The Illustrated Catalogue of the Universal Exhibition Published with the Art Journal* (London: Virtue and Co., 1868). Balfour, *Famous Diamonds*, 100.

³¹ For Australian diamond mining see: L. Chapman, *Diamonds in Australia: The Fields and the Prospectors* (Sydney: Bay Books, 1980), Emanuel, *Diamonds and Precious Stones: Their History, Value and Distinguishing Characteristics, with Simple Tests for Their Identification*, 53, William F. R. S. Pole and James Tennant, *Diamonds. ... Extracted from Macmillan's Magazine. ... With a Note on the Imperial State Crown and Its Jewels*, by J. Tennant (London: Privately printed, 1861), 3. See also *The Jewish Chronicle*, September 10 1869, 9B; "A New Diamond Field," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, July 1 1884, 161; "New South Wales Jewelry at South Kensington," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, April 15 1886, 141; "The seat of the New South Wales diamond-mining industry," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, August 15 1886; "International Exhibition of Mining and Metallurgy," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, August 1 1890, 235 and Oct 1 1890, 299; Nov 1 1892, 367; "Australia Gemstones," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, April 1 1894, 198; July 15 1900, 938; Oct 15 1901, 1344; "Australia," *Times*, October 5 1869, 7; *Times*, September

somewhere was not enough to cause a rush: there had to be assurances that there were plenty of diamonds available in the region, labor needed to be plentiful and more importantly cheap, and the price of rough diamonds had to be high enough to elicit a fat return – otherwise investors were not interested. The difference between an area with diamonds and an area capable of supporting a profitable diamond mine was vast in the minds of metropolitan entrepreneurs and investors and in 1867 the "Cape Diamond" did not compel any capital or prospectors into Africa.³²

It did, however, raise local interest and the trickle of raw diamonds to Europe from southern Africa officially began. O'Reilly went back to the Van Niekerk homestead to find more rocks to send to London (he found about five) and a handful of other prospectors, including Atherstone, Hond, and agents of Hérriette, swarmed to the area. Local newspapers began to print articles about the possibility of diamond finds in the area.³³ In the lore that surrounds the diamond discoveries, it was the second stone that O'Reilly brought to Southey – a larger and

14 1869, 7; October 6, 1869, 7. Australian diamonds, in the 19th century, were noted for their hardness and most of the diamonds coming from Australia were used for industrial purposes. In 1886, one of Cecil Rhodes' brothers stationed in Melbourne, Ernest Frederick Rhodes, wrote to Cecil to tell him about silver and diamond mining opportunities there. Cecil Rhodes replied to the effect that mining was "very foolish to touch...unless you are behind the scenes." See Correspondence of Cecil John Rhodes (CJR), Mss Afr. s. 228, Ernest Frederick Rhodes to CJR, February 21 1886, 25, October 17 1886, 31, Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth & African Studies at Rhodes House (BLCAS).

³² Just the fact that diamonds existed in an area did not make it appealing to investors. It was a question of cost/benefit analysis: given the price in roughs, were there enough diamonds and enough cheap labor to make diamond mining profitable? The East India Company faced this calculus between the 1790s and 1830s. From 1796, the government knew there were diamonds in the region near Kadapa (Cuddapah) but servants did not know how to amass the amount of cheap labor it would take to mine the deposits profitably. The Board of Revenue resorted to renting out known diamond mines to local Indian renters after 1815 but by 1829 the enterprise proved to be more trouble than it was worth for both the EIC and Indian entrepreneurs. Some noted that the government would stand to make more profit if they used convict labor in the mines but this was a step the EIC was unwilling to take: "it will be observed that there must be an establishment of Peons to watch the Convicts, an establishment of Searchers to discover the strata, and another establishment of Peons to watch the Searchers. These are expenses for which no certain [return] could be expected." India Office Records (IOR), IOR/F/4/676/18769, Extract from Proceedings of the Board of Revenue, June 28 1819, APAC, BL. See also IOR/F/4/540/13001, IOR/F/4/1/613 and IOR/F/4/275/6149, "Dr. Heyne's account of the Diamond Mines near Cuddapah in the Ceded District...", APAC, BL.

³³ Robertson, *Diamond Fever, 1866-69*, 64. See also *The South African Diamond Fields. Extracted from Cape and Other Newspapers, with an Introductory and Explanatory Preface by a Colonist*, (London: Edward Stanford, 1870).

more impressive specimen – that reportedly caused Southey to lay the stone on the table of the House of the Cape assembly and remark, "Gentlemen, this is the rock on which the future success of South Africa will be built."³⁴

Without some kind of official blanket recognition from a London authority as to the validity of the diamond fields, however, new stones had to be sent to the metropole and individually authenticated – a long and expensive process. One Cape official, John B. Currey, sought to streamline things by bringing the diamond experts to the diamonds, rather than the other way around. He invited London scientists such as Roderick Murchion of the Museum of Practical Geology, jewelers such as the Garrards, and other diamond merchants to investigate (and hopefully authenticate) the diamond fields, but to no avail.³⁵ As William Worger explains it, the diamond establishment were content with their Brazilian supply networks and reluctant to acknowledge southern African deposits because that information called into question prevailing ideas about alluvial deposits and geological formation.³⁶ Ironically, the diamond scientist who was eventually sent to the Cape did so at the behest of an influential trader, Harry Emanuel, was connected by marriage to the Coster diamond-cutting firm in Amsterdam and had been considerably invested in the maintenance of the Brazilian supply chain from Bahia since the 1840s. Thus, geologist/mineralogist James R. Gregory arrived at the would-be Diamond Fields in 1868 with a mandate to treat the African finds with extreme skepticism. His findings, published in *Geological Magazine* in December 1868, present an unequivocal position on the validity of Cape diamonds. The article opens

³⁴ Josiah Wright Matthews, Eric Rosenthal, and Ena Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa* (London: S. Low Marston Searle & Rivington, 1887), 130. For news of the second stone, as well as gold finds, reaching London see, "The Cape of Good Hope Mails," *Times*, August 22 1868, 8.

³⁵ W. Guybon Atherstone, "The Discovery of Diamonds at the Cape of Good Hope," *Geological Magazine* 6, no. 59 (1869): 208-10.

³⁶ Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, 9.

Were the diamonds said to be found at the Cape, and sent to England, really found in South Africa? I have just returned from the so-called diamond district, to which country I proceeded from England, being deputed by Mr. Harry Emanuel, the diamond merchant, of Bond-street, who is well known as a most indefatigable scientific enquirer on the subject of precious stones...During the time I was in South Africa I made a very careful and lengthened examination of the district where the diamonds were said to have been found, but saw no indications whatever that would warrant the expectation of the findings of diamonds, or of diamond-bearing deposits, at any of the localities.³⁷

Gregory's case boiled down to the fact that, geologically, South Africa was different from Brazil and that in two years only sixteen stones had been authenticated – a number so small that it more likely indicated "schemes for trying to promote the employ and expenditure of capital in searching for this precious substance in the colony."³⁸ He then made a plea for respecting expert opinion: "Persons read some work on diamonds and then fancy that they understand all about them, and insert in the papers paragraphs which are totally at variance with the real facts as to the character of the rocks or sands. Now a knowledge of geology and mineralogy is only acquired by a very long and continued experience, and not to be learned in a few days' application to a book." In this vein, Gregory also ridiculed Cape traders for improperly judging the value of uncut stones and exaggerating their clarity – a strange issue to write about if, as he argued, there were no real diamonds around to evaluate.³⁹ He ended the article in an unequivocal way: "I can now only conclude by expressing my conviction that the whole diamond discovery in S. Africa is an imposture – a Bubble scheme."⁴⁰

³⁷ James R. Gregory, "Diamonds from the Cape of Good Hope," *Geological Magazine* 5, no. 54 (1868): 558.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 559.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 560.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 561. To be fair to Gregory, diamond hoaxes and the practice of "salting" ground to give it the appearance of containing diamond deposits to drive up the price of land were common enough scandals at the time. Edward I. Erlich and W. Dan Hausel, *Diamond Deposits: Origin, Exploration and History of Discovery* (Littleton, CO: Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration, Inc., 2002), 2-22. See for example James H. Wilkins, ed., *The Great Diamond Hoax and Other Stirring Incidents in the Life of Asbury Harpending by Asbury Harpending* (San Francisco: The James H. Barry Co., 1913).

Gregory's evaluation was widely reported and followed up Emanuel's second edition of *Diamonds and Precious Stones* (1867) that had completely ignored the possibility of African stones and focused, instead, on Brazilian diamonds.⁴¹ In South Africa, Atherstone, one of the original authenticators of the Eureka Diamond, was enraged that Gregory had called his credentials and motives into question and wrote to the highest authority he could think of to see that his response would be printed in *Geological Magazine*: the eminent diamond expert Professor James Tennant of King's College. Atherstone's rebuttal ran in the May, 1869 issue. The Grahamstown doctor dismissed Gregory's "bubble scheme" accusation as being:

simply *absurd*; and the fact that twenty other diamonds have been discovered since, at spots far apart, on Government ground, in the territories of native chiefs, along the Orange River, Vaal River, and Reit River, and far beyond the colony, where there is no land to sell, -- and found by all kinds of persons, Englishmen, Boers, Griquas, Bechuannas, Hottentots, and other natives, who can have no possible connection with land speculation, proves the utter absurdity and impossibility of those statements.⁴²

He dismissed Gregory's geology as hasty and narrow-minded and asked, "why should our diamond conglomerates be necessarily like those of Brazil? Why not rather like those of India, to which...our rock formations...bear so striking a resemblance."⁴³ In the end, Atherstone brought up Gregory's connection with Emanuel and asked, "Why all this attempt at mystification, unless he had a purpose to serve?"⁴⁴

The magazine printed a quick rejoinder from Gregory who said that he did not intend to implicate certain individuals in his "bubble scheme" assertion, only "to caution the scientific community – and through them the public at large – against placing implicit reliance upon the newspaper reports sent home from that colony respecting these wonderful diamond

⁴¹ Emanuel, *Diamonds and Precious Stones : Their History, Value and Distinguishing Characteristics, with Simple Tests for Their Identification*, 53-62. Emanuel acknowledged the possibility of Australia as a diamond-producing country but argued that there was not yet sufficient evidence to classify it as such. For an example of Gregory's naysaying being widely reported, see "Cape Colony", *The Jewish Chronicle*, April 30 1869, 14.

⁴² Atherstone, "The Discovery of Diamonds at the Cape of Good Hope," 210.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 213.

discoveries."⁴⁵ Again making overtures to the authority of academic science, he quipped that Atherstone's geological observations were without merit because, "Atherstone told me himself that he did not know much about Geology, but that his son was a pupil of Professor Tennant's, and he was therefore interested in Geology."⁴⁶

Gregory's stance, of course, was bankrupted when news of a 147 carat stone unearthed at Colesberg Kopje, what would be renamed the Kimberley mine, appeared in the *Times* in 1870.⁴⁷ Professor Tennant took up Atherstone and the Cape government's cause and mounted a series of popular public lectures on "South African Diamonds," beginning in November 1870 and continuing through 1873. Tennant began his lecture with a recitation of the discovery narrative of 1867, with specific mentions of van Niekerk, O'Reilly, and Atherstone, and underlined the potential of the South African fields to produce not only a considerable quantity of stones but extremely large ones as well.⁴⁸ As a *Times* reporter described, "He anticipated that we should have diamonds from this region exceeding the Koh-i-noor in size, and equaling it in beauty when cut and polished."⁴⁹ Emanuel, no longer able to ignore South African diamonds by 1871, argued that African production was no more significant than Brazilian or Australian production, that the market could absorb however many diamonds Kimberley produced without a drop in prices, and that, "unfortunately, also, the quality of the yield, being in most cases inferior to that of India and

⁴⁵ James R. Gregory, "Discovery of Diamonds, Etc., at the Cape," *Geological Magazine* 6, no. 61 (1869): 333.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 334.

⁴⁷ "Port Elizabeth, South Africa," *Jewish Chronicle*, April 15 1870, 4; *Times*, November 23 1870, 9.

⁴⁸ The discovery narrative continued to be recited in most subsequent coverage of the Diamond Fields. See, for example, Matthews, Rosenthal, and Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa*, 129; Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, 2.; "The South African Diamond Fields," *The Graphic*, June 22 1872, 575. As the author of the article noted already in 1872, "An immense deal has been written about the South African diamondfields, and therefore we are anxious not to bore our readers...." See also: "Diamond Cutting and Polishing," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, May 15 1872, 177; "The First Discovery of a Diamond at Kimberley," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, May 1 1889, 150; "The Discovery of Diamonds in South Africa," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, September 1 1895, 569.

⁴⁹ "South African Diamonds," *Times*, November 24, 1870, 3. See also, "The British Association," *Times*, September 25 1873, 7.

Brazil, [means] the new discovery has as yet had no influence at all...."⁵⁰ He pulled the debate out of the realm of geology and diamond science and into one of pure aesthetics, charging that Cape diamonds were not as white as Brazilian and Indian stones.

Whether based on empirical information or rumor, the belief in the inferiority of African diamonds became widespread in 1871, to the degree that sellers in South Africa blamed it for a global drop in the price of roughs in 1872.⁵¹ This drop was to have tremendous impact on the structure of the Diamond Fields, a topic that I will take up in the following chapter, but here suffice it to say that the moment of contestation over the fact of African diamonds had passed.

At about the time Harry Emanuel began publicizing ideas about the inferiority of African diamonds, Southey and O'Reilly also abandoned the scientific route, leaving Gregory and Atherstone to fight it out in the pages of *Geological Magazine*, and, instead, looked to the market to legitimize African diamonds. They engineered what some might call a publicity stunt, and what others might view as part-and-parcel of the diamond business, particularly when unusually large rocks are involved. In 1868 or '69, as previously mentioned, Southey came into contact with another large specimen supposedly from the Niekerk homestead; this was the 83-carat, uncut stone he allegedly said would usher in the future of South Africa. It was arranged that a group of "Hopetown merchants" would purchase the stone for an exorbitant (and newsworthy) price of £11,200 in 1869. The merchants were led by the diamond expert who had helped Southey with the Eureka Diamond, Louis Hond. The setup worked: all details of the purchase of the newly-discovered "Star of Africa" made worldwide news. Not only did this exchange work to convince metropolitan investors and others of the validity of African diamonds -- who would

⁵⁰ Harry Emanuel, "Cape Diamonds: To the Editor of the Times," *Times*, February 9 1871, 10.

⁵¹ Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, 117, 21, 24. "The South African Diamond Fields," *The Graphic*, June 22 1872, 575. As the *Graphic* had it, over production of the Kimberley mine "injured the prosperity of diamond-miners by glutting the market with bad gems, and prejudicing home dealers against South African diamonds."

pay such an amount for a fake or inferior diamond? -- but Hond was able to cut the diamond (into a pear-shaped 47.69 carat gemstone), and sell it to the Earl of Dudley for about £25,000.⁵² A subsequent 147 carat find in late 1871, this time irrefutably from the Colesberg (Kimberley) mine, dispelled all doubt: demand increased for novel African stones, European jewelers and gem-traders sent buyers to the Cape, and diamond scientists were left to play catch-up rather than gatekeeper.⁵³ In this way, publicity about a market for African stones *created* a market for African stones: the colonial shaped the metropolitan. The discovery of this Kimberley "pipe" came on the heels of the discoveries of other mines in the area, namely the Bultfontein, Dutoitspan, De Beers, and Koffiefontein or Bloemfontein mines in 1871.⁵⁴ The Wesselton or Premier mine was discovered in 1896, bringing the total of number significant mines to six: by 1872, it was undeniable that southern Africa housed the world's largest diamond deposits ever found.⁵⁵

The circulation of discovery narratives and alternate readings of those narratives between South Africa happened at first blush largely through the discourse of diamond science, setting up a vision of amateur colonial geology against the metropolitan academy. The entire interaction was enmeshed in colonial politics and the diamond market as a whole, and took place in the public arena of print culture. The stakes of this interaction were about shaping consumer confidence in Cape diamonds and encouraging or discouraging investment in and migration to what became the Diamond Fields. Knowledge about the discoveries convened in movement back

⁵² The stone is now part of the Natural History Museum's collection in London.

⁵³ "The South African Diamond Fields," *The Graphic*, June 22 1872, 575.

⁵⁴ "Pipe" formations of diamond deposits are now called kimberlite pipes in geological terms. For news of the discoveries see "The Diamond Fields of South Africa," *Jewish Chronicle*, September 20 1872, 340.

⁵⁵ Godehard Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade*, trans. F. Bradley (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 138-9.

and forth from the diamond fields to the metropole, mediated by a number of colonial and market interests.

The Rush: People

While the discovery of diamonds in South Africa is best characterized as a number of discoveries both in Africa and London, the population "rush" to the area should be thought of as a series of seasonal ebbs and flows. It is a mistake to imagine the area of Kimberley, particularly in the 1860s, '70s, and early '80s, as a permanent destination for the vast majority of the fifty thousand who flocked there; instead, it was a means to an end for those willing to migrate for wealth and status. Most who circulated through the area, Boers and Africans alike, did so as short-time searchers and laborers who supplemented their agricultural income with diamond work. When planting and harvesting seasons came, they headed back to their crops, sometimes abandoning mine positions overnight, much to the distress of their employer-claimholders. A minority stayed on the Diamond Fields to mine claims of their own; only a few, lacking ties to "home" chiefdoms or homesteads, engaged in long-term diamond labor. "Poor whites" from Cape Town, Hopetown, or Port Elizabeth, as well as immigrants from across the globe, also ventured out to the Fields hoping for short-term gains, the usual goal being to collect enough wealth to comfortably relocate to major urban centers – the Cape, London, Paris, New York, Singapore – or buy farmland and diamond mines of their own. Thus, Kimberley grew up as a town catering to people on the move or looking to be. The mobility and impermanency of the population, particularly the labor population, had a profound impact on how diamonds were mined in this period and how Kimberley law and social structure developed to control this migrancy.

In 1866, just before the rush, the area was sparsely populated by poor Boer homesteads, and spots along the Vaal and Orange Rivers were used as temporary sites for African parties hunting elephant. Many contemporaries viewed the area, particularly as one moved inward from the rivers, as dry wasteland worked by only the most desperate of farmers.⁵⁶ Land ownership (not to mention the question of mineral rights) was open to dispute: parts of what would become the Diamond Fields fell under the jurisdiction of various Griqua chiefs, other sections were under private ownership by Boer farmers with papers issued by the defunct Orange River Sovereignty (which became the Orange Free State in 1854), some of it appeared to be administered by the OFS directly, and a few sections had been granted to groups like the Berlin Missionary Society.⁵⁷ The British government had made a claim to the land as well, but had done very little to press the matter further. In all, there was a striking lack of official presence in the area and, as Colin Newbury has noted, migrants found themselves negotiating with local residents for subsoil or mineral rights rather than government officials of any kind. Indeed, there was no clear title or procedure for deciding subsoil rights: laws would be put in place *ad hoc* or, indeed, after the fact.⁵⁸

Sparse population and government involvement prior to the rush was undoubtedly related to the principle feature of the diamondiferous area: its remoteness, located as it was in the interior of southern Africa, to populations oriented towards port towns. This was the defining characteristic of the Fields for most writers. For example, ex-digger and former California gold rusher Charles Payton's *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa* (1872) was essentially a travel guide pitched to would-be rushers and investors in Europe, the British empire, and the United

⁵⁶ See Matthews, Rosenthal, and Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa*, esp 58, Augustus F. Lindley, *Adamantia: The Truth About the South African Diamond Fields* (London: WH&L Collingridge, 1873), 2.

⁵⁷ Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, 10.

⁵⁸ Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947*, 13.

States. The introductory map to the guide (see Figure 3.1), not drawn to scale by any means, was meant to emphasize the inland distance between ports and the diggings. The tiny railroad connecting Cape Town to Wellington highlights the distance between Cape Town and the "Dry Diggings."⁵⁹ Kimberley resident J.W. Matthews' *Incwadi Yami* (1887) warned adventurers against tour guides who promised a quick and easy route to the diggings, especially from the Cape. Until 1885 when a railway was implemented to connect Kimberley and Cape Town, it took at least two weeks traveling by oxcart to make the journey into the interior, if roads were dry.⁶⁰ For metropolitan readers, the journey carried a certain rustic appeal that, again, emphasized the remoteness of the Fields and the exoticness of the stones it produced, as evidenced in London illustrated newspaper *The Graphic's* image, "On the Road to the Fields" (Figure 3.2).⁶¹ The picture depicts a small series of chuckwagons on a zigzagging road within a vast expanse of challenging terrain. The accompanying text makes a case for the road from the Cape, "in spite of its greater distance...because there are plenty of conveyances....When a waggon [sic] sticks in a mud-hole, the drivers know no remedy but the rhinoceros whip applied to the panting sides of their oxen."⁶² Beyond oxcarts, other modes of transportation included foot, horseback, or mulecart. It was not a journey that people embarked on lightly, African, Boer, or otherwise, and many, if they were not well-off to begin with, arrived to the camps

⁵⁹ Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, iv.

⁶⁰ Matthews, Rosenthal, and Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa*, 59.

⁶¹ "On the Roads to the Fields," *The Graphic*, June 22 1872, 584.

⁶² "The South African Diamond Fields," *The Graphic*, June 22 1872, 575. For more admonitory stories about traveling to the Diamond Fields, see "A Run in a Bullock Wagon" and "Adventures on the Road," *The South African Diamond Fields. Extracted from Cape and Other Newspapers, with an Introductory and Explanatory Preface by a Colonist*, 24-25.

malnourished and dehydrated.⁶³ While the Diamond Fields were a region that people tended to circulate through rather than settle in, this circulation was hardly easy, quick, or without risk.

In understanding the rushes to the Fields and how these movements shaped the conditions of diamond production, it is important to examine that stages in which the rushes and development of the Diamond Fields occurred. The first stage was river digging, a type of prospecting that required little in the way of machinery and basically entailed searching riverbeds for stones. While scientists and elites fought over the validity of South African diamonds, locals from southern Africa rushed to alluvial sites near the Vaal, finding that Cape buyers were eager to purchase African stones regardless of the lack of official authentication from London. Contrary to white settler-centric narratives of the rise of diamond mining in Africa, the most significant groups of diggers in this very early years of the trade were African – Tlhaping, Kora and Griqua – living in the Vaal River valley north of Dikgatlong. By and large they were able to control the first two years of alluvial production, from 1867 to 1869, by controlling access to river digging sites. Their exploitation of the deposits was systematic and efficient: organized searches of unknown size were implemented and police forces were set up to forcibly remove outsider-adventurers (white or African) from the area, claiming (usually rightly) that the river deposits were in chiefdom territory.⁶⁴ Some would-be rushers accused African guides of deliberately leading prospectors and scientists away from the diamond-yielding areas and this may have contributed to Gregory's and others' failure to recognize the legitimacy of African diamonds. White traders who were based in Port Elizabeth or Cape Town but traveled

⁶³ Ibid., 19, 29. Many mineowners complained that African migrant laborers arrived to their positions weak, underweight, and severely dehydrated, particularly in the 1880s when droughts were common. Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, 20.

⁶⁴ Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 1. Robert Frederick Sieborger, "The Recruitment and Organisation of African Labour for the Kimberley Diamond Mines, 1871-1888" (Rhodes University, 1976).

out to the mines complained that African sellers for the chiefdoms had learned the business very quickly and drove a hard bargain. They could get better deals from others who had happened upon diamonds in the business of farming or "greenhorns" -- newcomers to the Fields.⁶⁵

In the early months of 1870, African control of the emerging Fields crumbled, due to a number of local, regional, imperial, and global causes. In three ways, the chiefdoms were victims of their own success. Firstly, their exploitation of the river bed diggings was so efficient that the amount of production began to fall off – the diamond deposits were becoming exhausted. Secondly, wealth gained from diamond selling enabled Kora and Tlhaping chiefs to develop their military forces, and disputes over diamond territory compounded prior disagreements between the two groups. As the two fought, the result was a weakening of chiefly control over the territory in general and a significant drop in the chiefs' ability to keep outsiders away from diamond territory. Thirdly, prior to 1870, the chiefdoms had been so effective in controlling the river diggings that interested newcomers were forced to look elsewhere for precious stones. They searched inland and found what would become the famous kimberlite pipes – previously unknown geological formations that far outstripped river diggings both in quantity and quality of diamonds.⁶⁶

This weakening of chiefly authority occurred at about the same time Southey and O'Reilly set up the publicity stunt that manufactured interest in the monster diamond, the "Star of Africa." The rest of the world paid attention. By the end of 1869, it came to be widespread, accepted knowledge that not only were diamonds to be found in southern Africa but they promised to be of quantity and a quality worth investing in and relocating for. About 5000 white

⁶⁵ Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, 10.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 23-4.

diggers rushed to the dry diggings in 1870.⁶⁷ While many were Boer families from the region or "poor whites" from the Cape, a growing number were experienced independent miners from previous gold and silver mining operations in Canada, the United States, Brazil, and Australia. Matthews described the influx as, "of the most cosmopolitan character, North, South, East, and West adding their quota, gold diggers came from the gulches of California and the creeks of Australia, 'Cousin Jacks' from Cornwall, diamond buyers and speculators from London, Paris, and Amsterdam, 'tinkers, tailors, soldiers, sailors, ploughboys, apothecaries and thieves,' eager at all cost to embrace this chance of sudden wealth."⁶⁸ Another account described how South African urban centers was emptied of their cheap white male labor force because of the "diamond fever":

Good situations are being thrown up every day. The young man you saw but the other day serving goods over the counter, or keeping books, or acting back clerk, when you call at the same establishment in a day or two you will miss, and be told he has found a party to work like a navvy at 'the fields!' The principle servant in my household – a respectable soldier of the 11th Regiment – who had purchased his discharge, earning wages at the rate of 50s. per month besides food, bedroom, and other perquisites, gave notice a few days ago, and is gone this week. Other servants in the house are following immediately. So it is with most other houses... Two-thirds of our cathedral choir, belonging to various stations of life, have already gone, and we fully expect to be soon reduced to sopranos.... All who go are writing back to their friends to follow as soon as possible.⁶⁹

The numbers simply overwhelmed the weakening chiefdoms and local Boer homesteaders alike, and raised disputes over everything from land ownership and mineral rights to theft, water rights, and worker protections. On the heels of this incursion, jealous that control of a lucrative commodity would fall into independent hands, and citing the need to facilitate the

⁶⁷ Ninety percent of the rushers arrived in the latter half of 1870. *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁸ Matthews, Rosenthal, and Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa*, 130. See also *The Diamond News* (Kimberley), August 31 1875, 3.

⁶⁹ *The South African Diamond Fields. Extracted from Cape and Other Newspapers, with an Introductory and Explanatory Preface by a Colonist*, 19. Navvies were manual laborers more commonly associated with railroad work. For the "fever" that Cecil Rhodes himself experienced and witnessed see Rhodes to mother, June 7 1871, Cecil Rhodes Papers, Miscellaneous, Mss Afr s 115, 85, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House (BLCAS), Oxford.

rule of law in the area, the Cape colonial government annexed the Vaal/Harts region, otherwise known as Griqualand West, in October, 1871.⁷⁰

While it is tempting to view the 1867 to 1875 period as one of basic population influx to the area, the year 1870 is instructive in how, locally, the rush occurred in different stages, dependent upon the kind of diamond mining that certain deposits demanded and the control various groups had over the Diamond Fields. Indeed, for some, the viability of the Diamond Fields was an open question, as Captain Augustus F. Lindley wrote in 1873: "it may not be long before the migratory digging population retires to whence it came, leaving only the barren plains of Adamantia, and Waterboer's two hundred semi-savages, as this last proposed appendage of the British Crown."⁷¹ In the first half of 1870, there were indications that the rush was over, that diamond supplies had been quickly exhausted. This was, of course, only partly true: with the influx of searchers to the riverbed diggings, the easy-to-access alluvial deposits were soon used up. Several rushers, particularly those who had come from regional homesteads, chiefdoms, the Cape, or Natal, or who had very little experience with mining, went home. Those who had been involved with gold rushes in other countries, had come to Africa from farther afield, and who lacked the resources for long-distance travel again so soon were forced to turn their attention inland, to places where "dry diggings," (so named because they took place away from any river) had yielded precious stones. This type of digging was more invasive, labor intensive, and had a higher financial and physical risk/reward ratio than alluvial mining, but many of the newcomers had already experienced this with gold prospecting.⁷² They descended on the farmsteads of Vooruitzigt, Dorstfontein, and Bultfontein, a 45,000 acre section of land, and thus began the

⁷⁰ Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 1.

⁷¹ Lindley, *Adamantia: The Truth About the South African Diamond Fields*, ix. Lindley was writing to expose the perfidy of the British government in annexing areas properly owned, in Lindley's eyes, by the Orange Free State.

⁷² Many commented on how much like an Australian or Californian mining town Kimberley was. See "The Diamond Fields of Kimberley," *The Belfast Newsletter*, February 27 1890, 3.

development of the Dutoitspan, Bultfontein, and De Beers mines which would partly comprise the town of Kimberley.⁷³

The brief period of African control of production, 1867 to 1869, is often glossed over in official and settler memory of the rush, and as such is worth belaboring here: African, especially Griqua groups, that rushed to the area were perfectly capable of understanding and engaging in the trade and exploiting local resources in this early period; moreover, they were invested in doing so. While many have noted British disregard for OFS independence or Boer and German missionary land rights in the Griqualand West and subsequent annexations, few appreciate the annexations as a method of excising African management of the trade. Kevin Shillington's

⁷³ Vooruitzigt became the De Beers and Kimberley mines, Dorstfontein became Dutoitspan, and Bultfontein remained Bultfontein, though the physical distance between Dorstfontein and Bultfontein was very small and many got them confused as the Fields developed. The Colesberg Kopje was renamed "New Rush" and then "Kimberley" in 1873. The city of Kimberley grew up between and eventually around the four mines. Nomenclature, particularly in this early period, is inexact. People referring to the "Diamond Fields" might be referring to these mines; they were also called the "Dry Diggings" and "New Rush." Diamond Fields might also include the alluvial deposits near the rivers and territory in the Orange Free State in and around Bloemfontein. "Kimberley" might refer to the city or the mines, it is difficult to tell which one in many instances, and often the difference is unimportant. The early Dutch names with the -fontein suffix almost always refer to the farmsteads upon which the mines were found. To complicate matters further, the name of the "Premier Mine" was often used for new finds – for example, what was commonly referred to as the Wesselton mine appears officially as the Premier Mine. In 1902 another mine was discovered northeast of Pretoria, also called the Premier Mine. Sometimes mines were referred to by the name of the nearest town, so Jagersfontein and Koffiefontein often fall under the heading "Bloemfontein." For local claimholders, particularly at the beginning of the Rush, the differences were immense because each mine was administered differently, including everything from how claims were sold or rented, what regulations miners had to abide by in terms of hauling water or building roads between claims, claimholders fees, regulations about maintaining a consistent level of depth of claims with one's neighbors, and who could hold claims. For metropolitan buyers, the difference between mines was meaningful because there were constant rumors that stones from Bultfontein were consistently off-colour, that Jagersfontein produced stones of exceptional whiteness, and so on. It is difficult to tell whether these rumors were based in fact or were the product of good advertising put in place to offset or inculcate belief in the inferiority of African diamonds or promote one diamond mining company over another. The rumor about Jagersfontein diamonds being superior to all was certainly widespread in the 1880s and 90s and became a tool for manufacturing and retail jewelers to sell particular stones to customers. Nevertheless, in the imperial imagination, there was much blurring of differences between the mines, and indeed between Cape Colony and Orange Free State mines, as well as much misinformation about differences. For nomenclature issues see Lenzen, 139. For discourse about Jagersfontein diamonds, see "Diamond Field Notes: Kimberley," April 1 1893, 196, "Diamond Fields Notes," May 16 1893, 324, "Diamond Fields Notes," July 1 1893, 30, "Diamond Fields Notes," Sept 1 1893, 145, "Diamond Fields Notes," Sept 1 1895, 558, *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*. See also "How Diamond Mines Were Formed," November 15 1886, 400, "A Great Diamond Syndicate," May 1 1889, 140, "Precious Stones and Gems," July 1 1899, 810, *Jeweller and Metalworker*. For a discussion of where, exactly, the Kimberley reef was located for metropolitan readers, see "Kimberley Reefs: to the editor of the *Times*," *Times*, January 7 1880, 10.

classic look at the colonization of Southern Tswana shows how official annexation was also a means of controlling colonial merchant land speculation.⁷⁴

At any length, the early rush was a shifting battleground of competing claims for proprietorship and authority between not only local and colonial powers but also metropolitan ones as well. The property rights associated with the farmsteads of Dorstfontein and Bultfontein in 1870 and '71, as William Worger has shown, illustrate this confusion. In 1870, Dorstfontein was owned by a Boer farmer who held Orange Free State title to the property; he demanded a monthly license free from each digger who set up a claim on his farmstead. Bultfontein was owned by Port Elizabeth merchants (with OFS titles) who refused to allow diggers on their land. There were questions as to whether or not the titles over the land and mineral rights were valid: the OFS, while granting landownership *and* mineral rights "had never actually ruled the area, claiming only that sovereignty passed to it – if not in practice, certainly in theory – whenever Boers purchased land from blacks."⁷⁵ The British government, in contrast, had claimed the area in the 1840s and '50s and British and Cape law reserved the ownership of mineral rights for the Crown. When newcomers began to force their way onto Bultfontein in late 1870, the Port Elizabeth merchants appealed to the Cape government to force the diggers to respect private property rights. The owner of Dorstfontein was also overwhelmed by the task of policing his farmstead: he joined forces with the Bultfontein owners and other landowners in the area to form a "Boer commando" unit to police their farmsteads in January 1871, and this was effective in keeping squatters away. Seeking to control African production from Europe, a group of diamond merchants in London formed a company that eventually purchased both Bultfontein and

⁷⁴ Lindley, *Adamantia: The Truth About the South African Diamond Fields*, Kevin Shillington, *The Colonisation of the Southern Tswana, 1870-1900* (Braamfontein, South Africa: Ravan Press, 1985), Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 1.

⁷⁵ Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, 14.

Dorstfontein in February. The Boer commando, not interested in serving Londoners, dispersed and newcomers began settling on the farmstead again. The London company, through a local agent, demanded that the diggers vacate by May 15, 1871. Instead, the diggers, now 2000 strong, demanded their claims to be recognized and the merchants, lacking any kind of local caché to form another independent police force, were powerless to stop them. While the situation drew in Griqua, OFS, Cape, and British governments, as Worger puts it, "In the absence of any authority other than their own, diggers could assert their dominance over landowners and ensure that merchants did not get control of the diamond fields."⁷⁶

This situation is instructive because it shows how in the early rush, the balance of power over diamond production rested not with the metropolitan-based diamond trade, nor local Boer or African owners, nor any particular imperial or colonial government, but rather with the majority newcomers onsite. Control over the Fields required attention to a myriad of local, colonial, imperial and metropolitan interests. Each group struggled to legitimate their claims – or invalidate others' claims -- by appealing to whatever authority they could, drawing every level of British government into the issue. Fearful that other powers such as Germany or the Orange Free State might hone in on the area, later in the year, Griqualand West (of which Kimberley became the capital) was declared a British territory.⁷⁷

The influx continued: by the end of 1871, there were about 50,000 people encamped on the three farmsteads, Dorstfontein, Bultfontein, and Vooruitzicht. Triumphant Cape papers reported little resistance to the incoming masses: "All the information, so far, leads to the conclusion that there is quite as ample room for 500,000 as there is for 10,000."⁷⁸ The population

⁷⁶ Ibid., 15.

⁷⁷ In 1873 it was made a British colony, and in 1880 it was annexed by the Cape government.

⁷⁸ *The South African Diamond Fields. Extracted from Cape and Other Newspapers, with an Introductory and Explanatory Preface by a Colonist*, 21.

was constantly on the move with laborers coming and going from the Fields, but the breakdown was about 20,000 "white" to 30,000 "non-white" or people of color, a group mostly comprised of male African migrant laborers, but also included some South Asians, Chinese, and those of "mixed race" heritage.⁷⁹ The majority of people on the Fields, white or non-white, were rural and urban migrants from southern Africa who had been drawn to the area by the promise of employment, if not self-employment, on the claims; a significant minority (numbering in the thousands) came from mining centers throughout the British Empire, southern Europe (Italy and Greece, namely), and the US. Some, like J.W. Matthews, were compelled to the Fields by curiosity and the excitement of the moment but took a casual attitude to diamond mining: "We quiet folks in Verulam caught the fever, which was very contagious, as a proof of which one morning after breakfast I had no difficulty in organizing a company to proceed to the Vaal River, of which Mr. G.I. Lee, afterward chairman of the diggers' committee, Kimberley Mining Board, and a member of many scientific societies, consented to take charge." As Matthews' occupational information about Lee attests, some of these adventurers soon became dedicated to the Fields but many left the dry diggings after, as Matthews characterizes it, their daydreams of "immense fortune", "Sindbad the Sailor, his second voyage, and a walk through the valley studded with diamonds...were rudely broken."⁸⁰ The rise of Kimberley mining and politics was not a closed system by any means but because so many were on the move, people with the resources and will to stay were in a position to create a system that suited them. The disaffected tended to leave (or were forced out).

⁷⁹ Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, 15. Turrell cites that in 1872 it was 13,000 Europeans to 15,000-35,000 people of color. Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 19.

⁸⁰ Matthews, Rosenthal, and Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa*, 31.

Most often contemporary accounts of the early Fields celebrated the camps as a cosmopolitan and yet egalitarian zone.⁸¹ In terms of class, one Cape newspaper reported, "The higher classes of gentry and the lower classes of working people are going together without distinction." The point was made that because class mobility was so frequent and likely at the Fields, distinctions carried little meaning over the long term: "It is certain that some rough fellows who have gone up, who were known to many of us as poor men but a few weeks ago, have become suddenly rich. It is known to us, too, how some of them unfortunately spend it – viz., in gambling, billiard playing, champagne drinking, and brandy drinking. It is known to us that single stones have been picked up already by individuals, for which thousands of pounds have changed hands."⁸² Charles Payton described the camp population thusly,

There are of course to be found men of numerous nationalities, of every grade in the social scale, and every type of character and manners. A large proportion of the diggers are Cape colonists, and Natalians, then come the Dutch Boers, both of whom have, of course, facilities for trying their luck at the diggings at little expense, owing to the small cost of the journey. Then come Englishmen, Australians, and Americans, the former in very large and continually increasing numbers. A good many Germans, with a sprinkling of Frenchmen, Italians, and Spaniards, are also to be found among the diggers.⁸³

While his book emphasized how welcoming and lucrative South Africa was for especially the English migrant, it began with a warning that hints at the desperate financial circumstances that belayed many diamond rushers: "Let no one give up a fixed income *at home*, however moderate (so that it be sufficient to live upon) for the vicissitudes and hardships of a digger's life. But let any young, active, strong, 'smart,' and above all *steady*, man with a few hundreds to spare, start for 'West Griqualand' as soon as he likes."⁸⁴

⁸¹ For example *Ibid.*, 119.

⁸² *The South African Diamond Fields. Extracted from Cape and Other Newspapers, with an Introductory and Explanatory Preface by a Colonist*, 19, 21.

⁸³ Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, 103.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, iii-iv. Emphasis is Payton's.

Few if any European writers appreciated how "New Rush" or Kimberley was a cosmopolitan space, not only for the influx of European, colonial, and American peoples but also for the number of African groups represented on the Fields. By far, the most significant comings and goings for the production of diamonds were the movements of African laborers through the area. What is noteworthy for the early rush period is that much of this movement occurred at the behest of forces outside of direct colonial or non-aboriginal control: only as much as 20% of the workforce at any given time came from, as Worger characterizes it, "white ruled areas," and sometimes as little as 5%.⁸⁵ As Robert Turrell has detailed, migrant African labor had been a trend in southern Africa decades before the diamond rush; with the establishment of the Diamond Fields, thousands of young African males began to head to Kimberley as the most efficient way of amassing the bridewealth they needed to establish themselves in their home communities. Plough-money was also a goal. The majority of migrants were Pedi, also called "Mahawa" or "Secocoeni Basuto," who lived about a fifteen-day's journey on foot from the Cape. Other groups that made up the migrant labor workforce included the Tsonga, also known as "Shangaan" (from the Gaza Empire in Mozambique), the South Sotho, the Kalanga (Makalaka) of the Shona group, and Zulu from Natal. The men could usually amass the funds they needed by working short-term contracts, three to six months, before returning home – a labor turnover rate that vexed most claimholders. There is also evidence to suggest that some migrants came not to fulfill an individual quest for bridewealth but at the behest of their chiefs: for the Pedi, young males were deliberately sent out to channel money back to the community for the purchase of guns to ward off Zulu, Swazi and Boer aggression, and the South Sotho engaged in commodity production (typically grain) as well as migrant labor to finance their community. In this way, migrant labor was a political duty, a chiefly tributary system that

⁸⁵ Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, 86.

provided wages, gun, or diamonds channeled out of the Fields to the heads of the Pedi and South Sotho communities.⁸⁶ By 1874, Sekhukhune, the Pedi chief, had his brother, Marmaree, operating in the Fields as a Pedi representative, negotiating wages and labor conditions, as well as acting as an interpreter to digger administrators. Chiefly control of a strong percentage of the migrant workforce also meant that laborers could be called back to serve their chiefs in times of war: in 1876, in response to a Boer incursion, Sekhukhune summoned the Pedi back and some 6000 workers, or roughly half the workforce, left the Diamond Fields in the space of a few months. In other cases, the wealth young men gained through working at the Diamond Fields allowed them to challenge their chiefs and seriously destabilized local practices. For the Tsonga, the level of bridewealth was raised dramatically, alienating many young males who permanently left the community.⁸⁷ While on the one hand African political organizations were active in supplying labor to the diggings, on the other hand the wealth that young men accrued due to the sale of their labor could allow them some independence from community authority, weakening chiefdoms. From the point of view of the digger-manager, the end result was an unpredictable workforce population and thus an unpredictable supply of diamonds.

As William Worger has shown, while complaints about a shortage of labor in the Diamond Fields were *de rigueur* for digger culture, the complaint was more about a lack of *cheap* labor rather than an overall absence of workers in the area. African workers very effectively navigated the system in search of higher wages, shorter contracts, and relatively favorable conditions. In 1872, the average laborer's wage doubled because of so many workers leaving one employer to earn higher wages from another employer. Moreover, diamond work, by and large, was not lucrative enough to keep workers on the Fields during the harvest

⁸⁶ Sieborger, "The Recruitment and Organisation of African Labour for the Kimberley Diamond Mines, 1871-1888".

⁸⁷ Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 19-25. See also Sieborger, "The Recruitment and Organisation of African Labour for the Kimberley Diamond Mines, 1871-1888".

seasons.⁸⁸ In these ways, African migration through Kimberley was an integral feature of the diamond commodity chain in the early 1870s. Miner attempts to control the movement of African labor will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

In terms of gender demographics, while the majority of African and foreign migrants were male, the proportion of women to men in the white population was not as uneven as other "rush" contexts, at about three to five.⁸⁹ This statistic can be explained by the fact that many of the Boer rushers in 1870 came in family units. As a Cape newspaper reported, "The Dutch farmers (Boers) in large numbers, are making preparations, and are merely waiting till the lambing season to over when they will start; many of them taking their wives and families with them." The family was a source of cheap labor and women and children could be seen washing diamondiferous hauls and searching for gemstones in the debris.⁹⁰ Because female and child labor was used in Brazilian diamond production (not to mention other mining industries in Europe, such as coal), this practice on the Diamond Fields was not transgressive. Still, once families had accrued enough wealth to hire labor, many wives and children moved away from the diggings, to the towns of Kimberley, Grahamstown, Cape Town, or back to their homesteads.⁹¹ The ratio of women to men overall (regardless of skin color) was at best one to five, due to the fact that most African migrant labor was male. This does not mean that African women were absent from Kimberley life, but they were certainly in the minority. As the town began to develop, African women, Griqua, Koranna or of "mixed race", entered the ranks of

⁸⁸ Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, 20.

⁸⁹ Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 19. For studies on women, gender, and culture in other "rush" contexts see Elizabeth Jameson, *All That Glitters : Class, Conflict, and Community in Cripple Creek* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp : The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire : Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

⁹⁰ *The South African Diamond Fields. Extracted from Cape and Other Newspapers, with an Introductory and Explanatory Preface by a Colonist*, 27.

⁹¹ Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, 20.

service providers.⁹² Matthews recalls African women as laundresses and prostitutes; domestic service was also a vocation.⁹³

Not only were women in the minority on the Fields, but discourse about the area and the camps as basically a homosocial space, lacking in white women in particular, was common and persisted well into the 1890s. Figure 3.3, "At the Diamond Diggings, South Africa," is a double-page spread from *The Graphic's* coverage in 1872. The supporting text points out the dominant figure on the left, "a young man may be seen holding up a glittering gem which he has just discovered to the view of his admiring companions."⁹⁴ Despite the fact that Africans outnumbered whites on the Fields, the engraving shows a majority of white male diggers, with only a few African laborers seated on the ground. The man at bottom center, just to the right of the page split, is perhaps the only hint of the labor going on in the mines themselves. The only female in the image is to the left of the page split, just above the mule cart; she is of ambiguous racial background is accompanied by a white male, perhaps a subtle commentary on Boer interracial marriage in inland southern Africa. The scarcity of white women on the Fields was often commented upon: "Unfortunately the gentle sex are in small number, not more than thirty women of some social position. But the belief is positive, and the fact is heartily longed for, that the numbers will soon be largely increased, for where there are men and money, naturally there must soon be women 'in galore.'"⁹⁵ As the Fields developed and particularly after the railroad was finished into Kimberley, it became more common for white women to tour the Fields. For example, Lady Lugard, Flora Shaw, wrote a series of articles for the *Times* about her travels to

⁹² Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 19.

⁹³ Matthews, Rosenthal, and Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa*, 100, 35, 85-225.

⁹⁴ "At the Diamond Diggings, South Africa," *The Graphic*, June 22 1872, 586-7; "The South African Diamond Fields," 575.

⁹⁵ *The South African Diamond Fields. Extracted from Cape and Other Newspapers, with an Introductory and Explanatory Preface by a Colonist*, 21. For an 1899 fictional story about lack of white women on the Fields, see "Beauty in Camp," in *Knives of Diamonds*, by George C. Griffith, (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1899), 256-72.

the mines in 1893; Mary Endicott followed suit in 1902-03 when she accompanied her husband, Joseph Chamberlain, on his tour of South Africa following the Boer War. By then, a trip to the diamond mines was *de rigueur* for tourists in South Africa.⁹⁶ Matthews, writing in 1887, recorded another anecdote:

While I was looking at [Mr. Lee's] claims ... my ears were all at once assailed by a deafening roar, for without any warning all the natives in and around the mine ceased work and yelled out at the top of their voice: "Hullah! Hullah!" Such a babble I had never heard before, and on turning round I discovered that a lady standing behind me, who had come to see the mine, was the innocent cause of all the disturbance. On inquiry I learnt that was nothing new, but that the natives from the interior, who perchance had never seen a white woman before they come to the diggings were in the habit of taking this method of expressing their surprise and pleasure. Patti, Nillson [sic], or Marie Rozé never, I am sure, had a more enthusiastic greeting.⁹⁷

For Matthews, writing in 1887, the vision of the early diggings as an essentially male space where white women were anecdotal rarities carried a nostalgic tone. In contrast to London, for example, where women were becoming more and more conspicuous in the public sphere as activists, professionals, politicians, shoppers, and so on, as were people of color, the Fields as depicted in Figure 3.3 was a society of men and white male power.⁹⁸ Indeed, much of the discourse about the Diamond Fields romantically constructed the area as a playground for the enterprising young white man featuring ample opportunity for rags-to-riches transformation, comradeship, gambling, drinking, prostitution, gunplay, and lawlessness.⁹⁹ It was seen as space

⁹⁶ Dorothy O. Helly and Helen Callaway, "Lugard, Dame Flora Louise, Lady Lugard (1852-1929)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). For papers relating to the Chamberlain's tour of South Africa, see the Joseph Chamberlain Collection, JC18/14/1-24, General official correspondence and papers, University of Birmingham Archives, Birmingham.

⁹⁷ Matthews, Rosenthal, and Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa*, 100. The French Marie Rozé, Italian Adelina Patti, and Swedish Christina Nilsson, were famous soprano divas of the 1870s.

⁹⁸ For discussions of the visibility of women and people of color in late Victorian London see for example Antoinette M. Burton, "Tongues Untied: Lord Salisbury's "Black Man" and the Boundaries of Imperial Democracy," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (2000), Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁹⁹ Matthews, Rosenthal, and Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa*, 101.

of action and activity that rearticulated a gendered idea of the market, the diamond commodity chain, and the business of empire itself, as one of male activity "out there," working to deliver colonial products to passive women consumers "at home."

Matthews' explanation that "natives from the interior, who perchance had never seen a white woman before" in the above quote also explicates how the Diamond Fields, and the diamond trade itself, functioned as what Mary Louise Pratt has termed a "contact zone," or "space of colonial encounters, the space in which people geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict."¹⁰⁰ After annexation in 1871, Payton saw Kimberley as an area where British authority was modeled and, indeed, generated: "And the flag of old England waves proudly over the busy camps, and the imperturbable British 'bobby' is there, too, by this time, reassuring and home-like in aspect, an object of awe to the crowds of strangely-clad or un-clad Kaffirs and Hottentots by whom he is surrounded."¹⁰¹ Not only was Kimberley a contact zone for imperial-colonial encounters, or European-African encounters, but also encounters between different classes and different nationalities of people from around the world – the cosmopolitan character that commentators picked up on. Nor was it a simple space where imperial power was asserted over native or settler populations. Pratt explains that she uses "contact," as a word "to foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination."¹⁰² The idea of early Kimberley diamond production as a contact zone is more accurate than idealizing it as a typical colonial frontier or quintessential moment of the imposition of imperial rule on a native population. What is significant for the period before the

¹⁰⁰ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes : Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 6.

¹⁰¹ Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, 5.

¹⁰² Pratt, *Imperial Eyes : Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 7.

institution of closed compound mining in 1885, is that regardless of metropolitan depictions of the Diamond Fields and in spite of many of the racist measures that diggers put in place to limit African power on Fields (a topic that I will take up in greater detail in the following chapter), the movement of African workers and their savvy contract negotiations with claimholders dictated diamond production.

"Rushes" of people to the Diamond Fields must be viewed as a series of movements to and from the area. The contact zone of diamond trading that became Kimberley was significant in that the mobility of its population – physically as well as socially – was always a factor in the culture of the area, discourse about the Fields that traveled to Europe along with the rough diamonds, and in how Kimberley political developed. The movement of Africans was especially important to diamond production because they comprised the largest and most crucial body of labor in the mines. The movement of miners and would-be miners from across Europe, North America, and the colonial world would play a huge role in the culture and politics of diamond mining in the 1870s.

Rushes: Goods and Services

While the previous section dealt with the movement of people to and from the Diamond Fields in the early rush, this section is devoted to the supply of goods and services that this fluctuating population demanded in order to carry out the work of diamond production. Labor supply was only the most critical factor limiting production on the Diamond Fields out of a range of supply-related issues that illustrate how enmeshed the diamond commodity chain was with other networks – local, regional, and global -- of supply and exchange. Fifty thousand people encamped in what many considered to be a remote "barren wasteland" created an intense demand for a number of essential supplies (fuel, food, water, building materials), mining equipment, and

manufactured goods of interest (guns, dynamite, alcohol, and textiles, to name a few).¹⁰³ The difficulty of transporting goods in and out of the area afforded opportunities to any person or group interested in controlling the supply of these commodities, and speculators were on scene as quickly as claimholders.¹⁰⁴

Moreover, in terms of imperial-colonial policy and metropolitan attitudes towards South Africa, it was these corollary trades and movements that were the real stakes of the development of the Diamond Fields. As *The Graphic* put it in 1872, "The effect of the diamond discoveries will doubtless be permanently beneficial to South Africa. For years the Cape has been rather a sleepy place. It wanted waking up...The supply of diamonds is, in itself, a matter of little importance."¹⁰⁵ For the leaders of the Cape Colony, they had no interest in diamonds per se, but the tariffs and other revenue derived from shipping goods destined for Kimberley through the Cape and other ports were extremely lucrative.¹⁰⁶ Controlling the trade to the Fields was the primary reason the Colony supported British annexation of the region in 1871: Henry Barkly, the Cape governor, worried not that the government was losing out on diamond wealth but rather that if the OFS took over the territory, "it will not be content to play a secondary part [in the region] or go on paying customs duties at the Cape ports for all manufactured goods imported for its use."¹⁰⁷ The drive to protect this revenue stream underlay the Colony's engagement with the Diamond Fields at all times and in large part explains why the government tolerated the emergence and infiltration of diamond mining magnates into its ranks. Through promises of protecting tariffs and the ports, mining "outsiders" became Cape "insiders." Thus, with the issue

¹⁰³ The "barren wasteland" imagery continued to persist in the imperial imagination. See "The Diamond Fields of Kimberley," *The Belfast Newsletter*, February 27 1890, 3.

¹⁰⁴ *The South African Diamond Fields. Extracted from Cape and Other Newspapers, with an Introductory and Explanatory Preface by a Colonist*, 20.

¹⁰⁵ "The South African Diamond Fields," *The Graphic*, June 22 1872, 575.

¹⁰⁶ For this point of view, see *The Diamond News* (Kimberley), September 11 1872, 3.

¹⁰⁷ As quoted in Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947*, 13.

of port prosperity king in Colony politics in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the rise of Kimberley was, to Cape Town, the rise of a demanding, comparatively wealthy group of consumers willing to spend.¹⁰⁸

Of course, the Cape government was hardly the only party interested in profiting from the Diamond Fields' burgeoning population. The level of demand for specific products presented opportunities for many groups to monopolize various trades (firewood, milk, and meat, for example) and this carried far-ranging effects for the development of the region as a whole. Certain Cape proprietors as well as African groups oriented their activities to providing for the Fields – meaning that their livelihoods were caught up in the health of the diamond trade. For diggers, the cost of transportation combined with deliberate attempts to set high prices made for a very high cost of living. The price of bread, milk, and vegetables, for example, was easily four and sometimes as much as eight times higher on the Fields than at the Cape.¹⁰⁹ In turn, this put pressure on diggers to produce more and more diamonds and keep production costs to a minimum in order to sustain themselves. Some could not afford, or chose to do without, essentials such as potable water and vegetables. This, combined with a haphazard sewage system, led to widespread ill health or "camp fever" – usually malaria but also scurvy, severe sunstroke, small pox outbreaks, botulism, and, particularly at times when alcohol was cheaper than water, alcohol poisoning. Considering the thousands of people who moved through the area with the seasons, the Fields acted as an epicenter for disease dissemination, particularly for small

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, 71.

pox but also bubonic plague.¹¹⁰ The "contact zone" was about sharing diseases as well, and labor was affected by the supply of goods and services.

The production segment of the diamond commodity chain, therefore, was dependant upon other commodity chains: beef, milk, firewood, coal, machinery, guns, alcohol, and dynamite (to start), and importantly to the control and movement of water in the region. The remainder of this sections explores these various corollary commodity chains and how they affected diamond production.

In the early days of the "dry diggings," water was perhaps the most sought-after element on the fields.¹¹¹ In addition to it being essential to life, water was necessary for diamond production because as buckets of soil were hauled up from the mines, the dirt was "washed" away to leave stones behind; the stones were then searched for gemstones. Hauling water from rivers or buying from wells was expensive and many diggers, preferring to conserve their water for mining, did not wash (a situation that JW Matthews believed encouraged disease on the Fields), and bought cow's milk for drinking.¹¹² Milk was easily the main staple of the digger diet and the Koranna, a Khoisan group situated in the area, effectively monopolized milk supply. This industry allowed the Koranna not to have to sell their labor at the diamond mines; consequently, African laborers tended to come from farther away. In times of drought, which

¹¹⁰ Matthews, Rosenthal, and Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa*, 100. Matthews, one of the few medical doctors in the area, recorded: "the great majority of those who consulted me were suffering from camp fever, as it was termed, which was malarial, aggravated by exposure to the sun, tent life, bad water, obtained in the early days from exposed dams or polluted springs, imperfectly tinned meat and fish, a scarcity of vegetables, and last but not least by strong drink." In terms of epidemics, there was a great of deal of pressure put on local physicians to classify patients with small pox and other communicable diseases as suffering from "bulbous disease of the skin allied to pemphigus" or other non-contagious ailments, so that labor migration to the Fields would continue. Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 138.

¹¹¹ "The South African Diamond Fields," *The Graphic*, June 22 1872, 575.

¹¹² Ibid.; Matthews, Rosenthal, and Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa*, 100, Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, 153-54.

began happening regularly in the 1870s as more water was diverted to the Fields, milk supply dropped and prices increased. Drought also affected beef, grain, and firewood supplies.¹¹³

By 1875, amassing water for the mines ceased to be a problem because the diggings had gone down to the water table and machinery was available to "dry sort" the dirt. The challenge became to pump water out of the mines, especially after it rained because, otherwise, the claims would be permanently submerged. Those who had access to hydraulic pumps controlled diamond production: famously, Cecil Rhodes made his first fortune on the Fields by purchasing a pump at the Cape, hauling it out to Kimberley, and charging rent for its use. Prior to this scheme, he had gotten by on the Fields by selling cold drinks to miners. In order to shore up the power that came with hydraulic pump ownership, Mining Boards quickly stipulated that pumping out claims was their sole responsibility: claim-owners who stepped out of line (or refused to sell their claims to powerful members of the Mining Board) could have their operations shut down when Boards neglected to service their claims and complaints were launched about the obvious hierarchies at play in deciding which claims were attended to first.¹¹⁴ Whether in scarcity or in excess, controlling the movement of water was the key to controlling the Diamond Fields for much of the 1870s and the '80s. In terms of delivering water to the Fields, by 1883, a water monopoly was formed: the Kimberley Waterworks Company piped water in from the Vaal River, some 17 miles away. The Company sold coveted filtered water that left comparatively little residue in steam generators and thus both improved the life of mining machinery and lowered the cost of water in diamond productions costs to about 3%.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, 80-81.

¹¹⁴ For a discussion of Rhodes' involvement in water pumping schemes see Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 82-87.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

As Turrell has shown, the use of machines only intensified the already high demand for fuel – firewood and coal. Firewood was the major fuel in the 1870s and 80s, until a railroad could be implemented between Kimberley and the Cape that would regularly supply Welsh coal to the Fields in 1885.¹¹⁶ Even then, firewood remained a major energy source. Its price in 1873 was six times what it was in 1871 and continued to increase throughout the decade; as Payton complained in 1872:

Wood is dear, and not likely to decrease in price, for there is no wood worth mentioning in the immediate vicinity of the dry diggings, and it is being cut to a rapidly-increasing distance from the different camps... a great many niggers go out far in the country on Saturday afternoons and Sundays to cut wood, and bring back large bundles of good-sized dry sticks, which they sell for ninepence or a shilling a bundle.¹¹⁷

He also complained that if unattended, African workers built huge bonfires at night, "whether it be hot or cold," and that they were "particularly averse to collecting dry bullock dung... which makes most excellent fuel."¹¹⁸ Payton attributed these practices to "qualities in a Kafir" but it is likely that workers mindfully adopted strategies to increase demand for their own or others' firewood-collecting.¹¹⁹

By 1882, fuel costs made up a whopping 30% of the cost associated with producing diamonds, second only to the cost of labor which was about 50%; demand for wood was insatiable. The timber in and around the Kimberley region was gone within a few years of the Fields' establishment – mining companies even took to buying surrounding farmland only for the trees. The major group that cashed in on this demand for timber was the Tlhaping, who also sold vegetables to the encampments; they were able to avoid diamond work well into the 1880s by

¹¹⁶ Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, 71.

¹¹⁷ Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, 154.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, 154-55.

supplying these commodities. The rise of coal consumption in Kimberley spelled the end of Tlhaping economic autonomy in many ways.¹²⁰

While water, firewood, and later coal were directly essential to the workings of the mines, meat—mainly beef -- was a somewhat tangential commodity that nevertheless had a huge impact on diamond production and the general cost of living in Kimberley. Various segments of the meat commodity chain were also subject to monopolization and price-fixing, compounding the marked-up prices an average digger had to pay for the quintessential staple (alongside milk) of the digger's diet. At all times, there was tension and negotiation between the farmers who supplied the meat, the businessmen who facilitated the refrigeration of the meat, and the butchers who sold the meat.¹²¹ Cattle-raising had been a regional occupation for Boer farmers and various African groups long before the establishment of the Fields. This increased with the discovery of diamonds and the Mpondo, in particular, were able to finance themselves solely through supplying meat to the rushers. Cycles of droughts and cattle-disease epidemics, predating the 1870s but perhaps intensified by local deforestation and water-supply manipulation, sent beef prices soaring. Butchers from Grahamstown to Kimberley sought their own advantage in the situation by colluding to keep prices high. Finally, others sought to monopolize the cold storage business: while this was another area that Cecil Rhodes initially tried to corner, it was the Cape Town-based Graaff family's Combrink and Company which came to monopolize meat refrigeration in 1870s. Their monopoly was not broken until after 1900 when Rhodes set up a rival company, De Beers Cold Storage, to circumvent both the Graaffs and local meat producers by importing Australian beef to supply the diamond compounds. Competition between the two

¹²⁰ Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 21 For a discussion of South African coal reserves see Gardner F. Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa, Vol. 2* (New York: BF Buck & Company, 1905), 192-241.

¹²¹ "South African Freights," in Chamberlain papers, October 8 1902, JC18/11/1, Trade, Shipping, Railways Documents, University of Birmingham Archives.

was resolved when De Beers bought Combrink and installed David Graaff as its chairman.¹²²

The beef industry is just one way that diamond mining interests were enmeshed in other trades that had far-reaching effects, both for the region and the world at large. For example, the De Beers' Mining Company's interest in the cattle industry in South Africa led them to support Robert Koch's research on, among other things, rinderpest. In 1905, Koch received the Nobel Prize for isolating bacteria causing tuberculosis, anthrax, and cholera – largely through experimenting on cows.¹²³

While firewood and cattle were mainly local and regional trades, there was also a high demand for manufactured goods that had to be satisfied by transnational trade, the most critical and controversial of which were dynamite and guns. Dynamite stirred up controversy because it pitted digger against digger in terms of who could afford it, who had access to it, and who was perpetrating dangerous practices by using it. In 1874, as the diggings went deeper, miners turned to gunpowder and dynamite to blast through the layer of "blue ground" which was found about 20 meters below a comparatively silty layer of "yellow ground." Dynamiting did not necessarily cut down on the amount of labor necessary to find diamonds: while blasting through the layer of blue meant less work with a pick-ax, it meant more work drilling to place the dynamite. After a period of indiscriminate blasting, miners agreed to limit blasting to the lunch hour for safety reasons: flying chunks of diamond reef were extremely hazardous to people, overhanging cables,

¹²² Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947*, 161-2. This precipitated a period of buying, selling, and amalgamation, at the end of which, in 1924, the cold storage business was again a monopoly that served De Beers and David Graaff was its chairman.

¹²³ Ibid., 161. For Rhodes' involvement with the cold storage monopoly, see "Cold storage, 1899-1902," Correspondence of Cecil John Rhodes (1), Mss Afr. s. 228, BLCAS. For Joseph Chamberlain's monitoring of Rhodes' and the British South Africa Company's involvement with the "meat ring" as well as a "shipping ring" into South Africa, see Joseph Chamberlain Collection, JC18/11/1-6, General official correspondence and papers, University of Birmingham Archives, Birmingham: "The Shipping Ring," JC18/11/1,1; "Sir D. Currie on the Mail Contract," JC18/11/1,3; "Conference between the South African Merchants' Committee and the Steamship Owners engaged in trade with South Africa," JC18/11/2; "Position of the Conference Lines (Shipping)," JC18/11/3; "Shipping Ring," JC18/11/5.

and equipment. After a blast, diggers scoured the vicinity, looking for "their" blue soil, the chunk that might contain a monster diamond, and of course there were all kinds of disputes over the debris. Laborers who were made to handle dynamite, quite understandably, negotiated for higher wages.¹²⁴ Accidents quickly led to Mining Board legislation that limited the amount of dynamite that could be stored in any given area, thus limiting any miner's ability to buy in bulk, but larger companies came to ignore these rules, as evidenced by the explosion of 16 magazines of dynamite in the southeast corner of the De Beers mine in 1884 in which three Africans were killed. Blasting accidents or injuries caused by the inhalation of dynamite fumes were mundane occurrences.¹²⁵ Still, miners considered dynamite to be a necessity for their business and spent about 5% of their production budget on purchasing dynamite.¹²⁶

Similarly to the water and cold storage businesses, the dynamite business was monopolized as well: the Nobel Dynamite Trust manufactured dynamite for southern African diamond and gold mining enterprises in Britain (Scotland) and shipped to the Cape, to be distributed by the British and South African Explosives Company Ltd. In 1896, Nobel opened a factory onsite, in Modderfontein, to be overseen by the BSAEC, and it enjoyed the concession of both the Rand and Kimberley. De Beers sought (ultimately unsuccessfully) to break the monopoly by manufacturing dynamite of its own, beginning in 1898, using component chemicals from the US, France, and Britain – a lucrative industry to break into, for De Beers, considering the region was about to go to war. Colonial Office Secretary Joseph Chamberlain was adamant that the Company not be seen to profit off of the war through their dynamite connection.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 16. Blasting was reserved for the lunch hour on the fields and flying lumps of blue ground were very dangerous hazards during that time. See also Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947*, 60.

¹²⁵ Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947*, 81.

¹²⁶ Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 17.

¹²⁷ Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947*, 161-64.

Again, the supply chains for dynamite were another way that corollary commodities deeply affected diamond production. Independent miners often complained that the high cost of dynamite effectively shut them out of production, favoring large companies that could afford the product.¹²⁸

Guns were a controversial necessity for diamond production not because diggers, themselves, needed them, but because one major reason African workers came to the Fields in the first place was to gain firearms, either as pay or through purchase. Payton observed, "Many of them [African workers] will carefully save their money. The great ambition of every Kafir seems to be to buy a gun. When a Kafir has served long enough on the Fields to enable him to pay 5*l.* or 10*l.* for a gun or rifle, he shoulders his weapon, and turns his face towards the ancestral 'kraals,' a happy man."¹²⁹ Indeed, as Worger has shown, the Fields were essentially a clearinghouse for guns manufactured in Europe: between 1872 and 1877, approximately 150,000 single-barreled firearms were brought into the Cape port; about half of these were sent directly to Kimberley, another 3000 came into the Fields from Natal.¹³⁰ Matthews, writing in 1887, made a similar observation to Payton's: "[Africans] trudge hundreds of miles on foot for work in the mines, imbued with but one object, the height of their ambition, which was to become the proud possessor of a rifle or other gun. The quicker this could be effected the sooner they could return to their homes".¹³¹ Even before the rise of Kimberley, beginning in the 1840s, Pedi chiefs encouraged their males to travel to farms or the Cape to take up labor and purchase guns and other items. As Worger argues, "That cattle, guns, and blankets that these men brought back with them not only improved their individual economic position, since they were generally the

¹²⁸ Ibid., 60.

¹²⁹ Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, 145-6.

¹³⁰ Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, 74.

¹³¹ Matthews, Rosenthal, and Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa*, 187.

poor men in society to begin with, but also that of the Pedi state, for Sekhukune, the paramount chief, took a very considerable proportion of these goods in tax."¹³² Sotho groups also engaged in this strategy of labor migration for the sake of consumption. And certainly the number of firearms purchased indicates a high level of demand coming from African workers.¹³³ Worger is quick to point out that, contrary to contemporary diggers' assumptions that guns were the *only* commodity of interest to migrant workers, it is important to appreciate how guns were only one among many commodities of European manufacture that Africans sought to obtain through their time in Kimberley: by 1876, woolen goods exceeded demand for firearms, and a significant amount of laborers' wages were reinvested in African agricultural enterprises through the purchase of cattle, namely, but also farm implements, wagons, and land.¹³⁴

The material "transformation" was made explicit to metropolitan readers in *The Graphic's* 1873 coverage of diamond mining, "The Natives, Before and After Working in the Mines."¹³⁵ (See Figure 3.4) The "before" Africans, in the background, are clothed only in loincloths and carry sticks. The "after" workers in the foreground are weighed down in guns, clothing, hats, some wear shoes, and all carry packs or sacks presumably full of other goods. The "before" Africans examine the "after" group closely, perhaps curious about the latter's transformation or the goods they carry. The image encapsulates a number of commentaries alive on the Fields about African workers and how their time mining diamonds, time spent in the "contact zone," affected them. There were those such as Payton who characterized diamond mining as a civilizing force in the interior, a moment when "raw Kaffirs", as contemporaries were apt to

¹³² Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, 69.

¹³³ *The South African Diamond Fields. Extracted from Cape and Other Newspapers, with an Introductory and Explanatory Preface by a Colonist*, 37.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 73-6.

¹³⁵ "The Native, Before and After Working in the Mines," *The Graphic*, December 20 1873, 588.

characterize Africans from the interior, were impressed by British imperial authority and drawn into a modern consumptive ethos that would benefit the region as a whole. The metaphorical overlap between "raw Kaffirs" and raw diamonds was unmistakable: diamond mining was a refining or advancing process that produced both diamonds as commodities and Africans as disciplined laborers.¹³⁶ But the image also speaks to contemporary concerns about the Diamond Fields as a point where British authority was weakened because it allowed people potentially hostile to the imperial project to become wealthy and arms themselves. Complaints about the high wages Africans earned at the Fields were ubiquitous and some argued that this upset colonial hierarchies. While diamond workers certainly earned higher wages than African wage workers in Cape Town, it was feared that they could also out-earn low-level white workers, and thus throw the connection between status and race into question. Thus, the commentary in Figure 3.4 could also be read as anxiety about (and condemnation of) the material wealth four workers were able to accrue. In other words, it points out that they had negotiated the contact zone in a way that was dangerous for the status quo. This concern was voiced repeatedly in terms of the gun trade at Kimberley, and the British and Cape governments passed a number of laws that attempted to regulate when and where guns could be traded, and by whom.¹³⁷ In the early days of the diggings, despite whatever regulations operated, the fact of that matter was that African laborers demanded access to guns in exchange for their labor; if their needs were not met, they left the Fields. Thus, guns were in huge demand at Kimberley and tens of thousands flowed through the area.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ John M. Smalberger, "The Role of the Diamond-Mining Industry in the Development of the Pass-Law System in South Africa," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 9, no. 3 (1976): 433.

¹³⁷ *The Statute Law of Griqualand West*, (Cape Town: WA Richards & Sons, 1882), 62-63, 76-74, 153-58.

¹³⁸ Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, 76.

Thus, the Diamond Fields operated as a contact zone not only for the encounter between peoples, but between different consumer needs and material demands. The supply of various specific commodities was crucial for facilitating the production segment of the diamond commodity chain and in this way, diamonds were integral to the workings of other local, regional, and transnational commodity chains.

Moving Rough Diamonds

Haulers and sorters found rough diamonds and delivered them to the claimholder (although, especially in the early days, it was possible that the hauler-sorter-claimholder was all one person). The claimholder or digger then sold the diamonds to a buyer on the Fields; in Figure 3.3 it is likely that the two seated characters under the canopy in the middle ground of the right-hand panel are diamond buyers. Some represented Cape buyers, a minority represented European jewelry houses or buying firms directly, and many were independents -- as JW Matthews put it, "diamond buyers and speculators from London, Paris and Amsterdam."¹³⁹

Payton said that there were four kinds of dealers in 1872, almost all of them German Jews, with "very few Englishmen amongst them: --1. The large buyer, who is a diamond buyer, and nothing else; 2. The storekeeper, who buys diamonds; 3. The small buyer; 4. The diamond broker. Of the first class we can hardly take a better example than Mr. Moritz Unger, one of the earliest and largest buyers on the Fields, being backed up with an immense capital by an Amsterdam house."¹⁴⁰ Taking Unger as the quintessential buyer, Payton went on to describe the "class" as characteristically itinerant – perhaps implicitly combining discourse about "the wandering Jew" with the business of diamond buying: "He (Unger) is a good judge of horseflesh, and owns some remarkably fine horses. Formerly he used frequently to ride from one camp to

¹³⁹ Matthews, Rosenthal, and Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa*, 130.

¹⁴⁰ Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, 116.

another, visiting the claims, asking each digger if he had any diamonds to sell, doing business in the hotels and canteens, and, in fact, everywhere with untiring energy."¹⁴¹ As Kimberley became more established, this enabled Unger to stop traveling and set up a permanent office in Klip Drift. Still, the telltale clothing of the diamond buyer on the Fields, according to Payton, was a courier bag and "long boots, partly because they are much on horseback," as they were quick to "chase" a find, "Whenever a loud shout proclaims the finding of a big diamond, two or three of the diamond-buying fraternity are quickly on the spot."¹⁴² Along with Unger, major diamond buyers included Julius Pam of Julius Pam and Company, Moritz Joseph affiliated with the London firm Joseph Brothers, and Charles Mege who had ties to the Paris firm of Julius Porges. In addition to these, there were direct agents of diamond-traders in Europe: AW Davis of the Paris-London giant the Ochs Brothers, HB Webb for the Posno family in Amsterdam (MJ Posno and Company), Max Gammius for a firm based in Hamburg, and Henri Jacobs for the Paris-based Oulman and Company. The agent for the Port Elizabeth-based Adolph Mosenthal and Sons was Anton Dunkesbuhler.¹⁴³

Payton described, however, a numerous class of buyers, sellers, and brokers, that operated under the large shippers: "most of the storekeepers, large and small, advertise that they are 'Diamont Koopers,' or 'Diamond Buyers.' One man combined in his own person the various functions of dissenting minister, dentist, watchmaker and jeweler, homeopathic chemist, and diamond buyer; and he made money too."¹⁴⁴ While the shopkeepers dabbled in diamonds as a way to supplement their established storefronts, there were also the *kopje-wallopers*, basically poor, itinerant traders who did all they could to earn a living on the Fields and usually lived

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, 117, 20.

¹⁴³ Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 74.

¹⁴⁴ Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, 118.

hand-to-mouth. They could be seen scavenging piles of mine debris for missed stones and were often accused of nefarious dealings, cheating naïve diggers, living by their wits and running low-level scams. Famously, Barney Barnato, the co-founder of the Barnato Diamond Mining Company and a major competitor of De Beers before the two companies joined forces in 1888, began his rise on the Diamond Fields as a *kopje-walloper*.¹⁴⁵

Kopje-wallopers tended to be men who, like tens of thousands of others, had rushed to the Fields because of little or no prospects "at home," whether that was the Cape, Europe, or elsewhere. They hired themselves out as mine workers when they could, traded diamonds, and usually aspired to hold claims of their own. The most successful of them had or were able to access networks that incorporated traders and jewelers in Europe, North America, or Asia. Just as Payton characterized established buyers as typically German Jews, *kopje-wallopers* were often characterized as Yiddish-speaking Jews, though there were gentile, Asian, and South Asian *wallopers*. Thousands of Jews emigrated from Eastern Europe, urban Western centers, and the Cape as part of the Diamond Fields rush and resembled other groups who rushed to the Fields in their poor economic standing and desire to only pass through the area.¹⁴⁶ For example, one correspondent for the *Jewish Chronicle* in London complained that there was not a synagogue on the Fields by 1873 because, "nearly all the Jews...are young men who have no intention of 'settling' there, but who fill their pockets (if they can) and leave when fortune has filled their lap sufficiently with diamonds, or when their lap has been empty so long as to create a suspicion,

¹⁴⁵ Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 75. Colin Newbury, "Barnato, Barnett Isaacs (1852-1897)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004).

¹⁴⁶ Louis Herrman, "A History of the Jews in South Africa, from the Earliest Times to 1895," Greenwood Press, Gustav Saron and Louis Hotz, "The Jews in South Africa : A History," Oxford University Press.. Isabel Hofmeyr, "The Mining Novel in South African Literature, 1870-1920," *English in Africa* 5, no. 2 (1978): 4. See also "The Jews of South Africa," *Jewish Chronicle*, December 19 1873, 635 as the writer complained that Jewish congregations in Cape Town were losing all of their constituents because of migration to the Fields: "The emigration has been so great that we no have but eight resident Jewish families."

that the stomach might follow suit for too long a time to render the owner comfortable."¹⁴⁷ Other articles warned young Jewish men that if they thought they could just move to the Fields and take up diamond trading, they would be sorely mistaken because competition was rife, "A new arrival now has as much chance to make money as the handful of soldiers on the Gold Coast have a chance to annihilate the Ashantees."¹⁴⁸

With a large number of *wallopers* amidst more established and peripheral buyers, as well as gambling and other trading going on at the Fields, it was not unusual for rough diamonds to be bought and sold a number of times before arriving at a port town, typically the Cape. "Many small parcels of stones, and some large diamonds," posited Payton, "pass through a good many hands, and leave a good many small profits sticking to different people's fingers, before they finally leave the Fields on their way to the European markets."¹⁴⁹

Whether or not a seller could receive the best prices on the Fields with individual or parcel sales, at Cape Town usually through an auction, or in Europe, was open to debate, and shifted over time. It was generally suspected that a digger could sell for more if he made the journey to the Cape, where the "fraternity" of buyers was a little more dispersed and varied in their purchase prices but most doubted that it was worth it. Cape Town auctions, he reported, were populated with merchants "who dabble a little in diamonds, and have correspondents in London, Amsterdam, and Hamburg" but only a small proportion of the diamonds from the Fields were sold through the Cape.¹⁵⁰

Sometimes there were rumors that European prices were substantially lower than African prices and that the trade was on the brink of losing its value. No doubt these rumors ultimately

¹⁴⁷ "The Jews of South Africa," *Jewish Chronicle*, December 19 1873, 635.

¹⁴⁸ "The South African Diamond Fields," *Jewish Chronicle*, December 26 1873, 647.

¹⁴⁹ Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, 120.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 120-1.

served the interests of onsite buyers in Kimberley (as the remote point of production would, theoretically, be the last to know of a price crash and miners would be best to sell sooner rather than later) but, in part, rumors had some substance to them: in 1873 and 1874 there was a crash in price as the global economy was plunged into a depression for the next two decades.¹⁵¹ The effects this had on the diamond commodity chain, the *kopje-walloper* class, and the development of Kimberley will be discussed in the next chapter.

Buyers physically moved rough diamonds to the Cape by foot, ox, or horseback, themselves or oftentimes through the mail. Payton's map in Figure 3.1 outlines the various postal routes (in lighter writing) that were used by not only mail carts but most travelers to the Fields.¹⁵² In Cape Town, the majority of diamonds were simply mailed to Europe. Major shippers would insure their parcels, usually through a Kimberley or Cape branch of a London bank like the Standard Bank, and the banks would send out the parcels in a strong tin box bearing the merchant's seal.¹⁵³ Smaller shippers would circumvent the banks and mail the parcels themselves via the Colonial Mails, firstly because the postal service was already established, accessible to most, and comparatively cheap and reliable; and secondly, because Europe did not require unset diamonds to be declared for import duty.¹⁵⁴ Only the US set duties on stones coming into the country, likely in the hopes of fostering American mining and cutting companies – though British jewelers constantly complained that Americans smuggled in stones duty-free via Canada.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 119.

¹⁵² Ibid., iv.

¹⁵³ Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 76-77. For evidence of close connections between diamond merchants and banks, see "Loewenthal and Goldsmith," *The Diamond News* (Kimberley), September 11 1872, 1.

¹⁵⁴ "Importation of diamonds and other precious stones: Customs procedures," 1858, CUST 33/404, National Archives (NA), London.

¹⁵⁵ For angst about American-Canadian diamond smuggling schemes, see "Trade Items," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Feb 1 1880, 27; "Ingenious Diamond Smuggling in the US," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Dec 1 1883, 222; *Jeweller*

At any length, before the discovery of diamonds, the Cape postal system functioned primarily to facilitate the colonial government's communication with the imperial government in London. The ensuing traffic in rough stones sent through the mail placed a new set of demands on the postal service as did the increased level of bureaucracy the area developed as a result of the British government's takeover of Griqualand West. Administrators for Griqualand West reported that in the year 1875 over seven hundred pounds of stones were entrusted to the postal service, representing an estimated £1,400,000 (somewhere around £100,000,000 in today's terms). This did not take into account that "large amounts are sent home by shippers through private sources, and there is no doubt that very large quantities are clandestinely sent home by the illicit diamond buyers, whose name is 'legion.'"¹⁵⁶ Once a Kimberley post office was established, it reported shipping twice that amount – 1440 pounds of diamonds – for the year 1880.¹⁵⁷ Again, that was only the stones officials knew about. Thus, the diamond trade led to an intense increase in Colonial Mail Service between London and the Cape, a situation that ensured London would be the primary point of entry for rough diamonds into Europe.

Given this shipping centrality, London was indisputably the clearinghouse for rough diamonds in Europe; Lisbon had long been eclipsed. Whereas Brazilian supply in London was managed by a few individuals such as Harry Emanuel, who jealously guarded their supply networks, the African trade in the 1870s, in days before amalgamation, operated through

and Metalworker, June 1 1886, 188. For discussion of American import duties on diamonds see: "Transatlantic Jottings," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, Jan 1 1895, 29; Feb 1 1895, 98; April 1 1895, 221; *Jeweller and Metalworker*, March 1 1894, 94. For discussion of the American duty on diamonds (about 25-30%) see Carl Meyer to Cecil Rhodes, July 13 1894, De Beers Consolidated Mines, Mss Afr. s. 228 C7A, 109, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House (BLCAS), Oxford.

¹⁵⁶ "South African Diamonds," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Sept 15, 1877, 141.

¹⁵⁷ "Of South African Diamonds," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, October 15 1881, 194. The reliance on the postal system diminished as travel to South Africa via steamship became more frequent: "The manner of sending the diamonds over to this country had completely changed. Formerly most of them came through the post; now merchants went over and brought them back in their luggage, so that no accurate estimate can be formed of the number brought over." "The British Association," *Times*, Sept 25 1873, 7.

hundreds of large and small interests, all looking to offload their product soon after the mailbags came in. Not only were the usual rough stone buyers like Emanuel ill-disposed towards dealing in African diamonds, there simply were not enough of them to handle the Kimberley supply. Thus, as Payton described, rough and cut diamonds became part of a regular series of well-advertised sales held at emerging department stores like Messrs. Debenham, Storr, and Sons in the 1870s, throwing open the diamond business to the public as never before. *The Times*, for example, not only advertised for the Debenham's auctions, but covered their details in the paper, including descriptions of diamonds and what they sold for, and noticing that the auctions attracted "a good many buyers from the provinces and the Continent."¹⁵⁸ Indeed, diamonds left unsold in other European markets were remitted back to London to be sold at in these giant auctions.¹⁵⁹ The British metropole was known for being the place where buyers could purchase the best stones, and competition was fierce. One diamond expert of Chicago complained, "not one diamond in ten sold in the US is other than the refuse of the London market."¹⁶⁰ This early rush to London for diamond marts signaled a moment when anyone, seemingly, could become involved in buying and trading diamonds.¹⁶¹ As *Jeweller and Metalworker* noted with approval, "everything possible is done to attract attention, and especially to secure the attendance of ladies, the auctioneer relying largely upon their well-known proclivity for attending auctions."¹⁶²

Not all rough stones, however, ended up in London department store auctions; indeed, Payton likely exaggerated the auctions' centrality to the trade because Debenham's was an advertiser for his book publisher, even advertising the auctions themselves in the endpages of his

¹⁵⁸ Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, 124. For other auction coverage see *The Diamond News* (Kimberley), September 11 1872, 2.

¹⁵⁹ "Notes from All Quarters," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, October 1 1874, 247.

¹⁶⁰ *Jeweller and Metalworker*, September 1 1880, 183.

¹⁶¹ Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, 124-25.; "Cape Diamonds," *The Times*, Feb 1 1872, 10.

¹⁶² "Auctioneers and Peddlers," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, November 15 1882, 217.

travelogue.¹⁶³ (See Figure 3.5) Major importers who were not already affiliated with cutting and jewelry houses, having received their parcels from the London banking firm their Kimberley counterparts used, would arrange private "viewings" for continental buyers who traveled to London (usually in Hatton Garden) at the behest of cutting and jewelry houses. It was rare for a dealer in rough stones to leave London in search of buyers; buyers would come to him.¹⁶⁴

Regardless of which London mart, private or public, the buyers purchased rough stones from, or if the stones had already been purchased by European houses on the Diamond Fields, London was often just a stop-over for the roughs before they were mailed to another destination for cutting: usually to Amsterdam, but also Antwerp, Hamburg, or Paris. Sending gemstones through the mail was not unique to the South African trade; indeed, jewelers across Europe and the US routinely posted materials and products. The trade's reliance on the postal system made the mailbags sent from diamond districts in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, London, Birmingham, Brussels, Paris, and New York, lucrative targets for thieves. As Arthur Griffiths, author of *Mysteries of Police and Crime: A General Survey of Wrongdoing and its Pursuit* (1899) reported

Hatton Garden is the centre of the diamond trade in London, and the district post-office is constantly used by the local diamond merchants in transmitting their precious stones abroad. Registered parcels valued at high figures are received daily, till five p.m., when it is the rule to make them up in a special bag to be forwarded to the General Post Office at St. Martin's-le-Grand. That all these facts are perfectly well known to the thieves is proved by the numerous robberies that have been attempted at this office.¹⁶⁵

In the 1882, for example, two mail bags stolen from a Hatton Garden Post Office in London contained an estimated £20,000 to £80,000 (£1.4 to 5 million circa 2007) worth of diamonds,

¹⁶³ See Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, endpage.

¹⁶⁴ Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 77.

¹⁶⁵ Arthur Griffiths, *Mysteries of Police and Crime: A General Survey of Wrongdoing and Its Pursuit*, vol. vol. II (London: Cassell & Company, Ltd, 1899), 256.

reported *Jeweller and Metalworker*. Five of the suspects were later apprehended in Brussels, a clearing house for the Britain-to-Continental Europe mails.¹⁶⁶

Another heist in 1886 further reveals this cross-traffic in mailed diamonds: the thieves made off with about £60,000 or 150 parcels of stones that had originated in New York and were to be sent to Poland. The mailbags were shipped to London, shipped to Belgium, put on a passenger train to Verviers, and would have been put on another train to Poland had they not been rifled through somewhere between Ostend and Ghent. As the *Times* reported, "A traveller carrying a hand-bag, was observed to leave the train at Ghent." He had been sitting in the same car with another suspect who "had a coupon-ticket from Antwerp to London available for Brussels on the return journey" and the pair's "eccentric dress," as per the Belgian cabdriver's description, suggested they were English.¹⁶⁷ The fact that the thieves had stolen specific parcels from the mailbags, and not the bags themselves, suggested that they were only targeting diamonds and were perhaps connected with the trade: "all the Brussels banking-houses received their London letters, containing securities and other valuables, in perfect safety on Saturday morning." It was believed that the thieves boarded another train to Paris to dispose of their loot.¹⁶⁸

By December 1889, *The Times* had taken a decidedly sensationalistic bent towards "mail bag theft," reporting another incident as, "a carefully-planned conspiracy to get possession of the Hatton-garden portion of the Cape mail, at all times a valuable consignment, and particularly valuable at this time of the year." A man posing as a jeweler named Crosby rented an office in the diamond district. Five weeks later, the postman entered the room in order to deliver a letter

¹⁶⁶ "The Robbery at Hatton Garden Post Office," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, December 1 1881, 230. See also "The Hatton-Garden Diamond Robbery," *The Times*, March 7 1882, 10 and "The Hatton-Garden Diamond Robbery," *The Times*, March 8, 1882, 8. The *Times* reported the amount of stolen diamonds to be 22,000 francs.

¹⁶⁷ "Theft of Mail Bags," *The Times*, November 29 1886, 6.

¹⁶⁸ "Theft of Mail Bags," *The Times*, November 30, 1886, 5.

to Mr. Crosby; he was attacked by two or three men who knocked him unconscious and stole his mailbag. While the authorities said that it was "absolutely impossible to estimate the amount of valuables stolen," one letter was said to have contained a £5000 necklace from Paris. The chemist on the first floor of the building noted, "a good many of the letters came from Paris, and if it was the intention, as I believe it was, of the robbers to steal the Cape mail, they are disappointed, for that was delivered last night. It is always possible, of course, for any one to know when the Cape mail arrives, but no one knows when it will be delivered....If it had been the Cape mail, the loss would have been very great." The *Times* characterized Hatton- Garden mail robberies as "not infrequent of late years," and reported that the police suggested that the Post Office reinstitute the policy of allowing "important mails to be delivered by two men."¹⁶⁹

The frequency of mail-theft dropped dramatically soon after this heist, not because the Post Office instituted more secure procedures but because the De Beers Syndicate had come to control the flow of raw diamonds to Britain and did not use the postal service. Indeed, the lack of reported robberies is an indication of the degree of Company control of diamond traffic that came to characterize the market as a whole: not only was a mail heist significantly less lucrative for thieves in the 1890s but if mailed stones were reported as stolen, this potentially branded the claimant as a dealer in illicit diamonds (a topic I will discuss at length in the next chapter). In detailing the swindling of Dutch diamond merchant Reuben Spzyer in Hatton Garden in 1894, the *Times* reported that the district "has been singularly free from robbery since the theft from the local post-office some years ago." Spzyer "had come to England from Amsterdam purposely to dispose of a number of exceedingly good stones." He was lured into bringing the diamonds to

¹⁶⁹ "Daring Diamond Robbery in Hatton-Garden," *The Times*, December 18 1889, 7.

what he believed to be the office of a diamond merchant, where he was attacked, chloroformed, and robbed.¹⁷⁰

The segment of the diamond commodity chain that essentially transported the rough stones from the Diamond Fields of South Africa to the cutting houses of Amsterdam and Antwerp incorporated a number of "middle men" and paths to the metropole. This phenomenal diamond mobility allowed opportunities into the trade for greenhorn *kopje-wallopers*, interested customers at auction marts, and thieves: as Griffiths said, "jewels in transit are naturally exposed to the depredators."¹⁷¹ The circulatory system of the gemstone trade was undoubtedly the international postal system, and this prodded the growth of the postal system in South Africa. Buyers who had links to the Diamond Fields as well as London were at the center of the system; diamond merchants converged on Kimberley and London to get the best deals on the best stones. The amount of produce coming out of South Africa meant that the trade supported hundreds of interested parties; London auction marts in this early period of African production meant that the market was fairly wide open for buyers, though certainly there was a private, closed trade that went on alongside these marts. As never before, the trade was open and accessible to the public, as were diamonds themselves.

Cutting and Polishing

Just as there were rushes in South Africa and in the intermediary market for rough diamonds, so too was there one in the "cutting and polishing" segment of the trade: the years 1870 to 1875 are referred to in Dutch diamond history as the *Kaapsche tijd*, "Cape time", or, as Godehard Lenzen translates it, "time of the unusual employment and profit situation caused by

¹⁷⁰ "The Diamond Robbery in Hatton-Garden," *The Times*, September 15, 1894, 10.

¹⁷¹ Griffiths, *Mysteries of Police and Crime: A General Survey of Wrongdoing and Its Pursuit*, 254.

the first raw material supplies from the South African Cape country.¹⁷² Thousands joined the trade, and Amsterdam, as well as Antwerp, adjusted to accommodate these new numbers and the increased visibility of diamond cutting culture. It is important to note that this segment of the commodity chain – taking place in the Netherlands -- was most often physically removed from where the raw materials were produced (South Africa), the main distribution center (London), and even the major retail centers (Paris, for one) – an unusual circumstance for commodity trades and one enabled by the ease with which diamonds could be moved between countries and continents.¹⁷³

Diamond-cutting was the easiest way to increase the market value of crystallized carbon and became a necessary step for anyone wanting to sell a diamond as a wearable gemstone. A stone cut to a brilliant design was almost always worth more than a rough diamond, despite the fact that cut stones were smaller than roughs by a third to a half. The cut product tended to be more valuable because it was after it had been cut that a diamond really took on all the attributes associated with its cultural value and ornamental use in Europe – brilliance, symmetry, clarity, whiteness -- in addition to the hardness observable in its "raw" form.¹⁷⁴ As such, there were substantially more buyers (amateur and professional) interested in the cut product and for whom the rough stone was useless.

The cutting process tempered the market to a degree that is difficult to overemphasize. Rough diamonds, however regularly they were formed in nature, were always unique in color, shape, and size. The business of a diamond-cutter was to take a rough, whatever its appearance,

¹⁷² Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade*, 202n9.

¹⁷³ Mildred Berman, "The Location of the Diamond-Cutting Industry," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 61, no. 2 (1971).

¹⁷⁴ "Diamond Cutting and Polishing," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, May 15 1892, 177.

and transform it into the quintessential regular, white, flashy diamond: sameness was the goal.¹⁷⁵ As Robert Proctor argues, "It is actually the homogeneity of diamonds, their *absence of character*, then, that is central to their success."¹⁷⁶ Trading in rough stones was a speculative endeavor because the appearance of the rough stone did not always indicate the appearance of the cut stone: an excellent diamond-cutter could take a relatively inexpensive yellowish stone and transform it into a brilliant white – similar in appearance and price to every other diamond, even one that began as an expensive white rough. A bad cut could depreciate the value of a rough considerably, and given the fact that the cutting process could diminish the stone's size by a half, there was a great deal of trust put in the cutter. The speculative nature of rough stone buying was even more pronounced when it came to "colored diamonds," and few dealers specialized in them. While in the rough a stone might exhibit a pink or blue color, the look resulting from impurities and asymmetries in the crystal lattice, and as it is the cutter's job to remove irregularities, the refinement process could completely change the color of the stone.¹⁷⁷ Thus, for the nineteenth-century jeweler, finding white diamonds of equal size to create a necklace was easy; finding a number of pink diamonds of the same hue and size was extremely difficult and costly.

Beyond color, the cutting process added value to the stone by shaping it in a fashionable design.¹⁷⁸ At the beginning of the nineteenth century, while most tended toward the modern brilliant cut, there were a number of acceptable fashions on offer: the single and double cut rose, the teardrop, the Peruzzi, the English brilliant, the Briollette or Briolet, the Victoria, and the table, to name only a few. The advent of the modern brilliant cut caused many diamond owners

¹⁷⁵ "The Diamond Trade," *Birmingham Daily Post*, August 15 1893, 3.

¹⁷⁶ Robert N. Proctor, "Anti-Agate: The Great Diamond Hoax and the Semiprecious Stone Scam," *Configurations* 9 (2001): 384. Italics are Proctor's.

¹⁷⁷ The speculative drama of a "large pink" in the rough is the opening hook of Hart's book. Hart, 1-4

¹⁷⁸ "The Diamond Trade," *Daily Birmingham Post*, August 15 1893, 3.

in the eighteenth century to have their rose diamonds recut for the sake of fashion. By the 1870s, however, the modern brilliant cut was hegemonic; no longer would buyers lose money on good stones cut into unfashionable designs. Indeed, some aesthetic commentators characterized diamonds as "beyond fashion" or fashion-proof. While the nineteenth century saw an explosion of different fashion in diamond jewelry, the actual diamonds themselves tended toward a completely generic product: stones of uniform sizes, whiteness, and design that were ideally interchangeable, indistinguishable in aggregate, their values easily assessed, easily exchanged, and, in short, capable of functioning as a currency.¹⁷⁹ Thus, cutting was truly a process of commoditization-as-civilizing process (as I discussed in Chapter 2). Because the stakes for cutting the stone were so high in determining the price of the gem, dealers placed tremendous trust in the cutting firms they patronized; consequently, reputation was everything for cutters. Dutch firms, particularly Coster, invested heavily in advertising their expertise at international exhibitions, so much so that Holland became synonymous with diamonds. Cutting in exhibitions will be discussed in the final chapter of this dissertation.¹⁸⁰

The vast majority of diamonds in the nineteenth century, about 90%, were cut in Amsterdam. Why Amsterdam and *not* South Africa, London, or anywhere else? This was a question often posed by contemporaries, mainly those interested in subverting Dutch supremacy, because there was no written mandate that traders had to prefer Amsterdam in this stage of the commodity chain. Cape officials continually speculated as to why more entrepreneurs did not take better advantage of their location and create a colonial cutting industry.¹⁸¹ And Londoners

¹⁷⁹ For discussions of the diamond-cutter's art, see "Diamond-Cutting in Birmingham," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, March 1 1876, 99; "Diamond Cutting and Polishing," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, May 15 1892, 117.

¹⁸⁰ See, for example, John Hollingshead, *A Concise History of the International Exhibition of 1862 ... And a Summary of All Former Exhibitions. With Forty Illustrations* (pp. 183. London, 1862), 123.

¹⁸¹ Sir Bartle Frere was happy to see London cutting firms develop. See *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 1 1881, 104. For talk of Kimberley or Johannesburg efforts see "The Diamond Industry," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, July 1 1892, 234.

were also flummoxed by the seeming necessity to send the stones to Amsterdam. As Lewis Atkinson and Robert E. North, the founders of Britain's Diamond Cutting Company Ltd, reasoned in their company proposal of 1888:

Without taking into account the products of Brazilian, Indian, Australian and other mines, the whole of which may be said to find their way to a market situated at the very doors of the Company's Factory, the exports of rough Diamonds from the mines in the Cape Colony alone, according to the statistics which have been prepared from materials courteously furnished by the Agent-General, it is estimated that $\frac{7}{8}$ of the rough Diamonds manipulated into Brilliants are cut at Amsterdam....

When it is stated that there are established in the foreign Diamond cutting centres probably 10,000 mills (a number which is on the increase) and that these are actually kept in full operation by a trade which has its fountainhead in Hatton Garden – the Diamond market of the world – it will be seen that the Company will commence operation in London with a number of mills [100] which is comparatively insignificant.¹⁸²

Like Atkinson and North, or Ford and Wright (another London cutting firm), others tried to break into the cutting market: small-scale operations developed in Cape Town, London, New York, Cincinnati, Birmingham, Paris, Hamburg, and Antwerp.¹⁸³ But with the exception of Antwerp, these firms lacked what Dutch businesses aggressively cultivated: the lowest prices for their handiwork and an impeccable reputation – again, a must in a speculative business.

¹⁸² "No. of Company: 25426; British Diamond Cutting Company Ltd.," Records of the Board of Trade, Companies Registration, Public Records Office, PRO BT 31/3996/25426, National Archives.

¹⁸³ Parisian cutters handled most of the Brazilian trade in diamonds when Dutch and British cutters were overwhelmed by Cape imports: *Jeweller and Metalworker*, August 15 1886, 279. See also "Exhibition Notes," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Sept 1 1878, 323. For Ford and Wright of Clerkenwell, see *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 1 1881, 104; *Jeweller and Metalworker*, 15 April 1882, 71; *Jeweller and Metalworker*, February 1, 1883, 27; "Diamond Cutting and the Turners' Company," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, August 15 1886, 284; "Diamond Cutting," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, July 1 1889, 9; "English Diamond Cutting," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, July 1 1893, 21-2; "Notes about Town," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, April 1 1895, 205, the article called for a national subsidy for English cutters. See also, "A Valuable Diamond," *Jewish Chronicle*, Sept 13, 1867, 2C. For Birmingham see, "Diamond-Cutting in Birmingham," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, 1 March 1876, 99; *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, Jan 1 1895, 17. For the United States, see "Diamond Cutting by Girls," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, 15 June 1877, 93; "Transatlantic Jottings," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, April 1 1895, 221. For Belgium, see "Diamond Cutting in Belgium," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 1 1881, 108; *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Aug 15 1886, 279; "The Diamond Industry of Amsterdam," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Nov 1 1887, 326; *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Sept 15 1892, 307; *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Dec 1 1893, 449.

Amsterdam's and Antwerp's rise as diamond-cutting centers began when Portugal, Spain, and several Italian states expelled their Jewish populations in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, forcing the famed diamond-cutters of Lisbon and Italy to relocate to the Netherlands. The outcome of the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648) compelled another migration of Jewish cutters from Antwerp to Amsterdam which cemented Amsterdam's supremacy in the trade, though it is important to note that Belgian cutting did not disappear and began to make a comeback after 1824.¹⁸⁴ By the nineteenth century, these two cities cut over 93% of the world's rough diamonds, smaller stones being the purview of the Amsterdam cutters, and Antwerp known for its prowess with larger stones despite the fame of the Dutch Coster firm as the cutter of many "monster diamonds".¹⁸⁵ *Jeweller and Metalworker* described the diamond-cutting business in Amsterdam in the 1870s thusly,

Diamond cutting in the present day is almost exclusively done by Jews at Amsterdam, where large diamond mills have been established; and it is calculated that 10,000 out of the 28,000 persons of Jewish persuasion, living in that city, are dependent directly or indirectly on this branch of industry. One of the largest establishments is that of M. Coster, in the Zwaneburg-straat, who use steam power to drive their machines, and employ from 200 to 300 hands...The workman are all Jews and are regularly educated to the trade. They are paid by piece-work. Formerly they did their work at their own houses, their wheels being turned by manual power; but it is now found more advantageous for the large proprietors to provide workshops of their own, furnished with steam power, for the use of which the men pay out of their earnings. Some of the more skilful and industrious men realise considerable incomes. There is of course always temptation to dishonesty, from the great value which is compressed into so small a space, but all possible precautions are taken, and the character of the men is made of so high weight in all the transactions with them, that losses very seldom occur.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ "A History of Diamond Cutting," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, June 1 1893, 315; "Diamond Cutting in Belgium," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 1 1881, 108.

¹⁸⁵ "The Art of Diamond Cutting," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, July 1 1893, 17; Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 78.

¹⁸⁶ "Cutting Diamonds," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, July 1 1875, 505.

The *Scientific American* described the industry as a space fastidiously reserved for Jewish men:

"The Amsterdam cutters are nearly all Israelites, and they are exceedingly chary of imparting their knowledge to strangers, preferring to teach only their sons or family relatives, or at best Dutch boys, of their own selection. It is their invariable rule to decline to take apprentices except under the above restrictions."¹⁸⁷

As the above quotations illustrate, in Amsterdam, diamond cutting was a massive machine-heavy, factory-organized industry that drew on a considerable urban population.¹⁸⁸ In 1845, the period of a kind of industrial revolution in diamond cutting, the majority of the jewelers in Amsterdam known for their diamond work formed the *Diamantslijperij-Maatschappij* (Diamond Society). They built a central steam-mill factory and required workers to cut roughs for the Society first, before supplying other jewelers. Two firms, ME Coster and B & L Arons, refused to join the society and set up factories of their own.¹⁸⁹

The movement of diamond-cutting from cottages to large factories was more or less complete by 1870. Far from being overwhelmed by Cape imports, the cutting segment of the commodity chain was fully capable of keeping up with colonial production. Indeed, Lenzen argues that Amsterdam was actually starving for rough diamonds in the 1860s, that the industry had over-expanded in the 1850s and the influx of Cape diamonds only began to tap the full potential of the city's diamond-cutting capabilities.¹⁹⁰ The Franco-Prussian War in 1870 temporarily slowed down the flow of consignment gemstones to Amsterdam, Paris being the largest retail market for finished diamond jewelry in Europe. But after the war ended, a huge

¹⁸⁷ As in "Diamond Cutting by Girls," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 15, 1877, 93. The demand for diamond workers was so high in the 1820s that women began to be trained for the job, but were quickly forced out again by the 1850s. Berman, "The Location of the Diamond-Cutting Industry," 320.

¹⁸⁸ Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 77-8.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁹⁰ Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade*, 141.

consignment was forwarded to Amsterdam for cutting, causing a hiring boom and rise in wages that, in turn, attracted immigration to the city, particularly Jewish immigration.¹⁹¹ There arose a notion that, for Jewish migrants, diamond work was high-paying, especially compared to other working-class positions. Some argue that this belief kept most Jews in Amsterdam from realizing their "worker consciousness", believing themselves to be in an echelon above the rank-and-file worker, until the late 1880s.¹⁹² The high demand for diamond cutters was also felt throughout Europe and some highly-trained cutters were lured away from Dutch firms to end up in Hanau, other German centers, and especially Antwerp.¹⁹³ Quick French payment of reparations to Germany in 1871 and the boom in the American economy following the US Civil War seemed to indicate nothing but future prosperity for the diamond market, and the cutting industry in Amsterdam expanded throughout the *Kaapsche tijd*. Lenzen argues that while the price of cut diamonds began to slide in 1873, a crisis in the industry was not discernable until 1875.¹⁹⁴

Jeweller and Metalworker noted, "a very large proportion of the diamonds manipulated in Amsterdam belong to London and Paris [jewelry] houses."¹⁹⁵ Thus, while the diamonds themselves moved from London to Amsterdam and back to London or Paris, many did not change ownership in the process. Diamonds that were not already purchased by jewelers before being cut were bought from the cutting houses or individual cutters in Amsterdam. This combined with the fact that Dutch banks (like British ones) accepted diamonds for deposit and

¹⁹¹ Nico van der Zwet Slotenmaker, *Amsterdam : City of Diamonds (1586-1986)* (Amsterdam: Diamond Foundation, 1986), 41.

¹⁹² Whether or not these high wages were real or imagined is a point of contention. See Chaya Brasz and Yosef Kaplan, eds., *Dutch Jews as Perceived by Themselves and by Others : Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 191, 95-6.

¹⁹³ Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade*, 142-3.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.* Zwet Slotenmaker, *Amsterdam : City of Diamonds (1586-1986)*, 39-41. The post-crisis diamond cutting market will be discussed in Chapter 4.

¹⁹⁵ "The Diamond Industry of Amsterdam," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, November 1 1887, 326.

sold them in Amsterdam meant that the Dutch metropole was another center for both the rough and cut loose-stone trade.¹⁹⁶

While Hatton Garden served as the Diamond District in London, where cut stones were traded in the open, the coffee houses of Amsterdam, particularly in the area near Rembrandtplein Square, for the center of the Dutch diamond trade. Rembrandtplein was an area of town known for banking, pubs, and cafés and as such was a high-profile place for cutters and traders to congregate.¹⁹⁷ The diamond business was a participant in the coffee commodity chain in ways that promoted not only coffee and tea consumption but also increased the visibility of the Dutch-Jewish population in Amsterdam and contributed greatly to bourgeois culture in the nineteenth century.¹⁹⁸ "Cape time" or the manifestation of the Diamond Rush in Amsterdam was connected to corollary commodity trades such as coffee. The rush to Amsterdam represents another way that the diamond commodity chain in the early 1870s was comprised of a series of overlapping and multi-directional interests, with power not centered in one distinct metropole (London, or even Kimberley) but diffused throughout the chain in transnational ways.

Cut-Stone Distribution and Manufacturing Segments

After being cut, the diamonds were sent directly to whatever manufacturing jewelry house had consigned them to the cutters or merchant-distributors in Paris and London. Whereas London dealers were concentrated in one place (Hatton Garden) and fairly sedentary, Parisian

¹⁹⁶ British banks, of course, sold diamonds to the London market. For diamonds and Anglo-Dutch banking see Harry Bernstein, *The Brazilian Diamond in Contracts, Contraband and Capital* (London: University Press of America, 1986).

¹⁹⁷ Berman, "The Location of the Diamond-Cutting Industry," 317. For Hatton Garden see "Diamond Dealers in Hatton Garden," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, July 1 1881, 126.

¹⁹⁸ Brian William Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), Steven Topik, "Historicizing Commodity Chains: Five Hundred Years of the Global Coffee Commodity Chain," in *Frontiers of Commodity Chain Research*, ed. Jennifer Bair (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), Zwet Slotenmaker, *Amsterdam: City of Diamonds (1586-1986)*.

merchants would sell cut stones in a series of fairs that travelled throughout Europe.¹⁹⁹ Leipzig hosted the *Ostermesse* (Easter fair) in March and April where most stones were purchased for the Eastern European and Asian markets; Nisji-Nowgorod's fairs in June and July supplied Russian buyers; August and September moved focus back to Leipzig for the *Michaelmesse*; and October and November were reserved for the Paris fairs, where western European and US buyers stocked up for the Christmas rush.²⁰⁰ Buyers at these fairs consistently complained that the best diamonds were always held back for October selling, meaning that if Russian, Ottoman, or Indian buyers wanted the best stones available, they would have to travel to Paris or London to have access to them.²⁰¹

In Paris, the largest retail market for jewelry in Europe, the manufacturing and retail sections of the trade tended to take place in the same house. Thus, the city of Paris provided jewelry for the French empire; the same structure was in place for Lisbon.²⁰² In the German states and Britain, there was more distance between the manufacturing and retail segments of the chain: Hanau and Pforzheim were the German centers of production, and Birmingham produced the majority of jewelry that supplied London and the empire, with the Clerkenwell district in London providing the rest.²⁰³ Thus, diamonds likely to end up being purchased by British consumers travelled from Kimberley, to Cape Town, to London, to Amsterdam, to London, to Birmingham, to London, and out across the empire, though steps could be skipped along the way

¹⁹⁹ Hatton Garden proprietors were perpetually annoyed at the number of "foreigners" who "resort to this thorough for the purpose of selling precious stones [and] create a great nuisance and impede the inhabitants in their business....we wonder why these dealers do not take a house between them and call it the Diamond Exchange."

"Diamond Dealers in Hatton Garden," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, July 1 1881, 126.

²⁰⁰ Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, 78.

²⁰¹ "Rough Diamond Market," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, May 15 1875, 463. Contemporaries argued that because Indian, Ottoman, and Russian jewelers could not get access to the best gemstones, they developed superior techniques in jewelry-making that did not require gemstones (enamelling, for example), in working with unusual semi-precious materials (amber, for one), and in combining several small stones to look like one large stone. See Arthur McKEwan, "Foreign Jewelry," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, August 1 1874, 174.

²⁰² Bernstein, *The Brazilian Diamond in Contracts, Contraband and Capital*, 41-57.

²⁰³ "English Jewelry in the Vienna Exhibition," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, November 15 1874, 278.

(and more could be added).²⁰⁴ Some continental diamond buyers also found it more convenient to situate themselves in Birmingham instead of London, and Birmingham's Jewelry Quarter was touted as one of the largest in Europe, supporting about 50,000 people by 1887, about 10% of the city's population.²⁰⁵

Connecting the dots between trade centers and jewelry houses were the postal system and individual jewelers who traveled from shop to shop looking to offload their surplus material. As the Birmingham Jeweler's Association observed in 1887, "Birmingham post office statistics show that 300,000 registered letters or parcels were transmitted to, or go from the Jewelry District -- this number being three times that of any other town or city in the United Kingdom London alone accepted."²⁰⁶ Within the Quarter, jewelers traded stones and other precious materials via messenger boys who sometimes, as the story went, used parcels of diamonds as goalposts for their impromptu football games. The Association prided itself on anecdotes such as this that showed how safe and close-knit the Quarter was: anyone who stole diamonds from the area would have difficulty selling the stones to someone wholly unconnected with the Quarter, and it was not worth the risk.

The Birmingham leg of the diamond business was one not advertised by London shops, though the vast majority were directly supplied by jewelry manufactured in the Midlands. There was a stigma attached to "Brummagem wares," a term that both made fun of the Midland accent and derogated Birmingham products as of inferior quality. The late nineteenth-century

²⁰⁴ The Parisian commodity chain could be Kimberley, to Cape Town, to London, to Amsterdam, to Paris; in a minority of cases it was Kimberley, to Cape Town, to Paris and Parisian jewelers also used Belgian cutters, thus Antwerp could substitute for Amsterdam. American buyers tended to buy in London; again, the majority of stones went through London at some point, regardless of their final destination.

²⁰⁵ Birmingham City Archives, Minutes of the Committee of the Birmingham Jewellers and Silversmiths Association, 1888, MS 1646/1, 401-2.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

persistence of the "Brummagem Myth" infuriated the Jeweller's Association because, after all, they were supplying the empire with jewelry, unbeknownst to shoppers.²⁰⁷

In terms of personnel, just as people rushed to the Diamond Fields to get involved with the production of diamonds for market, so too did people rush to manufacturing centers to participate in those aspects of the trade. Usually, this kind of movement is subsumed within discussions of increased immigration to London, Paris, and Amsterdam in general in the latter half of the nineteenth century, particularly in the movement of Eastern European and Russian Jews into these city centers. Certainly this is true, but we can also see that the Jewelry Quarter in Birmingham doubled in size between 1867 and 1887, the major years of the Diamond Rush, and that diamond setters (jewelry-makers who specialized in diamond jewelry) who had been trained in Paris, German states, and Russia, were in very high demand in Birmingham, London, and Amsterdam. Other immigrants "fell" into participating in the jewelry trade and tended to specialize in the "cheap trades," producing manufactures that used plated metals and the cheapest, "off-color" diamonds that had become readily available in the context of the Kimberley rush.²⁰⁸ Thus, the Birmingham Jewelry Quarter experienced a diamond rush, both literally in terms of number of gemstones being sent into and out of the city and in terms of people migrating to the Quarter to take up positions as diamond setters and specialists in "cheap ware" jewelry. The Diamond Rush also buoyed Birmingham industry through increasing demand for guns, gun-making being another fixture of the Birmingham manufacturing sector. Many jewelers augmented their primary business through weapons manufacture (and gunmakers also

²⁰⁷ "Meeting of the Jewellers Association," *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, August 4 1887, as in "Minutes of the Birmingham Jewelers and Silversmiths Association," Birmingham City Archives, MS 1646/1, 93; MS 1646/247, 32. See also *Birmingham Illustrated. Cornish's Stranger's Guide through Birmingham*, (Birmingham: Cornish Bros.; London: J. Cornish, 1913), 148-49.

²⁰⁸ Birmingham Corporation, Asa Briggs, and Conrad Gill, *History of Birmingham, Manor to Borough to 1865*, vol. I (Oxford Oxford University Press, 1952), 67, 78, 94, Asa Briggs, *History of Birmingham Vol. 2 : Borough and City 1865-1938* (Oxford: OUP, 1952), 40. See also "The Jewelry Trade in 1885," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, January 1 1886, 14.

described themselves as silversmiths) so the diamond rush and gun rush overlapped in Birmingham as well as Kimberley.²⁰⁹

Retailing and Consumption

The physical division between the manufacturing and retailing segments of the trade, so prominent in the British system but less so in the French, is part of what many have called the “retailing revolution” in Britain, a revolution begun in the late eighteenth century that also entailed a turn towards rationalized supply and demand, advertising, more attention to visual spectacle in order to attract customers, and a move away from itinerant selling and towards fixed shop locations with fixed prices.²¹⁰ Certainly London was at the center of this transformation and Judith Walkowitz’s *City of Dreadful Delight* (1988) and Erika D. Rappaport’s *Shopping for Pleasure* (2000), among others, historicize London in the late nineteenth century as a metropolis of pleasure for men and women, a realm of freedom, mobility, and consumption. There were significant anxieties about, limitations to, and reactions against this freedom and mobility, which these authors explore, but as Rappaport argues, the rise of shopping districts, such as the West End, and shopping culture, came to define the city as a place of national-imperial power *and* pleasure, the two being inextricably linked “as pleasure came from both enforcing and evading power.”²¹¹ Shopping was not only about buying; indeed, buying was perhaps the last thing it was about. Shopping was about experience, “consuming space and time *outside* of the home,” seeing attractions both exotic and expected.²¹² Rappaport shows how women shoppers, in particular, were fundamental to creating and populating this crucial meaning of the metropole, and the

²⁰⁹ For a discussion of this, see “Birmingham Guns for South Africa,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, January 1 1896, 8.

²¹⁰ See John Benson and Gareth Shaw, eds, *The Evolution of Retail Systems, ca. 1800-1914*, (Leicester University Press, 1992), esp. 135-65.

²¹¹ Erika Diane Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure : Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 4. She is paraphrasing Foucault in the above quote.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 5.

performance of shopper-as-pleasure-seeker created another layer of information about gendered differences. In London, the West End was the place for middling to upper class shopping, and as the *Saturday Review* noted in an 1872 article on “London as a City of Pleasure”: “It was impossible not to be struck by a certain brightness and glow in the Western parts of Town.”²¹³

Taking my cue from the above quote, diamonds, I argue, were major participants in the rise of shopping culture, in the construction of London as a pleasure-power zone, and both literally and discursively in the “brightness and glow” – the experience of power and pleasure -- that emanated from the West End. While certainly the correspondence of diamonds with pleasure and retail culture in Britain predates the diamond discoveries in South Africa (in ways that I have shown in previous chapters), the rush of diamonds to London combined with the relative cheapness of the stone as never before post-1867, allowed a much broader use of the gemstone, placing diamonds, in particular, at the center of the novelty and glitter of emerging shopping districts detailed by Rappaport. One *Times* article in 1885 reasoned that the “rush” saved beauty by allowing French daughters to be adorned, placating the “vanity of American, European, and Australasian ladies,” facilitating the “spendours of New York and London, of Paris and St. Petersburg. [One] will survey no scene which does not owe much of its magnificence to Kimberley wares.”²¹⁴ The rush metaphor that I have used to characterize the production, distribution, and manufacturing segments of the diamond trade also applies to the retail segment in this early 1870s moment: diamonds rushed to London for distribution, manufacture, and also retailing just as shoppers rushed to places like the West End to consume

²¹³ “London as a City of Pleasure,” *Saturday Review*, July 27 1872, 110. As in *Ibid.*, 4.

²¹⁴ *Times*, April 20 1885, 9.

diamond jewelry as well as diamond spectacle. As the *Times* said, "[diamonds] are no longer unattainable except for the very rich or the very extravagant."²¹⁵

Indeed, diamonds became the expected extravaganza on offer at the jewelry store. By 1896, one commentator quipped, "in a town like London...every jeweller's shop is ablaze with diamonds."²¹⁶ The experience began with the quintessential Victorian jewelry store-window -- and moreover, store-windows throughout Europe and North America -- which were packed solid with diamond-encrusted jewelry, from the pawnshop to the department store. Contemporaries described Bond Street, the centre of high-end shopping in London's West End, as simply a "mass of diamonds."²¹⁷ Figure 3.6 shows the kinds of pieces that were on display in the shop window at Edwin Streeter's New Bond Street jewelry house; the engravings are from the opening pages of his 1885 catalogue, another kind of shop window as it were. (See Figure 3.6) The rest of the catalogue is full of pieces that did not feature diamonds (charms, tableware, carriage clocks, chains, 18-carat gold full suites, pieces featuring onyx, coral, opal, carbuncle, pearl, ruby, and so on) which only serves to underline how Streeter frontloaded his approach to customers with diamonds.²¹⁸ The tiaras and bracelets on offer in stores such as Streeter's were, importantly, designed for the middling class consumer and this shows the kind of pervasiveness that diamond jewelry had in the jewelry business. Delivering "diamond glare" was not only a matter of supplying demand: in a period before the widespread use of electrical lighting and

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ "Precious Stones by Prof. Henry A. Miers, MA, FRS," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, September 1 1896, 850.

²¹⁷ "Representative Windows," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, 1 February 1893, 155; "Great Exhibition of Gems," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, Oct 1 1895, 606; "French Notes," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Dec 15 1888, 371.

²¹⁸ Edwin Streeter, *Catalogue with Designs and Prices of Diamond Ornaments, 18-Carat Gold Jewellery and Watches & Clocks, (English Machine-Made) Also of Silver & Plated Goods*, 60th ed. ed. (Harlow: Matching Reprints, 1992), 4-11.

certainly before the flashing neon sign, sellers used mirrors, metal, glass, and especially diamonds to attract the eye of passing customers. Glitter was a gimmick of the trade.²¹⁹

For retail jewelers, this method of overcrowding shop-windows with diamond wealth was not without its drawbacks, the most obvious one being that it created a considerable security risk: the shop window was susceptible to smash-and-grab thieves. Considerable time and energy had to be devoted into putting up and taking down displays each day and strategizing how metal bars might be placed to protect the jewelry and show it off at the same time. Trade publications advertised elaborate security display cases designed to mitigate these issues (as well as keep dust away from the pieces) but it was an open question as to whether the cost of the cases could be recouped to a degree that made them worthwhile.²²⁰

The vulnerability of the jewelry shop was especially evident during times of protest and civil unrest. The London Riot of 1886, a bread riot, had rioter-looters targeting jewelry shops throughout the West End and into Clerkenwell, smashing shop windows and holding clerks at gunpoint while the shops were looted. Some jewelers were badly beaten.²²¹ Diamond jewelry was not only the most lucrative, readily available, and mobile product for looters to dash off with, it was also a symbol of luxury spending -- politicized material culture in class-based protests. Moreover, jewelers themselves could be targets as they were increasingly characterized as foreigners and/or Jews channeling wealth away from domestic Britain. Attacking a jewelry store fulfilled political and economic goals for perpetrators, be they looters, protesters, rioters or any combination of these, and jewelers wondered if the practice of (over)loading shopwindows only worked to advertise the shop as a target. Particularly in London, moving diamond wealth – both in terms of physically taking the gemstones and in selling them again – was so

²¹⁹ Patrick Streeter, *Streeter of Bond Street* (Harlow: Matching Press, 1993), 18.

²²⁰ "Jewelers' Shopwindows," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, 15 May 1877, 73.

²²¹ *Jeweller and Metalworker*, 15 February 1886, 62-3.

comparatively easy that glittering shop-windows posed quite a temptation to the would-be thief, argued some jewelers.²²²

As Walkowitz has argued, the West End was particularly constructed against ideas about the East End, juxtaposing “a West End of glittering leisure and consumption and national spectacle to an East End of obscure density, indigence, sinister foreign aliens, and potential crime.”²²³ This was certainly true of the jewelry market, where the openness and brightness of Bond Street and department store auctions – in which, presumably, diamonds were sold “fresh” from the supply chain --- was contrasted with the closed, surreptitious, second-hand market of Houndsditch.²²⁴ This proverbial “underbelly” of the trade was a favorite topic of latter-nineteenth century journalists who sought to describe in voyeuristic detail urban milieus to bourgeois, gentile readers who would not otherwise access these spaces. Thus, “social investigator” James Greenwood, in his book *Unsentimental Journeys: or, Byways of the Modern Babylon* (1867) described the gemstone tradehouses in Houndsditch as “back slum golcondas” populated by European Jews instead of Indians. He found five jewelry marts, all in the same vicinity, and, having been given information on the secret entryways and passwords to these marts via a retired police officer, soon found himself:

Among a company beady-eyed and hawk-nosed, some with little black beards, some with grey beards resting on their shirt fronts, and all of them chattering like London sparrows – doing, too, as well as talking. On the common-looking tables were common iron teatrays inches deep of silver watches and watchcases, and naked works that looked as though the cruel Jews had flayed them. Over these trays the beady-eyed ones stooped, and plucked, and poked, and picked, fiercely

²²² “Jewelers’ Shopwindows,” *Jeweller and Metalworker*, 15 May 1877, 73.

²²³ Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight : Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, 20.

²²⁴ “Recollections of the Past by George Ford,” February 1910, MS1799, 2, Birmingham City Archives: Nearly every other store on the street [in Houndsditch] was occupied by Jews, dealers in old clothes and china ware. The English Jew is very different in appearance from those one sees in America. Some of the handsomest girls I have ever seen were Jewesses. Their stores were generally very dirty, from the kinds of goods they sold, but they always had an upstairs room fitted with costly pictures and furniture.”

demanding the price as with a foreknowledge that it would be preposterous, and to discuss it a simple waste of time.²²⁵

Greenwood's distaste for the people at the mart and his basic anti-Semitism is clear from the start of his description. The interest of his narrative sprang from both his ethnography of jewelry- and gemstone-selling, and the pieces themselves. In another mart, he observed,

Behind the tables and seated on forms, a close row of Jews of every country and complexion, some dark almost as Arabs, other freckled and sickly fair; some so old and shaky that they sat muffled up in cloaks and comforters; others so young and un-Jewish that it seemed a mere temptation to rogues to seat them there as dealers. On the broad tables, on every one of them, and so that they were completely covered, were vessels of gold and of silver, cups and vases, and jugs and goblets, gold chains in great coils; while flickering with rare topazes, locketts glaring with ruddy opals, crosses and clasps and necklaces rich with great pearls, and looking chaste as snow; coronets brilliant with clustering emeralds, and earrings ablaze with diamonds. Besides these there were gems unset, piled in the corners of the trays like cherrystones, or stowed in common pillboxes.

The room, "downright hazy with smoke," was packed solid with about 200 men whom he described as

seedy-looking and even shabby-looking... And yet there was the mixed company handling the contents of the trays as freely as blackberries, and passing diamonds and pearls to each other, and struggling with costly rings and necklaces through the press that they might examine them at a better light than that afforded near the vendor's stall; and the vendors all the while placid and serene, and evidently in no fear of being robbed....Everyone...seemed so contented, and warm, and comfortable, that the sight was quite affecting.²²⁶

Jeweller and Metalworker presented a less anti-Semitic description of the Houndsditch mart but pointed out the cosmopolitan quality of the room: "The room was so full of people, that it was inconvenient to make the slightest movement from fear of alighting upon some one's toe, and thus drawing down an anathema, -- but possibly it would not matter, as it would as likely be

²²⁵ James Novelist Greenwood, *Unsentimental Journeys: Or, Byways of the Modern Babylon* (London: [s.n], 1867), Chapter 22.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

expressed in any language under the sun as in that which you would understand – for Jews from almost every country are present."²²⁷

The second-hand market for diamonds was integral to the gemstone's meaning of concentrated wealth made mobile and yet, even before the South African discoveries, was set in a sinister light. In the next chapter I will discuss how legal restrictions worked to further circumscribe this second hand market, thus limiting the diamond's ability to hold market value and rendering the portability of diamond wealth all but a myth.

Conclusion

Early discourse about southern Africa as a site of diamond deposits was constituted (and dampened) by scientific exchanges between South Africa and London in ways that show how deeply enmeshed science was with the market and imperial-colonial politics. Not only was diamond production partly contingent upon London-centric scientific views, but also on a number of corollary trades, services, and supply chains to the area that would become Kimberley. While the "diamond rush" of the late 1860s and early 70s is usually characterized as a local phenomenon in terms of the number of people from different backgrounds (African, Boer, European, Asian, American) converging on the Diamond Diggings, the "rush" trend can be seen throughout the diamond commodity chain from South Africa to London and beyond, from production, to rough stone distribution, to cutting, to cut-stone distribution, to diamond jewelry manufacturing, retailing and second-hand selling. In this early rush moment, diamonds, for the consumer as well as producer, were about having access to a previously closed and secretive market. The rush of diamonds to Europe -- diamond portability -- was in many ways celebrated as a democratizing flow as more and different people became involved in the chain. Diamond glare became an integral and expected part of London's burgeoning reputation as a metropolis of

²²⁷ "The Houndsditch Jewellery Mart," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, November 15 1873, 5.

pleasure. The next chapter will discuss how imperial power – and, moreover, imperial authority – became a much more celebrated feature of the consumer pleasure diamonds both marked and enabled in the British metropole. The meaning of diamonds shifted from being about accessibility and freedom to being about social control and restricted movement – both for diamonds and for the peoples caught up in the commodity chain.

Figures

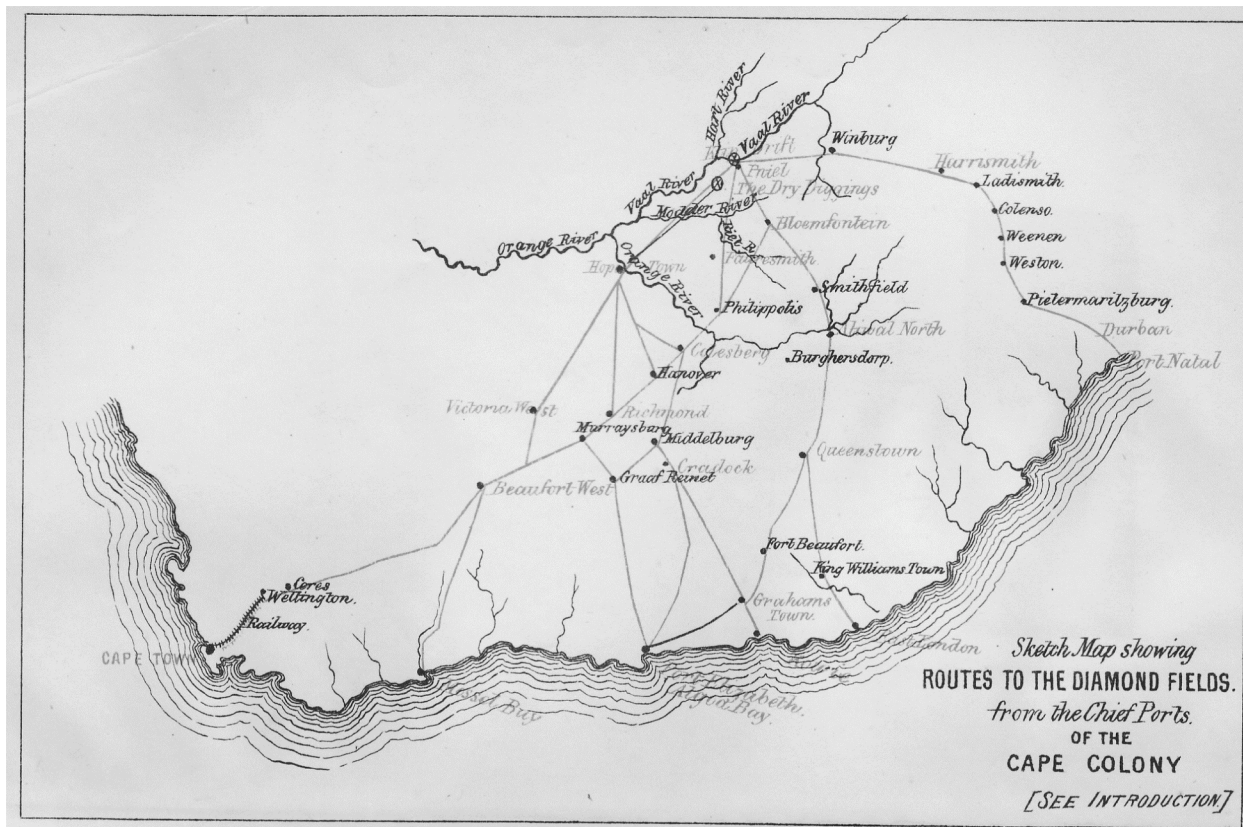
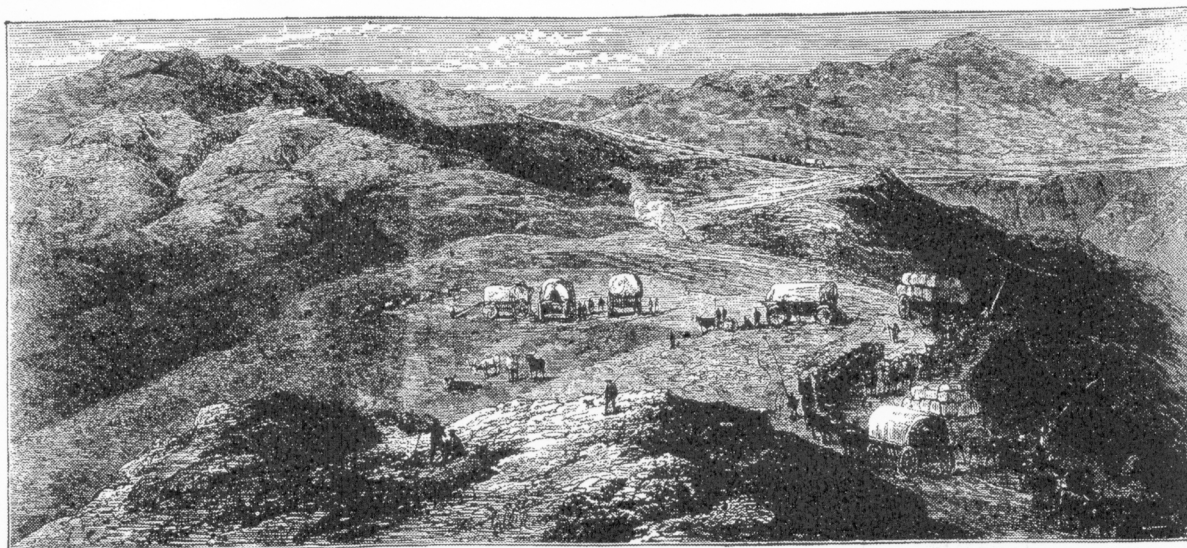


Figure 3.1: Payton's map of the journey to the Diamond Fields



ON THE ROAD TO THE FIELDS

Figure 3.2: *The Graphic's* 1872 depiction of travel to the Diamond Fields

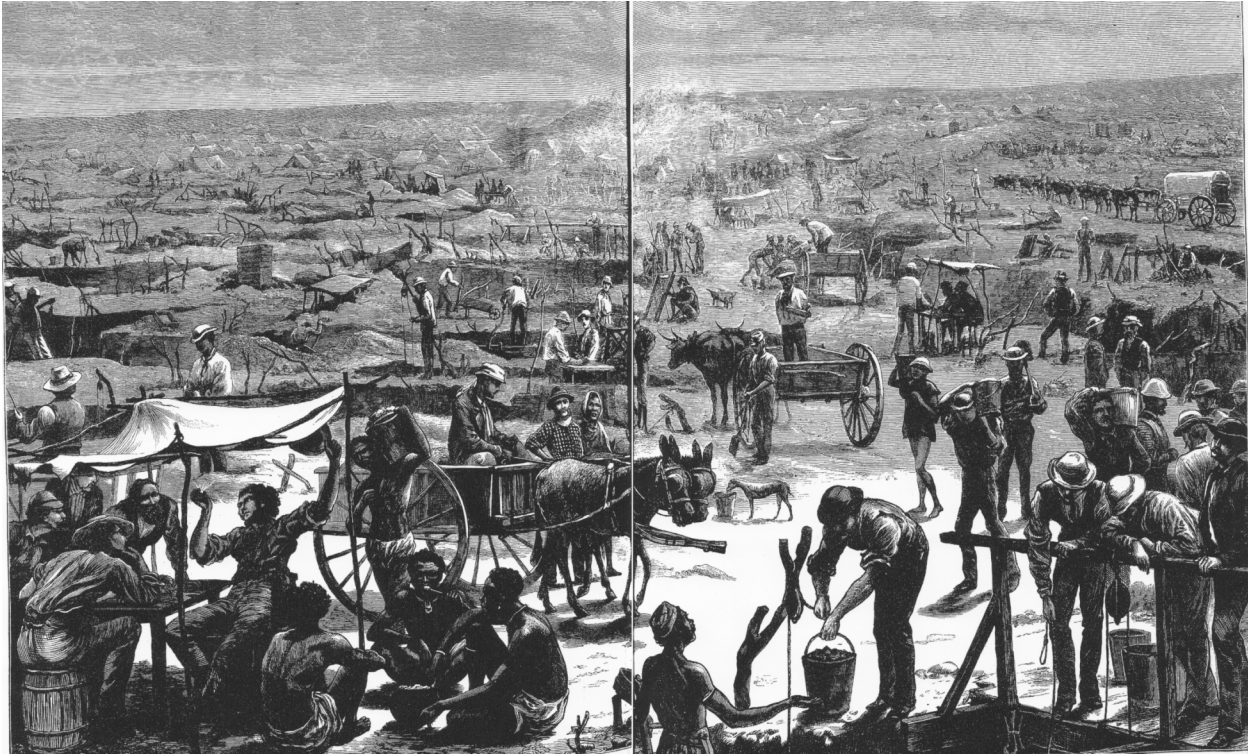


Figure 3.3: *The Graphic's* two-page panorama of the 1872 Diamond Diggings



Figure 3.4: *The Graphic*, 1873: "The Natives, Before and After Working in the Mines."

MESSRS. DEBENHAM, STORR, & SONS,
HOLD FREQUENT
PERIODICAL SALES
OF
CAPE DIAMONDS,
Cut, and in the rough,
COSTLY BRILLIANT ORNAMENTS,
And other select and highly valuable items, at their
GREAT METROPOLITAN AUCTION MART.

Consignments intended for these Sales should be forwarded on or about the 5th of each month.

26, KING STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON, W.C.
March, 1872.

Figure 3.5: An 1872 Debenham advert for diamond auctions

MR STREETER, (LATE OF CONDUIE & CO)
Stars, Bird Brooches, & Crosses.

1. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	24. Diamond Star, 14 points, as drawing ... £10 0 0
2. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	25. Diamond Star, 14 points, as drawing ... £10 0 0
3. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	26. Diamond Star, 14 points, as drawing ... £10 0 0
4. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	27. Diamond Star, 14 points, as drawing ... £10 0 0
5. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	28. Diamond Star, 14 points, as drawing ... £10 0 0
6. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	29. Diamond Star, 14 points, as drawing ... £10 0 0
7. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	30. Diamond Star, 14 points, as drawing ... £10 0 0
8. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	31. Diamond Star, 14 points, as drawing ... £10 0 0
9. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	
10. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	
11. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	
12. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	
13. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	
14. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	
15. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	
16. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	
17. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	
18. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	
19. Diamond Cross, as drawing ... £10 0 0	

Cheques payable at London & County Bank, Hanover Sq.

18, NEW BOND ST, LONDON, W.
Diamond Tiara and Bracelets.

25. Diamond tiara with gold band, as shown, £100
 Mounting own diamonds and finishing gold bands, £10

26. Diamond tiara with gold band, as shown, £100
 Mounting own diamonds and finishing gold bands, £10

27. Diamond tiara with gold band, as shown, £100
 Mounting own diamonds and finishing gold bands, £10

28. Diamond tiara with gold band, as shown, £100
 Mounting own diamonds and finishing gold bands, £10

29. Diamond tiara with gold band, as shown, £100
 Mounting own diamonds and finishing gold bands, £10

P. O. Orders payable at Vere Street, Western District.

MR STREETER, (LATE OF CONDUIE & CO)
Diamond Earrings.

43. Diamond Earrings, as drawing, £10	49. Diamond Earrings, double size shown, £10
44. Diamond Earrings, as drawing, £10	50. Diamond Earrings, double size shown, £10
45. Diamond Earrings, as drawing, £10	51. Diamond Earrings, double size shown, £10
46. Diamond Earrings, as drawing, £10	52. Diamond Earrings, double size shown, £10
47. Diamond Earrings, as drawing, £10	53. Diamond Earrings, double size shown, £10
48. Diamond Earrings, as drawing, £10	54. Diamond Earrings, double size shown, £10

Cheques payable at London & County Bank, Hanover Sq.

18, NEW BOND ST, LONDON, W.
Diamond Locketts.

31. 34. 37. Diamond Locketts, the size of drawings ... each 100 0 0
Mounting own Diamonds 17 0 0
32. Diamond Lockett, with fringe, the size of drawing 120 0 0
Mounting own Diamonds 35 0 0
The fringe makes this ornament very expensive in manufacture.
33. 35. 38. Diamond Locketts, double the size of drawings, each 250 0 0
Mounting own Diamonds 13 0 0
36. Diamond Lockett, the size of drawing 13 0 0
Mounting own Diamonds 13 0 0
37. Diamond Lockett, double the size of drawing 200 0 0
Mounting own Diamonds 15 0 0

P. O. Orders payable at Vere Street, Western District.

Figure 3.6: Four pages of the diamond ware on offer in Edwin Streeter's 1880 jewelry catalogue

Chapter 4: Amalgamation: Moving Diamonds after 1873

Chapter 3 examined the early years of the diamond rush and the rise of Kimberley after 1867, arguing that the characteristics of a "rush" can be observed throughout the entire diamond commodity chain, from the Diamond Fields to the distribution and retail markets in London and other European cities, to the cutting and polishing segments in Amsterdam and Antwerp. The chain was characterized as a fairly democratic one, inhering thousands of individual producers and distributors, and enabling an explosion of diamonds onto the market, thus opening up diamond appreciation and ownership to more consumers than ever before. Building upon discourse that proliferated before the South African rush about the value of diamonds being bound up in their mobility, the meaning of diamonds for consumers in Britain and empire was about celebrating the opportunity to become involved in the diamond chain and diamond portability as a whole.

This chapter examines how the diamond chain came to exemplify the very definition of *streamlined* between about 1873 and 1893: one major producer, De Beers Consolidated, came to monopolize production in South Africa, while the London-based Diamond Syndicate came to control distribution. While there were moments of tension between the two companies, the Syndicate was undoubtedly in league with De Beers from its inception, creating a powerful, united controlling interest in the world's diamond supply. This structural amalgamation in the commodity chain was mutually constitutive with a shift in the diamond's meaning in Britain: as the well-being of De Beers, diamond consumer market value, British authority in southern Africa, and national-imperial prosperity increasingly came to be understood as interchangeable phenomena, developing and maintaining control of the diamond market was seen as tantamount to maintaining control of the status quo in local, imperial, and global scales.

This merging of the imperial project with the diamond trade in positivist ways in the minds of metropolitan consumers was achieved through the proliferation of discourse about IDB or “Illicit Diamond Buying,” a discourse that originated in the eighteenth century with Brazilian production, but found global purchase in the era of South African production. IDB was generally defined as the buying and selling of diamonds taken from territory in which the seller did not hold mineral rights. In the early days of the Diamond Fields, IDB legislation worked to illegalize African mine-owning and diamond selling on the Fields, compelling the maximum number of Africans into the diamond labor market and reserving mineral rights and the middle segments of the diamond commodity chain for non-Africans. As De Beers attempted to monopolize production and distribution and maximize profits by controlling the movements of African workers to, from, and on the Fields, the measure of “licit” versus “illicit” diamond movement (a matter of colonial legislation) became more about what the Company controlled and what it did not. Thus, fears about IDB were bound up in fears about the stability of African colonialism and the British empire-nation in general.

After an explanation of the demand for diamonds after 1873, similar to Chapter 3, this chapter is then organized around explicating the southern-Africa-centric diamond commodity chain, moving from production, to rough stone buying and selling, to cutting, and finally to diamond jewelry manufacture. While the theme of Chapter 3 was the early diamond rushes as a democratizing moment in diamond history (however slight and short-lived), this chapter examines how, in the context of a global depression, that development was quickly curtailed in terms of production and distribution amalgamation. Indeed, various kinds of amalgamation were the theme for the entire chain, including the manufacturing segments of cutting and jewelry manufacture. Just as diamonds were becoming available to more people in more ways, in the

context of a global depression, the structure of the chain changed to conserve the stones as the property of the privileged. What was a comparatively open and transparent movement of material from Africa to Europe circa 1871 became more secretive and speculative than ever before in the 1880s and '90s – all in the name of buoying the value of diamonds and with it the status quo in Britain and empire.

* * *

Consumer Demand after 1873

What changed in 1873 that so profoundly affected diamond production? The answer is two-fold: firstly, a global depression began that would last until about 1893, severely dampening the price of diamonds and making it so that only claimholders who produced a large amount of diamonds could break even on their production costs; and secondly, the depth of digging in the Diamond Fields began to reach a level that demanded the use of large and expensive mining, hauling, and pumping machinery.¹ Both circumstances favored company operations versus individual mining efforts, and thousands of diggers sold or abandoned their claims and left the Fields.

Thus, the causes of the dramatic changes to the diamond trade after 1873 were not a product of local interests in Kimberley or European metropolises, or even changes to the global economy, but rather a result of all of these forces combined. In 1873 the global price of rough diamonds fell by a third (from £1.5/carats to £1/carats), and this drop was followed by another 30% decrease in the second quarter of 1876 – a veritable crash between 1872 and '76.² Until

¹ Gardner F. Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa, Vol. 1* (New York: BF Buck & Company, 1905), 220-67.

² Godehard Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade*, trans. F. Bradley (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 143, William H. Worger, *South Africa's City of Diamonds : Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867-1895*, Yale Historical Publications. Miscellany. 135 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 35. See also *The Diamond News* (Kimberley), March 6 1875, 3.

relatively recently, the crash was thought to be a result of over-production, a replication of the fall that occurred in the late 1720s when the rush to the Brazilian diamond fields produced a glut of gemstones that overwhelmed the market.³ Careful analysis by Colin Newbury and others, however, has shown that in the 1870s, it was actually a drop in demand that first sent prices spiraling downwards. The difference is much more than a semantic one: it means that the retail side of the commodity chain could and did, in fact, dramatically shape the production side of it, and that any company seeking to control the trade had to attend to issues of both supply *and* demand, neither activity being dictated by the other.⁴ Again, what separates diamonds from a variety of other trades is the stone's superfluity: there is no biological need that it satisfies such as sugar, grain, cotton, or wool. Demand is not innate; therefore, it is not necessarily related to supply or price and could become negligible. In other words, the diamond trade – like any trade in articles of pure fancy and fashion -- is dependent upon the maintenance of demand, perhaps even more so than the control of supply.

As early as 1872, diamond sellers in Europe noticed a drop in demand for their product. Many blamed this on the perceived quality of Cape stones, that African diamonds had a "prevalent yellowish tinge" that was undesirable to consumers – an opinion publicized by jeweler Harry Emanuel and geologist James Gregory as discussed in the previous chapter.⁵ As *Jeweller and Metalworker* reported in 1882:

³ See for example, Charles Alfred Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account* (London: Horace Cox, 1872), 124.; or Harry Emmanuel, "Cape Diamonds: To the Editor of the Times," *Times*, February 9 1871, 10; Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade*, 140.;

⁴ Colin Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 24.

⁵ Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, 117, 21, 24. "The South African Diamond Fields," *The Graphic*, June 22 1872, 575. As the *Graphic* had it, over production of the Kimberley mine "injured the prosperity of diamond-miners by glutting the market with bad gems, and prejudicing home dealers against South African diamonds." Harry Emanuel, "Cape Diamonds: To the Editor of the Times," *Times*, February 9 1871, 10; James R. Gregory, "Discovery of Diamonds, Etc., at the Cape," *Geological Magazine* 6, no. 61 (1869): 334.

After the first enthusiasm excited by the discovery of these Diamond Fields, a reaction set in, as it will be remembered, to the detriment of the new industry, on account chiefly of the inferior colour noticed in almost all of the diamonds. Instead of the purity for which the best stones are most highly prized, the African diamonds showed tints of various colours, most usually some shade of yellow, but also occasionally pale violet, resembling the amethyst, light green, or even smoky patches.⁶

But the publication went on to emphasize that the “yellowish tinge” derogation was more a matter of bad publicity than empirical fact, “the essential virtue of the diamond remains free ‘from a stain on its character,’ the blemishes being due, not to any vice in the stone itself, but only to its having been corrupted by evil communications.”⁷ Others reasoned that the initial stones from the Cape were indeed yellowish but as the diggers went down further in the mines, whiter stones were unearthed. The “yellowish tinge” stigma persisted well into the 1880s and several metropolitan exhibitors set about to dispel the myth, but whether real or imagined, dealers blamed this perception on the drop in demand.⁸

The drop, however, may have had just as much to do with the coming depression than with the quality or quantity of Cape diamonds on offer in Europe. Indeed, the diamond market may have acted as the proverbial canary in the mineshaft for consumption patterns, meaning that the decline in demand for Cape product signaled the start of the overall decline in consumer spending and corresponding overproduction characteristic of what was known at the time as the Great Depression.⁹

⁶ “Cape Diamonds,” *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 1 1882, 105. See also *The Diamond News* (Kimberley), September 11 1872, 2.

⁷ “Cape Diamonds,” *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 1 1882, 105.

⁸ *Jeweller and Metalworker*, August 1 1894, 334. For an example of the persistence of the myth see “The Diamond Trade,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, August 15 1893, 3.

⁹ Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade*, 142-43. Lenzen refers to the period as the second Kondratieff cycle.

As jewelers often complained in the 1870s and '80s, jewelry-buying is the first to disappear in a depression and the last to come back as the economy recovers.¹⁰ This does not mean that people were uninterested in jewelery during the Depression – quite the opposite, as evidenced by any international exhibition of the time (the subject of the next chapter) – but the means and will to buy and wear jewelery among the middling classes was observed to be on a decline in the period. Etiquette manuals had long since advised the use of moderation in jewelry, arguing that:

It shows a want of both taste and judgment to clothe the figure in all the most dazzling and attractive materials, to deck it with a profusion of jewellery, and render it conspicuous as rainbow-silks and gold and gems can effect... While it detracts from personal charms, it impresses the beholder with anything but respectful admiration, and tells the story of vanity more clearly than a homily. Bad enough it is to see this peacock-sort of pride even in the young, but far worse when an aged dowager, or a maiden of two score, inflicts her over-dressed self upon one's company.¹¹

When in doubt, the reader was advised to go without jewelry: “The true lady needs no costly jewels, no diamond pendants to mark her rank; etiquette ordains simplicity and elegance, and taboos at once all ostentation in the outward habiliments.”¹² Certainly the logic of frugality found its fullest articulation during the 1870s and '80 and fashions for lace, flowers, feathers, wood, and even pieces made out of hair and other non-precious or semi-precious materials replaced articles typically made of gold, silver, and gemstones. While the male writers in *Jeweller and Metalworker* recognized that the fall-off in typical jewelry-buying was due to larger economic decline, they refused to acknowledge that female consumers made choices based on

¹⁰ For examples of this from *Jeweller and Metalworker*, see JW Tonks, “The Jewellery Trade in 1879,” January 1 1880, 3; Tonks, “The Jewellery Trade in 1880,” January 1 1881, 6; Tonks, “The Jewellery Trade in 1882,” January 1 1883, 2; Tonks, “The Jewellery Trade in 1883,” January 1 1884, 5; August 15 1884, 212; Tonks, “The Jewellery Trade in 1888,” January 1 1889, 13.

¹¹ By a Lady, *A Manual of Etiquette for Ladies: Or, True Principles of Politeness* (London: T Allman & Son, 1856), 9-10.

¹² *Ibid.*, 12. See also Lady de S*****, *The Spirit of Etiquette; or, Politeness Exemplified* (London: RH Moore, 1837).

anything other than fancy. The publication cultivated a tragic image of the jeweler's livelihood at the mercy of female whimsy, as one writer quipped: "Once again the ladies, by whose fickleness the jewellers are one moment lifted into the seventh heaven and the next drifted into the sea of despond, have taken to wearing lace frilling round their sleeves in lieu of bracelets, and consequently the demand for these articles has gone down very considerably."¹³ Another contributor asked,

Who is the actual leader of fashion? is a query not a few of the fraternity would like to have answered. It seems, however, that the lady – I presume we have to thank one of the fair sex for the frequent changes that take place – is unknown, which is a great pity, as, were it possible for some information to be gained as to who actually does start the fashions, the jewellers might in their own interest petition the lady to set some fashion going which would necessitate a larger quantity of gold being used in the production of earrings.¹⁴

As fashions for jewelry tended towards the smaller, less conspicuous, and less costly, many in the male-dominated jewelry industry imagined themselves in a love-hate relationship with the female consumer, blaming her in a sense for market downswings.

While the demand for jewelry dropped after 1873, thus lowering the prices of precious materials across the board for the next two decades, what is important to note is that demand did not completely disappear. Indeed, while customers were unwilling to pay high prices for diamond jewelry, they were happy to pay moderate to low prices for it. In other words, when jewelers and diamond merchants complained that the market had crashed, what they meant was that the high-end market disappeared. Diamond cheapware ruled, facilitated by the unprecedented number of stones coming out of Africa. At a time when jewelry sales were bleak, demand for diamond jewelry formed "the backbone of the trade."¹⁵

¹³ *Jeweller and Metalworker*, January 1 1886, 14.

¹⁴ *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 1 1884, 137. Italics are the writer's.

¹⁵ "Jottings in Birmingham," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, December 1 1889, 266.

While this situation had a number of repercussions for manufacturing and retail jewelers within the chain that I will discuss later in this chapter, for claimholders on the Diamond Fields in Kimberley, it meant that diamonds – whatever their quality – could only sell for low prices. This, in turn, meant that in order to make a profit, diggers would have to keep their production costs as low as possible while selling a high volume of rough stones.¹⁶

Production: Controlling the Movement of Machinery, Capital and Labor

A depressed economic climate in Europe put a great deal of pressure on miners in South Africa, to be sure, but they also faced a number of local challenges that profoundly affected diamond production. As Cecil Rhodes wrote back to his mother at the beginning of 1871:

The accounts of the Diamond Fields were rather gloomy; oxen dying by hundreds, no food for cattle, as there has been a plague of locusts up there, which have eater everything up, even the tents and clothes of the diggers... There are, too, hundreds of men up there who are totally without money, and glad to work for a shilling a day, many of them having been in good positions at the Cape and elsewhere...¹⁷

William Worger argues that the three most important factors affecting profitability (and thus an independent digger's ability to maintain independence) on the Fields were the ability of African workers to negotiate for high wages and leave their positions if they were unhappy; the movement of capital between Europe and southern Africa; and the availability of pumping and hauling machinery in the mines themselves. Following Worger, this section will examine how, firstly, the confluence of these challenges within depression conditions created an atmosphere for amalgamation; and, secondly, continuing on with the "movement" theme of Chapter 3, how each factor was invigorated by transnational movement and discourse that requires us to appreciate

¹⁶ This is the business model that large-scale superstores like Walmart operate under: the mark-up on most of their products is minimal but they are able to move such an enormous volume of product that, as long as overhead is kept low, they can maintain profitability.

¹⁷ January 17 1871, Cecil Rhodes Papers, Miscellaneous, Mss Afr s 115, 38, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House (BLCAS), Oxford.

the rise of the De Beers-centric diamond commodity chain as a transnational phenomenon within a global scale, heavily tempered by the priorities and technologies of British imperialism. In other words, as Colin Newbury urges, move beyond the idea that the De Beers monopolies came about because of the actions of one visionary, well-placed character in South Africa (Cecil Rhodes) or through only or even primarily local activity.

To begin, as discussed in the previous chapter, having access to hauling and pumping machinery on the Fields was perhaps a digger's most immediate concern from the early 1870s onwards. As claims penetrated deeper and deeper into particularly the Kimberley mine and met what was called hard "blue ground," "slips" (essentially landslides) began to occur.¹⁸ To deal with the question of haulage, the diggers set up a system that has become a fairly iconic image of the diggings: a hypnotically elaborate web of pulleys and wires to transport dirt out of the mines. Figure 4.1, "The Deep Diggings," represents one such rendering and ran in the December 20 1873 edition of *The Graphic*, depicting a kind of controlled chaos that no doubt stood in imaginary contrast to the semi-random, "dumb luck" feel of the "At the Diamond Diggings, South Africa" images printed in the same periodical a year and half prior (Figure 3.3.), in the minds of readers.¹⁹ Gardner Williams later characterized the wires-and-pulleys visual as equal to the absurdity of the diamond trade in general, a contrast that heightened the romantic whimsicality of diamonds for metropolitan readers: "every beholder was wonder struck at the thought that this weird creation in the heart of South Africa had been evolved by men for the sake of a few buckets of tiny white crystals to adorn the heads and hands of fanciful women."²⁰

¹⁸ Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa, Vol. 1*, 235-45. See also See "The Diamond Fields of Kimberley," *The Belfast Newsletter*, February 27 1890, 3.

¹⁹ "The Deep Diggings," *The Graphic*, December 20 1873, 588; "At the Diamond Diggings, South Africa," *The Graphic*, June 22 1872, 586-87.

²⁰ Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa, Vol. 1*, 228-29.

To both facilitate and circumvent this wire-system, hauling machinery was implemented but it was expensive (both in terms of the machine itself and its shipping and fuel costs), could not be introduced to remote claims, and still required a significant amount of labor to manipulate the machines and process the dirt on either end of the system. As discussed in the previous chapter, access to water pumping machinery became more and more necessary the deeper the mines went: in January 1874, as the depth of the Kimberley mine (the deepest of the mines) sank to 200 feet, rains flooded it, leaving some claims submerged until November. Between slips and flooding, half the mine was unworkable at the beginning of 1875.²¹

Some diggers who found themselves unable to gain access to the necessary machinery simply abandoned or sold their claims; some diggers' access to the necessary machinery was intentionally blocked by influential others looking to force them out. Many who were unwilling to sell looked to local banks to advance them the capital they needed to buy or rent machinery but were met with an unfriendly lending climate. Local money-lending and credit organizations deemed the Diamond Fields too risky: in 1873, interest rates on loans were between 10 and 20% per month, an extremely unfavorable situation for any digger. As diamond prices continued to fall, so did the value of the claims; banks refused to accept diamond mines as collateral for loans and foreclosed on many of the mortgages that diggers had taken out to establish their claims in the first place. This created a condition that favored the digger with ties to financial backing in Europe -- any capital that was going to begin being circulated in Kimberley would have to come from abroad and much has been made of Rhodes' relationship with the London-based Rothschild banking firm in the 1880s and '90s. It is not my intention to suggest that backing from the Rothschild firm was not instrumental in the consolidation of the De Beers monopoly, but it is

²¹ Worger, 23; *Ibid.*, 220-31.

important to keep in mind that Rhodes was not the first or only diamond mining interest to seek backing in Europe.²²

By far the largest percentage of production costs in diamond mining was devoted to hired labor, some 50 to 85%.²³ Most of this labor was provided by African migrant workers, at least 20,000 of whom were available on the Fields in 1872, a number that Worger argues was more than adequate to fill the needs of miners, despite claims that labor was in short supply. It was *cheap* labor that was in short supply; miners continually grumbled that the cost of labor was simply too high. In the context of low diamond prices and technical challenges, cutting down on payroll costs became an obsession. Indeed, wage reductions at the mines was an obsession for all employers of labor (regardless of skin color) in southern Africa: high wages on the Fields drove up the wages for all work from domestic to professional services at the Cape, because African diamond work was, in theory, supposed to be in the lowest category of menial labor in the region.²⁴ Claimholders complained that wage reductions were impossible to implement because workers easily left unfavorable positions with one digger for more favorable ones with another or left the Fields altogether. Turrell, Worger, and Newbury all agree, it was a worker's job market in the early 1870s with about 5000 diggers competing for African labor.²⁵

Looking back on how the Diamond Fields developed, it seemed natural to many late Victorian metropolitan commentators that, in a racist logic, the division of labor on the Fields would necessarily be between white claimholders and non-white hired labor. *The Graphic*, in 1873, for example, argued that Australian mining lagged behind South African efforts because,

²² Worger, 25. Colin Newbury, "The Origins and Function of the London Diamond Syndicate, 1889-1914 " *Business History* 29, no. 1 (1987).

²³ Turrell, 89-94.

²⁴ "The Diamond Fields of Kimberley," *The Belfast Newsletter*, February 27 1890, 3.

²⁵ Worger, 19-20, 113; Turrell, 89-94; Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947*, 19-23. See also Rhodes to mother, July 16 1871, Cecil Rhodes Papers, Miscellaneous, Mss Afr s 115, 89, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House (BLCAS), Oxford.

“In Australia there was no dark-skinned race available, and miners had to do their own digging.”²⁶ Likewise, the General Manager of De Beers, Gardner Williams, penned a two volume history *The Diamond Mines of South Africa* (1905), that racialized the early rush as “The Rush of Whites and Blacks to the New Golconda,” and early Kimberley as “The Great White Camps.” For Williams, the “contact zone” quality of early Kimberley was best valued as a melting pot of whiteness and white opportunity that also allowed for a “Marvellous Collection of Savages.”²⁷ Williams argued that the experience of diamond mining was an “uplifting” one that manufactured “savages” into civilized low-level workers, necessary for the economic workings of South Africa and in fulfillment of the civilizing mission of African colonialism.²⁸

Of course, this seemingly automatic social and economic bifurcation of the Diamond Fields was hardly tensionless; discourse about white privilege such as *The Graphic*'s or Williams' was constructed in opposition to non-white land and mineral claims, the presence of Africans and Asians as intermediary diamond merchants, shopkeepers, and suppliers of corollary trade items, and mining interests in having access to a large body of cheap labor.²⁹ In the opening two years of the rush before 1869, the Fields, particularly the river diggings, were controlled and managed by Africans. Diggers rushing to the area sought ways to subvert African control and establish their own claims. Discourse that linked privilege with citizenship was of little use for this purpose – many diggers were not British and the Diamond Fields were, at best, a disputed area of British territory. Thus, some argued that in the absence of a clear legal system, racialized laws and practices in effect in Australia and the United States, should also

²⁶ “The South African Diamond Fields,” *The Graphic*, June 22 1872, 575.

²⁷ Gardner F. Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa*, Vol. 1, (New York: BF Buck & Company), 1905, viii.

²⁸ “An Uplifting Power,” Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa*, Vol. 2, (New York: BF Buck & Company), 192. John M. Smalberger, “The Role of the Diamond-Mining Industry in the Development of the Pass-Law System in South Africa,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 9, no. 3 (1976): 419-21.

²⁹ *The Diamond Fields* (Kimberley) noticed large number of “coloured diamond buyers” in 1875: February 27 1875, 3.

apply to the Diamond Fields.³⁰ In other words, it was argued that whiteness should dictate the legitimacy of claims, as it did in Australia to exclude Asian claimants, California to exclude Mexicans, and both settings to exclude indigenous claims.³¹ One British officer in Natal, Major WF Butler, in 1875 characterized the logic of the white diggers as such,

although many of them may be of English extraction, [they] are nevertheless, generally speaking, but faintly impressed with the advantages arising from British citizenship. They fall easily into that method of beliefs so acceptable to the middle-class Anglo-Saxon, viz., a belief in universal equality, so long as that aspiration has reference only to an order of beings higher in the social scale; and of repressive superiority when the sentiment is connected with a lower or differently colored race.³²

Many memoirists looked back on the early rush as a time of democracy and brotherhood, when diamond mining was seen as an honest living and theft on the Fields was apparently unheard of. JW Matthews' 1887 memoir, for example, waxed nostalgic about the quasi-legal system the "Digger's Committee" put in place between 1869 and 1871, referring to it as the "Digger's Democracy."³³ On the one hand, as Butler's quote above references, "laws" were established to ensure a modicum of equality between diggers. For example, limits were put on the number of claims an individual could own (the number changed over time, from five to two to one) and the number of laborers a claimholder could employ per claim.³⁴ In other words, it

³⁰ Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947*, 10, *The South African Diamond Fields. Extracted from Cape and Other Newspapers, with an Introductory and Explanatory Preface by a Colonist*, (London: Edward Stanford, 1870), 38, Josiah Wright Matthews, Eric Rosenthal, and Ena Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa* (London,: S. Low Marston Searle & Rivington, 1887), 117, 30. See also See "The Diamond Fields of Kimberley," *The Belfast Newsletter*, February 27 1890, 3. Smalberger, "The Role of the Diamond-Mining Industry in the Development of the Pass-Law System in South Africa," 434.

³¹ Matthews, Rosenthal, and Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa*, 117, Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947*, 10. See also *The Diamond Field* (Kimberley), October 10 1874, 2: "That is, these people are not to be treated as English people." See also *The Diamond News*, (Kimberley), March 6 1875, 2.

³² Major WF Butler, 24 Aug 1875, Natal as quoted in Newbury, 11. To be clear, the majority of rushers to the area were not middleclass though Butler argues that they espoused bourgeois ideology.

³³ Matthews, 132-5.

³⁴ Widows owned a few claims, that was the only pathway for female mine ownership on the Fields. Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947*, 14-15.

was a system designed to discourage large conglomerates and encourage individual entrepreneurship.

On the other hand, again as Butler observed, whiteness was the major determining factor for enfranchisement in the system – alongside a requisite fee for registering a claim. Though the vast majority of claimholders were men, women were not completely excluded from owning a claim – a handful of plots, for example, were owned by widows – but they could not directly purchase claims.³⁵ The system was designed to exclude as much as include and, moreover, to actively construct Africans as a cheap labor force, beholden to digger-owners: borrowing in some cases from Cape Colony law, the Digger's Committee defined all Africans as “servants” or diamond workers in the charge of their “masters” or mine owners; it was illegal for any African to be on the Fields for more than forty-eight hours without a “master.” As a digger's newspaper put it, “The natives... came here to be our servants.... They are not our equals before the law, which no right-minded man can complain of.”³⁶ Most African and “mixed race” diggers were forced to give up their claims by what contemporaries recognized to be lynch mobs, vested with punishing what became known as “illicit diamond buying” or the dealing in diamonds from unrecognized claims. While some white diggers, accused of stealing stones from claims that did not belong to them, were punished or executed by this vigilante force, the bulk of violence was done to Africans. Essentially, any African found dealing in diamonds was suspect because under the Digger's laws, Africans could not own legitimate claims. As *The Graphic* put it in 1883, “The law is that no white man may buy a diamond from a negro.”³⁷ Thus, from the beginning of the Diamond Fields, the ability to define what was licit and illicit diamond trading was rooted in

³⁵ Ibid., 14. Worger, 17.

³⁶ *The Diamond Fields* (Kimberley), October 10, 1874, 2. See also “Native Claimholder Question,” *The Diamond News* (Kimberley), September 7 1872, 3.

³⁷ “Illicit Diamond Buying in South Africa,” *The Graphic*, October 13 1883, 361. About a dozen diggers who were either black or “colored” continued to mine. Ibid. See also Worger, 115.

maintaining white supremacy on the Fields, in the trade, and in constructing a large body of cheap, available labor. Moreover, this system of racialized diamond production and trading grew up as the result of transnational flows and influences as well as because of local conditions.

In the face of being physically and legally excluded from claim ownership and compelled into the lower ranks of diamond work, African migrant laborers made ready use of the major leverage they had over mineowners: their mobility.³⁸ Abusive or low-paying employers would quickly be deserted by employees in favor of better conditions with another claimholder; when claimholders banded together to fix low wages, workers simply left the Fields for opportunities in railroad building and agricultural labor; and African workers used the threat of abandonment to negotiate for higher wages and shorter contracts. Claimholders constantly complained that even when they fulfilled all the demands of their employees, the contracts were meaningless because workers would leave the Fields at will to attend to agricultural or other duties elsewhere.

In the context of the drop in diamond prices beginning in 1872, suddenly the stakes of controlling African movement as a way of cutting down production costs were deemed of the highest importance.³⁹ To encumber worker mobility, mineowners argued that Illicit Diamond Buying or IDB was rampant, that it was facilitated by African mobility, that it caused owners to lose enough profit that it made diamond mining prohibitively expensive, and thus put the prosperity of the region – and namely the Cape Colony which was provisioning Kimberley – into peril. Because Griqualand West had been annexed by the British government in 1871, the

³⁸ Turrell, 26-8.

³⁹ Smalberger, "The Role of the Diamond-Mining Industry in the Development of the Pass-Law System in South Africa."

Digger's Committee submitted a series of proposed laws in March 1872 to the imperial government that would, they claimed, quash IDB.⁴⁰ Included were demands that: no "Kafir or other colored person" be allowed to hold a digging license unless the license had been approved by 50 white claimholders; a written contract be drawn up between all employers and workers and that contract be registered with a government official (for a fee which the employer would pay); no contract would be less than three months; workers who had completed their contract would be assigned discharge papers to that effect; no unemployed Africans would be allowed in the mining camps longer than forty-eight hours after discharge; no African would be permitted to move about the camp after eight p.m.; there would be a £25 fine or one month imprisonment imposed if one digger enticed workers to leave another digger's employment; a police force would patrol the camps and surrounding countryside to ensure Africans were registered properly; all employers and constables would have the right to search any worker at any time for stolen diamonds; there would be a punishment of 50 lashes and up to three years imprisonment if any person was found with stolen diamonds; all diamonds found on an African leaving the Fields would be considered the property of their last employer; and that any person not a registered claimholder found purchasing a diamond from "any native or colored person" would receive 50 lashes in public, have his property confiscated, and be banished from the Fields.⁴¹ In addition to imposing controls on worker movement and terms of employment and virtually outlawing African ownership of diamonds, these diggers' demands also sought to

⁴⁰ For this point of view, see Gardner F. Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa, Vol. 2* (New York: BF Buck & Company, 1905), 47-89. See also Smalberger, "The Role of the Diamond-Mining Industry in the Development of the Pass-Law System in South Africa," 428.

⁴¹ Worger, 114.

regulate what Africans could buy on the Fields: no liquor was to be sold to "servants," because of the suspicion that alcohol induced Africans to steal diamonds.⁴²

The vast majority of the Diggers memorandum was made into law in 1873 when Griqualand West was declared a British colony under the administration of commissioners separate from the Cape Colony.⁴³ The ordinances provided the new colonial government with a way of increasing revenue without taxing mine output directly (an impossible tax to collect as the Luso-Brazilian situation had shown): not only would the government collect fees from claimholder registration but also from employee registration. The imperial government rejoiced in the idea that local government in Kimberley could pay for itself while satisfying the voluble demands of both Kimberley and Cape Colony contingents.

Thus, the Kimberley Pass Laws were implemented, a system designed to control African mobility and criminalize movement that did not serve the needs of mineowners. Immediately the registration of 51,000 contract employees was required: every worker (read: African) arriving to the Fields needed to register at a service registry office, obtain a day pass until he had secured employment, be issued another pass that showed the duration of his contract and wages upon gaining employment, and obtain another pass when he left the Fields that certified the completion of his contract. After nine p.m., workers were confined to their "masters'" claims. The pass had to be presented at all times to any claimholder or official who asked to see it; the punishment for not being able to produce a pass on demand ranged from fines, to imprisonment

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Richard Southey, lead commissioner for Griqualand West, however and much to the chagrin of many Kimberley residents, refused to specify that it was "native and colored persons" to whom the majority of the laws referred, instead using the language of master and servant to specify roles on the Fields. His logic was that, as per the Cape's Masters and Servants Act of 1872, British subjects (including Africans from Basutoland, Natal, and the Cape Colony) could not be discriminated against on the basis of skin color. To do so in Kimberley law could invite legal challenges not only from the Cape but across the empire, a situation for which he was not willing to be held responsible. Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947*, 14-20. See *The Diamond Fields* (Kimberley), October 10 1874, 2.

with or without hard labor, to corporal punishment, usually in the form of lashes. A worker's body or property was subject to search by any claimholder or official at any time. In exchange for the registration fees, claimholders demanded a strong police presence on the Fields to enforce these pass laws, and the degree to which the government provided that presence was a point of contention from the moment the laws were enacted. Some mine owners felt that too many employers and employees alike were able to skirt the system and created their own police force - thus vigilante justice competed with government efforts on the Fields.⁴⁴

For all the overtures made to the financial merits of quashing IDB by controlling worker movements, once the pass law system was put in place, small claimholders still found themselves in a precarious position on the Fields.⁴⁵ The contract registration fees were yet another financial burden that they struggled to meet, and with no capital flowing in via local loans, and mining becoming increasingly technically difficult, many chose to sell (usually at a loss) or abandon their plots in 1874.⁴⁶ By the end of that year, almost two-thirds of the De Beers mine had been abandoned and absentee ownership became a problem in the Kimberley mine with only a third of it being worked. The population of Kimberley plummeted to about 17,000 (7000 white to 10,000 non-white), and poverty in both white and non-white populations was widespread.⁴⁷

This drop had a major impact on the area. Groups and individuals, African and Boer, who had been subsisting on supplying goods and services to Kimberley became impoverished and entered southern Africa's migrant labor force. The Cape's crucial shipping industries suffered, plunging the area into a depression. The Griqualand West government, basing its

⁴⁴ Worger, 17, 115-117, 124. Smalberger, "The Role of the Diamond-Mining Industry in the Development of the Pass-Law System in South Africa."

⁴⁵ *The Diamond Fields* (Kimberley), February 27 1875, 3: "IDB is a great and crying evil" that "terribly affects the industry of every honest man."

⁴⁶ The registration system was not popular with independent diggers who felt that this was an unwanted imposition on them from the government. *The Diamond Fields* (Kimberley) reported in 1875, "The Natives are slightly raised in numbers, and we are glad to see that only a few of them are registered." See Feb 27 1875, 2.

⁴⁷ Worger, 25.

revenue on diamond production fees, was forced to cut its police services to the area -- much to the aggravation of the diggers who remained. Those who stayed demanded, simultaneously, more freedom for themselves to own an unlimited number of claims and racially-specific legislation that would limit the movement of non-whites on the Fields to an even greater degree. Both demands the government was loathe to give in to: limiting the number of claims per digger ensured more registrations fees and, some commissioners reasoned, explicitly racializing the language of the pass laws would give opponents of British rule across the empire too much ammunition to work with.⁴⁸

Sir Henry Barkly, governor of the Cape Colony, did nothing to support the Griqualand administration vis-à-vis the diggers: the Cape government resented how the imperial government had taken direct control of the area, bypassing Cape input into Kimberley administration as well as ensuring that government profit from the diamond mines went to London instead of Cape Town. By the middle of 1875 the mines were all but shut down and Kimberley residents rebelled in what has come to be known as the "Black Flag Revolt".⁴⁹ British troops were dispatched from the Cape to gain control of the area.⁵⁰

In examining the power struggles between local interests in Kimberley, colonial interests in Cape Town, and imperial interests in London, it is tempting to view the measures adopted after the 1875 uprising as a victory for the diggers. After all, they would come away from the

⁴⁸ Worger, 92. Southey's motivations for limiting claimholdings were both financial and ideological – while he was eager to secure revenue for the government, he was also convinced that "foreign," specifically German and Jewish, interests were inciting diggers' unrest on the Fields. To give into popular demands, as he saw it, would be to deliver the Fields into the hands of those outside of and possibly at odds with the control of the British imperial government, an unthinkable solution for the staunch nationalist-imperialist. In this way, Southey anticipates the heightened British nationalism and anti-Semitic paranoia that infected the Empire in the 1880s and '90s. See Turrell, 74. See also TRH Davenport, "Southey, Sir Richard (1808-1901)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴⁹ For a detailed discussion of the Revolt, as well as the complex political climate leading up to and during the revolt, see Turrell, 49-72. For other coverage, see "Cape of Good Hope," *Jewish Chronicle*, July 9 1875, 238; *The Diamond News*, April 17 1875, 1-2.

⁵⁰ Worger, 118, 29-30.

uprising with the vast majority of their demands met (or at least with promises for demands to be met) and with the respect or fear of London and the Cape that the settler population on the Diamond Fields would not be ignored. However, post-Revolt reforms would ultimately spell the end of any legal structure instituting digger independence and usher in the era of the joint-stock company on the Fields. While emerging joint-stock companies certainly incorporated Kimberley interests into their schemes, the majority of their investors were situated in Paris and London and were more interested in dividends than questions of settler autonomy. Thus, the ability of local producers to control the production segment of the diamond commodity chain began to diminish after 1875. To be sure, the economic, social, cultural, and political climate of Kimberley continued to affect the entire chain, meaning the relationship between Kimberley and Europe was not unidirectional. If anything, control was divided between Kimberley and London and this tension came to be replicated in the emerging administrations of the joint-stock companies.

Following the Revolt, Lord Carnarvon, Secretary of State for the Colonies and a politician interested in promoting self-government in the so-called white settler colonies, dismissed the Griqualand West administration and instituted some of the diggers' demands, most significantly removing limitations on the number of claims one person could own. This would be the thin edge of the wedge in terms of government condoning mine amalgamation.

Carnarvon, quickly realizing that Kimberley would be no easy money-maker for the Colonial Office, began negotiations to hand off responsibility of the area to the Cape. By 1877, however, the Cape Colony was no longer interested in the Fields, worried it would be a financial liability that would ruin the Cape's credit with private banks. Barkly and Carnarvon entered a phase of heavy negotiation, neither side interested in being held responsible for Kimberley. Frustrated with Barkly's opposition, Carnarvon restructured Cape Colony politics, replacing the governor

with a High Commissioner, Henry Bartle Frere, who agreed to facilitate the transfer. After years of negotiation, in October 1880, Griqualand West was officially annexed by the Cape Colony.⁵¹ This meant that not only did Kimberley interests have to appeal to (and infiltrate) Cape government to consolidate power, but that laws instituted to regulate labor and racialized hierarchies in Kimberley would affect the Cape Colony (and vice-versa). In other words, the diamond trade that structured Kimberley politics, and Cape economics, would structure Cape politics as well.

While the back-and-forth between the Cape and the imperial government ensued, the global price of diamonds continued to plummet alongside European luxury consumption, depressing the Kimberley economy even further. In 1876, the price dropped by 30%, property values in Kimberley fell 1000%, and half the population (about 8000 people) left the area. A drought at the end of the year only served to underline the disaster that 1876 was for the Diamond Fields.⁵²

Yet, underlining how the development of Kimberley occurred in ways that far transcended local or imperial interests and drew in the whole diamond market, low property values combined with the new freedom to own as much of the Fields as possible attracted foreign investment into the area as never before. The potential for monopolizing mine ownership was obvious to a number of groups in 1877 both local to Kimberley and in Europe; it came down to whoever could command enough capital to buy the claims and was willing to risk it on the diamond trade. London- and Paris-based diamond merchants already embedded in the commodity chain took the lead, chief among them Parisian Jules Porges and his *Compagnie Française de Diamant du Cap de Bonne Espérance*: in 1877, Porges picked up 10% of the

⁵¹ Turrell, 3, 37, 73, 105. A sticking point was the compensation paid to the OFS for the annexation. For the beginning of this negotiation, see *The Diamond News* (Kimberley), September 5 1874, 3

⁵² Worger, 36.

Kimberley mine and blocked London merchants from buying the entire mine.⁵³ Whereas 1600 claimholders operated in the Kimberley mine in 1872, 300 did so in 1877, and by 1879 twelve companies controlled 75% of the mine.⁵⁴

Outside investors favored the Kimberley mine because it was the most productive; the other three mines, which had lower property values (De Beers, Bultfontein, and Dutoitspan), underwent similar amalgamations under local magnates. Porges' investment in the area is particularly significant because he was connected to the largest diamond jewelry trade in Europe (Paris), as well as a major trading and cutting firm in Amsterdam. He would sell *Compagnie Française* to the De Beers Mining Company in 1887 and become instrumental in negotiating the takeover of Barney Barnato's Kimberley Central Mining Company by what became De Beers Consolidated in 1888. Porges' underlings and eventual successors, Alfred Beit and Julius Wernher, relocated their operations to London after 1888 and took up the European side of the De Beers organization, setting up the Diamond Syndicate, the distribution arm of the monopoly in 1889.⁵⁵ The growth of De Beers Consolidated was not a process of one Kimberley or London interest expanding outward to take over the market but rather the sometimes tense, transnational alignment of London, Paris, Amsterdam, and Kimberley diamond interests, all within the context of multiple, competing national-imperial and colonial policies. No segment of the commodity chain could dictate policy to the other segments; instead it was a constant process of negotiation, infiltration, and amalgamating interests.

⁵³ Porges was originally from Vienna and his underlings, Beit and Wernher, were Germans: this was exactly the "German influence" that Southey feared on the Diamond Fields, although Beit and Wernher relocated to London in the 1880s and Wernher eventually entered the British peerage as a baronet. Turrell, 65, 81, 91, 117

⁵⁴ Worger, 42.

⁵⁵ Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa, Vol. 1*, 267-306. Porges, Beit and Wernher were also major players in the Witwatersrand gold rush but that, unfortunately, falls outside of the bounds of this study. For a discussion of Beit's legacy, see "A Diamond King," *Freeman's Journal & Daily Commercial Advertiser* (Dublin), October 9 1899, 6; CW Boyd, "Beit, Alfred (1853-1906)," rev. Ian Phimister, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford UP, 2004.

Colin Newbury has been particularly vocal about “outside” interests creating Kimberley, arguing that diamond merchants – metropolitan and colonial -- had much more agency in the rise of De Beers than they are typically assessed, in the historiographical rush to evaluate players like Cecil Rhodes.⁵⁶ Even as early as 1869, we can observe diamond merchants honing in on production: the company that Louis Hond, the Cape Town diamond cutter, fronted was also owned by the Lilienfeld Brothers of Hopetown. They were able to buy the Bultfontein farm and lease the Dorstfontein farm until 1879 – a lucrative position as the Lilienfelds, Hond, and their other partner Henry Barlow Webb would become major shareholders in DMC. The Lilienfelds were beholden to the Cape merchant house Adolph Mosenthal and Company, which in turn was supported by the Posno family of jewelers based in Amsterdam and the diamond brokerage of Ochs Brothers based in London, among other backers. Adolph Mosenthal’s son, Harry, would become a major fixture in the De Beers organization and emerging Diamond Syndicate, becoming a Board member in 1887, alongside Alfred Beit.⁵⁷ Thus, in terms of capital and influence, the lines between the various segments of the diamond commodity chain, from production to retail, began to blur from 1876 onwards. Likewise did the lines between Kimberley and Cape interests in promoting the diamond trade, and the Paris, London, and Amsterdam trades in general.

The influx of capital also meant an influx of machinery into the mines, machinery that small claimholders could not afford but larger operations could. By the middle of 1877, production in the Kimberley mine was under steam power, creating a new demand for workers skilled in the ways of mining machinery, as well as supervisors to oversee large operations.⁵⁸ The demand encouraged a small but significant influx of mining engineers, machinists, and mine

⁵⁶ Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947*, 1-5.

⁵⁷ Turrell, 3.

⁵⁸ Worger, 40-41. Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa, Vol. 1*, 231.

overseers from across the empire, Europe, and the United States. This group was different from the early digger rush in that these were individuals, some transported to South Africa, some who had traveled on their own, but in the majority of cases, hired by mining companies for their skill set. In other words, the situation highlighted a transnational body of "skilled" labor (who usually commanded higher wages) seen in contrast to a regionalized body of "unskilled" labor.⁵⁹ This contrast was idealized in racialized terms, with the conflation of "skilled" with "white" and unskilled with non-white labor, adding another dimension to the bifurcation of diamond work that had begun with the dispossession of African claimholders.

As the number of claimholders fell, the government sought new ways to recoup lost registration fees. It instituted tougher pass laws and policed those laws more stringently, applying fines or confiscating diamonds when infringements occurred – particularly in instances that helped the large magnates and hurt smaller operators.⁶⁰ Mining interests were successful in extending pass laws to urban dwellings in Kimberley as well as the mining camps, essentially, as Worger has argued, extending the space of the workplace not to mention the jurisdiction of mining companies throughout the area, and ensuring there was nowhere on the Fields that African movement would be free of regulation and surveillance. Companies argued that this was a necessary measure to guard against IDB; it worked to guard against desertion.⁶¹

Drought and Cape legislation, such as the hut tax the government introduced in 1879 or the ban on collecting firewood from Crown lands that was instituted in 1880, forced many Africans into seeking out contract employment in Kimberley. Workers continued to exercise a modicum of autonomy on the Fields because the industry, though evermore streamlined, was still

⁵⁹ Gardner Williams was one such migrant, an American mining engineer who would become the general manager of the De Beers operation. *Ibid.* See also Turrell, 152-68.

⁶⁰ Worger, 119-26. The double standard for large companies and independents did not go unnoticed but, financially, it was within the government's best interest to service the largest employers in the area.

⁶¹ Worger, 129-31.

competitive enough that miners had to compete for employees. The burgeoning railroad industry, in particular, was a viable alternative for laborers, though railway building offered slightly lower wages. Despite the myriad of pass laws and regulations, however unevenly applied, desertion remained the ultimate tool of worker resistance and this kept wages relatively high; the payroll for African labor was still the majority of any company's production costs. While at the beginning of the 1870s, the diamond production appeared at the mercy of its migrant workforce, by the end of the decade there was an uneasy stalemate between employer and employee.⁶²

In this context, Thomas C. Kitto was contracted to study the Fields and provide suggestions on how to lower production costs.⁶³ Kitto is perhaps the ultimate example of how Kimberley mining structures were not only predicated upon local southern African conditions but developed in concert with British (and later American) mining operations across the globe. His involvement again reveals the transnational movement of mining personnel from production site to production site in the nineteenth century and how British involvement in Brazilian diamond mining was instrumental in the development of Kimberley.⁶⁴ He was a Cornish mining engineer who had been involved in copper and tin production in England (and possibly Ireland), and had worked for a diamond mining company in Brazil. South African mineowners, he posited, needed to adopt labor structures similar to those implemented in Brazil, despite the fact that Brazilian companies used slave- and convict-labor in their mines. He argued that the Brazilian method of incarcerated compounds was a civilizing influence, one that would create better workers than existed in South Africa at the time of his July 1879 study:

⁶² Worger, 131

⁶³ Matthews, Rosenthal, and Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa*, 151-65.

⁶⁴ Worger, 150.

I think every possible means should be adopted to secure to owners of mines a constant supply...I must say the quality of labour here is the worst I have seen in any part of the world, and I cannot help contrasting it with the black labour of Brazil. I am very certain that one of the Brazilian blacks will do as much work on an average as three Kimberley blacks. The Brazilian blacks are classed from one to four, and are hired out to English companies...The companies have to feed them...The blacks are lodged in barracks...The entrance to the place is by a large gate, over which at night stands a powerful lamp which lights up the whole place. Men and women answer to the call of their names while passing out at the gate in the morning and in the evening when entering. They retire to rest early, and an overseer locks up the premises each night and unlocks them in the morning. There is a very good feeling between the Brazilian slaves and the owners...in another 22 years, or thereabouts, all will be free; by which time, if they continue in their present state of progression, they will be ripe for the occasion. I believe the natives of South Africa, under European supervision, are capable of being made almost – if not quite – as good as the blacks of Brazil, provided they are dealt with in the same manner.⁶⁵

Workers should be housed in fenced enclosures, provided with daily sustenance, and kept under constant supervision of white overseers. This, he argued, would solve the problems of the Diamond Fields: it ensured that workers, by being incarcerated, would serve out their contracts; theft would be stamped out due to increased surveillance; and Africans would be disciplined to their worker-roles which Kitto implied was destined by their skin color. Though he denounced slavery as an institution, he condoned the labor structure it afforded: "If natives could be bound to masters for say seven years, it would be for the infinite benefit of the natives themselves."⁶⁶ His recommendations were published in the *Griqualand West Government Gazette* in August and September, 1879, and serve as an early blueprint for what became known as the closed compound mining system implemented on the Fields in the mid-1880s.⁶⁷

Kitto's recommendations notwithstanding, the rise of closed compound mining must also be understood in the context of both imperial expansion in southern Africa and the continued depression in Europe. Several regional wars involving the imperial-colonial government and

⁶⁵ as in Turrell, 97-8.

⁶⁶ As in Turrell, 98.

⁶⁷ Worger, 43.

African and Griqua groups between 1879 and 1882 simultaneously drew African labor away from the mines and drew European ex-soldiers into the area. The depression in Europe, especially in the tin and coal mining industries of Cornwall and Cumberland, respectively, also compelled many to leave that continent, hoping to gain an economic foothold in the colonies. Thus, the Cape Colony received a huge influx of European immigrants, many of whom made their way to Kimberley in search of jobs. Most would be classified as "unskilled laborers," but a conspicuous group were former miners from Scotland and Cornwall, workers who were not only skilled and semi-skilled in mine work but had experience with unions and concepts of proletarianization.⁶⁸ Lastly, but just as significantly, the depression also pushed diamond prices down even further: the price of roughs in London dropped 42% between 1882 and '85. All these factors combined to present mineowners with a dwindling pool of African laborers, increased numbers of European workers – skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled – who readily formed workers' associations and strike committees, and a necessity to produce more diamonds than ever before.⁶⁹

In the early 1880s, the situation was such that mineowners had more opportunities to hire white laborers – mainly Irish, Italian, and Lithuanian – for “unskilled” work in the mines, than Africans. This, many argued, threatened to dismantle the connection between whiteness and high status throughout Kimberley and, by extension, British imperial authority on a wide scale. Diamond Fields debates arose about white labor that centered around three points: while the experience of diamond mining was supposed to be “uplifting” for Africans, would it be permanently damaging to “white men” to be treated like “barbarous savages”; were white laborers a “superior class of labor,” to the extent that higher wages for whites was economically

⁶⁸ Worger, 150-51. The Cornish tin depression was most dire between 1873 and '78. See also Turrell, 153.

⁶⁹ Turrell, 122-24.

justifiable; and finally, would using white labor really cut down on theft because whites were supposedly more honest? While most people assumed that whites should be paid higher wages, opinion varied widely on whether or not this was economical.⁷⁰ The debates, hashed out in local newspapers like *The Diamond News* as well as in Select Committee hearings on issues of IDB, were heated.⁷¹ Inspector of the Mines, Captain Erskine, argued, “From my own observation I opine that white labour though highly paid as compared with typical Kaffir-dawdling would prove the more economical and reliable.”⁷² When mineowner Sammy Marks was asked by the Select Committee, “Do people consider that what they pay the native, and what they steal, is not more than they pay a white man?” he responded, “I have tried white labour. I engaged 50 white men as labourers but it would not answer, they worked one day and got drunk the next. You can always depend on the Kaffirs.”⁷³ In short, there was no consensus that white labor in itself was a solution to industrial theft and no reason to pay white workers higher wages outside of the simple argument of white privilege.

For many mineowners, maintaining white status on the Diamond Fields was tantamount to losing their companies. In their efforts to stamp out theft and minimize wages, some found themselves acting at odds with dominant white supremacist paradigms. In 1880, bowing to the demands of large mining operations, the government passed Ordinance 11, legislation that legalized the spontaneous strip-search of all diamond workers, regardless of color. Prior to this, while companies may have wanted to institute stripsearches, African workers would not stand for it. By 1880, however, the depression in regional economies combined with government efforts to compel Africans into the colonial workforce, shifted the balance of power towards mineowners.

⁷⁰ Worger, 158-59.

⁷¹ *The Diamond News* (Kimberley), April 17 1875, 1-2; May 15 1875, 2.

⁷² As in Turrell, 126.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

White workers vehemently opposed the stripsearch, less because of its demeaning nature and more because they would be subjected to the same demeaning treatment as black laborers.⁷⁴

Moreover, this was an admission that theft from the mines occurred not only because of opportunistic African workers – an idea that subverted much of the dominant discourse about Illicit Diamond Buying that was circulating at the time.

Outside of the issue of stripsearching, mineowners simply did not want to pay higher wages than they needed to: white workers who incurred higher wages were typically laid off in preference for African labor or never hired in the first place. Moreover, white overseers began to be replaced by African overseers in 1882 (beginning with Sammy Marks' claims), a move that subverted the dominant racialized pattern of authority (white owners/overseers: non-white laborers) that had been in place since 1873. White engineers were also replaced with non-white (Indian, Chinese, African, Griqua) engineers, especially in the De Beers mine while white males around twelve to fourteen years of age were preferentially hired as overseers and workers because of the low wages they garnered. While women were members of the diamond workforce in Brazil, female workers were absent on the Diamond Fields of South Africa in this period, though they had been employed as sorters in the early days of the rush. Reducing "European" wages on the payroll was clearly a priority for companies during this period and formed an incentive for amalgamation. As the "poor white" population of Kimberley ballooned, the early 1880s became a moment when racial hierarchies were blurred, when economic status on the Diamond Fields did not necessarily reflect white privilege.⁷⁵ For local newspapers, African mobility was, again, at the heart of diamond production costs and social status: the ability of African laborers to leave the Fields, and moreover their willingness to do so, ensured

⁷⁴ Worger, 160. Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947*, 61.

⁷⁵ Worger, 163.

that mineowners reduced European adult wages first and foremost – the perception being that white workers were much more localized, would stay in Kimberley, and would accept the reductions.⁷⁶ Many studies on colonial discourse explore how the idea that “the natives” were local, stationary forces set in opposition to mobile, transnational colonizing populations was part of the colonial project. Kimberley in the early 1880s presented another facet of this discourse because it represents a moment when the opposite of this paradigm was true and settlers characterized it as “a world turned upside down,” the ultimate threat to British authority.⁷⁷

A series of strikes over the issues of stripping and wage reductions in 1883 and '84 gave companies traction with the Cape Parliament to argue that closed compounds were the only solution to unrest in Kimberley, beyond pass laws, police forces, and searching.⁷⁸ The strikes were called by the Overseers' Association and the Artisans Association, organizations of skilled and semi-skilled diamond laborers that were open to all male workers except Africans, in protest of wage reductions and measures that would force white workers to strip alongside African workers and don similar uniforms.⁷⁹ In 1883, strikers were able to shut down production in all four mines for a period of about a week: white workers began the strike and were joined by the majority of African laborers. Ironically, the reason that mineowners were quick to resolve the strike was far less about white worker grievances or union strength than about African mobility: Frederick Stow, one of the directors of De Beers, commented, “The employers of labour were of the opinion that if work once stopped, all the natives would leave for the kraals.”⁸⁰ The strike of 1884 ended in bloodshed, with both European and African strikers being shot by company

⁷⁶ Turrell, 127-30; Worger, 162.

⁷⁷ Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette M. Burton, eds., *Moving Subjects : Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 5-6,8, 16-18, 151.

⁷⁸ This was a step above what *The Diamond Fields* (Kimberley) advocated: a return to lynching. See February 27 1875, 3.

⁷⁹ Worger, 181. Cecil Rhodes to John Merriman, October 25 1883, Mss Afr 115, 43, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House (BLCAS), Oxford.

⁸⁰ Turrell, 137.

"police" with impunity, a violent confrontation that empowered the companies to push for stricter measures.⁸¹

The depression on the Fields in the early 1880s, combined with some heavy politicking and hardball tactics employed by major players, compelled many mid-range companies to sell their holdings to the large diamond mining companies that would jostle for supremacy in the mid 1880s: the De Beers Mining Company, the Standard, the Kimberley Central, and the Compagnie Française (companies that would later merge into De Beers Consolidated). Each of these instituted two massive, interrelated changes on the Fields that would profoundly affect the diamond business: they mandated closed compounds for African mineworkers and shifted operations to underground mining (versus the open-pit mining of the 1870s and early '80s).⁸² Both developments were designed to improve yield, the first by ensuring a regular, disciplined workforce that had no opportunity for theft or desertion; and the second, to go deeper into the deposits, the logic being that deeper operations produced more diamonds.⁸³ All was done to alleviate what most deemed the unacceptably high cost of production. As Arnold White of the *Pall Mall Gazette* quipped in an 1885 article asking the question, "Shall we Emigrate to South Africa?": "Diamonds cost nearly as much to produce as they can be sold for in Hatton-garden or Amsterdam."⁸⁴ Thus, it was thought, closed compound mining was the answer; as one Bultfontein operation reasoned, "The erection of three compounds was recommended, in order to prevent theft of diamonds by natives, it being calculated that the compounds would pay themselves in two years in robberies prevented."⁸⁵

⁸¹ Worger, 142. Six whites were killed, six were injured. For a discussion of "white worker consciousness," see Worger, 148-87.

⁸² Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa, Vol. 1*, 255-61. See "The Diamond Fields of Kimberley," *The Belfast Newsletter*, February 27 1890, 3.

⁸³ Turrell, 146-7. *Ibid.*, 246-55.

⁸⁴ Arnold White, "Shall we Emigrate to South Africa?" *Pall Mall Gazette*, November 4 1885.

⁸⁵ "Gordon Diamond Company Ltd.," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, January 1 1890, 12.

The effects of these developments were extreme. Underground operations exponentially increased production levels but with horrific costs: diamond mining in Kimberley vied with goldmining on the Rand as the world's most lethal mining industry – the death rates were at least double those for coal miners in Britain, for example.⁸⁶ Yet the number of workers who died in the mines was eclipsed by the numbers who died in the compounds from contagious diseases like small pox and pneumonia or from exposure.⁸⁷ Not only did the compounds serve to regulate the mobility – indeed, all aspects of the body -- of African workers contracted to the mines, but their jurisdiction would extend throughout Kimberley and the roadways that Africans used to migrate from job to job. The use of convict labor to supplement the pool, an innovation that could be easily implemented with closed compounds in place, evaporated any leverage that African migrant laborers had over companies, and the rigid prosecution of pass law and vagrancy violations in the area ensured that Africans who traveled to Kimberley would likely find themselves in the mines through contract or via prison sentence.⁸⁸

When the compounds were first introduced in 1885, African laborers already contracted to the Compagnie Francaise or Kimberley Central, struck in protest. The strike leaders were quickly dismissed and companies circumvented their independent labor contracts by negotiating with chiefs in Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Transvaal for group labor contracts or recruiting migrant labor from Natal and Mozambique. The companies began arranging migrations, ensuring that Africans were shepherded, both literally and figuratively, throughout the process.

The De Beers plan was drawn up in 1882:

One of the present drawbacks on the Fields has been and is at the present time, the native labor question. By adopting the barracks system all competition would be

⁸⁶ Turrell, 158-65. For Williams take on the matter see Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa, Vol. 1*, 307-46.

⁸⁷ Worger, 153.

⁸⁸ A somewhat fatalistic sentiment expressed in "Colonial Convict Life," *The Glasgow Herald*, January 9 1897.

obviated by entering into a contract with the Kaffir Chiefs for a constant supply of boys for the Company only; the company to establish depots along the road and pay for all food or requirements the boys needed (the boys holding the Company's pass) to and from the Fields. The contract might be so much per hundred, or an handsome present – a petty chief might reside on the Fields to represent the boys of his tribe.⁸⁹

The compounds themselves were modeled off of the De Beers convict station, first used between November 1884 and May 1885 for about 200 convicts that the company had "rented" from the Cape government. This initial experiment with convict labor was successful and the company continued to use convict labor until 1932.⁹⁰

The rise of the compound system limited Kimberley's capacity as a "contact zone" for the dissemination of goods and services: Africans could spend their wages within the compounds or in Company-approved stores. This limited the type, variety, and quality of goods on offer to them and disrupted many shopkeepers' livelihoods outside of the compounds. The guns and alcohol trade became a perpetual point of contention between those who supported company interests and local shopkeepers and suppliers who wanted to sell to the most significant consumer group in Kimberley.⁹¹

Thus, the amalgamation of the production segment of the diamond commodity chain was effected through the collision of a number of transnational trends and influences and was not simply a local or contained phenomenon. Through the discourse of IDB, mineowners were able to influence the government to have laws passed that limited the mobility of African migrant laborers and in so doing stabilize diamond mining, British authority, and white supremacy in Kimberley. IDB discourse, as Chapter 5 explores, not only gained purchased in South Africa but

⁸⁹ As in Turrell, 150.

⁹⁰ Turrell, 155. For Williams discussion of the compounds see Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa*, Vol. 2, 47-89.

⁹¹ George Chetwynd Griffith afterwards Griffith Jones, *Knives of Diamonds, Being Tales of Mine and Veld, Etc* (London: C. A. Pearson, 1899), 23.

became a fascination of metropolitan readers in the 1880s and '90s – in ways promoting the monopolization of diamond mining and the institution of evermore stringent closed compound mining regulations.

Intermediary Market Amalgamation

As the number of mineowners and diamond companies dwindled in the 1880s, so too did opportunities for intermediary selling in Kimberley and Cape Town. The major dealers continued to operate by forming or maintaining relationships with the large companies or by establishing themselves as direct representatives of major European jewelry houses. They also participated in Cape politics, effecting the passing of laws that demanded all dealers be registered, pay registration fees, adhere to an onerous system of paperwork for buying and selling, and generally put restrictions on who could deal in diamonds. Not only did these regulations exclude Africans from participating in the intermediary market, but they encumbered newcomers to Kimberley who were looking to break into the trade but had very little start-up resources. Thus, with the streamlining of diamond production, the group that found it the most difficult to eke out a living in Kimberley was undoubtedly the *kopje-wallopers*.

The *wallopers* had always toggled between hiring themselves out as mine labor and dealing in rough stones; in the 1880s, the opportunity for them to participate in either vocation was rapidly disappearing.⁹² While the major dealers set up restrictions that kept them out of legal diamond trading, one of the effects of the racialized closed compound system was to essentially reserve low-level mining work for non-white labor. Labor associations that promised collective action for white mine workers often excluded *wallopers* on the basis of race, ethnicity, and religion: as a group the *wallopers* were characterized as Jewish outsiders – Yiddish speakers directly or originally from Eastern Europe, mainly Lithuania. The leadership of most unions

⁹² Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa*, Vol. 1, 265.

tended to blame these "foreigners," many of them former British tin and coal miners, for entering the mining industry in Britain and causing an oversupply of labor there.⁹³ Thus, they were not about to embrace *wallopers* in their organizations in Africa. Insight into the resentment some Midlanders were beginning to harbor for Jewish immigrant labor in the 80s and 90s is gained from a letter sent by Cornish concerned citizen Sarah Hensman to Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of the Colonies, in 1903. After reading "daily paragraphs in the newspapers" about the need for labor in South Africa following the South African Wars as well as proposals to import Chinese and Indian contract workers for the mines, Hensman reasoned,

Could the stream of emigrants, so far as the Jewish element in it is concerned, be encouraged and diverted to South Africa? Jewish immigrants are already working in the mines in this country, and by their thrifty methods are in some degree ousting our miners... Perhaps the leaders of the Jewish community in this country would be willing to undertake the selection of suitable emigrants for South Africa. They should prove more desirable for the purpose than the coloured and heathen laborers whose introduction has been proposed.⁹⁴

With the rise of closed compounds and the number of racialized worker concessions unions obtained to protect the status of white overseers, engineers, and managers, Hensman did not realize that the possibility of Jewish immigrant or contract labor in the mines had already been ruled out decades before. As early as December 1873, a correspondent for the London publication the *Jewish Chronicle* advised readers, "The greater part of the new comers are too late and are entirely out of the running for the race for wealth. Many at the Diamond Fields are seeking means to return to England... My advice to those about to emigrate to the Cape is – *Don't*."⁹⁵ In the same vein, a letter to the editor from a Marcus Hayman argued, "Diamond buying and selling on the Fields is a thing of the past. At all events it is frightfully overdone;

⁹³ *The Diamond News*, August 31 1875, 3.

⁹⁴ Joseph Chamberlain Papers, April 23 1903, JC 29/6/10/161, Sarah Hensman, University of Birmingham Archives, Birmingham.

⁹⁵ "The Jews of South Africa," *Jewish Chronicle*, December 19 1873, 635. Emphasis is the reporter's.

you can hardly clear your expenses at it...Cape Town swarms with respectable Jewish young fellows who are unable to get employment, and who have not the means where with to return to their parents."⁹⁶

Joseph Shermann argues that Jewish, Yiddish-speaking immigrants to South Africa after the early 1870s who had expected to make a living as *kopje-wallopers* or miners, comprised a unique grouping within the South African racial hierarchy: a category of people who were deemed too white to be hired as unskilled labor in the mines and yet not white enough to be allowed into labor organizations that excluded non-whites.⁹⁷ Here was not a case of simple anti-Semitism because in the racial ideology of the area there were "good Jews" who had taken up mainstream positions of political, financial, and social power and integrated into dominant society through learning English, losing non-English accents, by marriage, some by conversion, and, in short, losing all the trappings of the "cosmopolitan" (read: unpatriotic) identity particularly associated with Jewishness at the time. Thus, major local Jewish diamond dealers like Mosenthal, mineowners like Barnato, and financiers like the Rothschilds, were viewed as respectable, progressive forces in South Africa and deserving of full enfranchisement in the region.⁹⁸ Many who comprised the increasingly defunct group of *kopje-wallopers*, however, were viewed in contrast as drags on society, needless clutter in an already problematic population of "poor whites," essentially foreign and untrustworthy. In order to perform their own respectability and whiteness, many South African Jews chose to openly discriminate against

⁹⁶ Marcus Hayman, "The South African Diamond Fields: letter to the editor," *Jewish Chronicle*, December 26 1873, 647. See also "The Cape of Good Hope," *Jewish Chronicle*, July 9 1875, 238: "I would take this opportunity too to warn some of our poorer classes against coming to this colony – except handicraftsmen. We have had of late an influx, *en masse* of jewelry hawkers, or rather of would-be jewelry hawkers. They no doubt left home with the idea of going to a thickly populated country, but on their arrival they found that they out-number the jewelry-buying population of the colony, and their position, I can assure you, is most unsatisfactory."

⁹⁷ Joseph Sherman, "Serving the Natives: Whiteness as the Price of Hospitality in South African Yiddish Literature," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no. 3 (2000).

⁹⁸ Joseph Mosenthal had a major public presence in the Cape Colony. See "South Africa," *Jewish Chronicle*, November 26 1875, 564.

this class of immigrants.⁹⁹ One colonial correspondent for the *Jewish Chronicle* reasoned that the influx of poor Jews into southern Africa via Britain hurt the entire community and subtly blamed the newcomers for IDB, directing an anti-Semitic discourse onto the "bad Jews":

Now I am aware that the Emigration Society aims not so much at getting rid of the poorer classes of London, as at really benefiting them, to improve their position, and to translate them from a state of wretchedness to, comparatively speaking, happiness; but is their aim attained by sending these people to a country where there is no likelihood for them to get a living? Moreover, there is a very wise saying, "wash you dirty linen at home" and if that is at all attended to, there ought not to be sent out here a class of individuals who, I am sorry to say, are by no means credible to the name of Jew. In England they are not so conspicuous, they are lost in the multitude, but here it is different. It is like living in a small village where everyone knows what his neighbour cooks for dinner; and if a discreditable act is committed by any of them (and, goodness knows, a great many of them are that class who believe that as long as they fill their stomachs only with what they call meat, they owe no other duty to God or to man) it reflects on the whole community. I think it necessary to be plainspoken, and I say if only *ad honores* keep such at home, at all events there is no chance for them here – in legitimate channels of business.¹⁰⁰

The issue of "poor white" population was widely understood as a major factor in IDB as this excerpt from the *Pall Mall Gazette* explained to readers with a tangential interest in the trade, "In the early days of the diggings, diamond-stealing was a very common offence, and the natives were encouraged to steal by the low-down white blackguards, who traded in the stones, and who are still to be met with in the colony."¹⁰¹ The *Diamond Fields* newspaper of Kimberley put an even finer point on it: "If there be no white buyers there would be no native thieves."¹⁰² The "early days" of freedom and intrigue were contrasted with the "nowadays" of 1897, a time of

⁹⁹ This kind of bifurcation of the Jewish community, and anti-Semitic discourse, into the respectable and disrespectable in ways that were about class but also culture in the late nineteenth century, was certainly not unique to the South African context. For example, a correspondent for the *Jewish Chronicle* argued that actually South Africa was more egalitarian in the Jewish community: "The London fashion of 'crowding out' those in shabby attire on New Year and Day of Atonement from the synagogue is unknown here." See "Cape of Good Hope," *Jewish Chronicle*, July 9 1875, 238.

¹⁰⁰ "News from the Cape," *Jewish Chronicle*, November 10 1875, 508. For discussion of the "Houndsditch Jew" see Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa, Vol. 1*, 261. See also Sherman, "Serving the Natives: Whiteness as the Price of Hospitality in South African Yiddish Literature."

¹⁰¹ "The Botany Bay of the Cape," *Pall Mall Gazette*, June 9 1897.

¹⁰² *The Diamond Fields*, February 27 1875, 3.

control, when the mines "are surrounded by walls, and guarded by armed men, and no one can get out except at the gates, where this is a most searching examination."¹⁰³

In the 1880s and '90s, Jewish immigrants who likely would have become *kopje-wallopers* in the early 1870s found themselves without employment options and turned to Jewish-owned businesses for support. Excluded from selling to workers within the compounds, many of these businesses were so-called "Kaffir eating houses," restaurants catering to African migrant workers who were entering or exiting their compound contracts. The restaurant owners took advantage of the situation by offering new immigrants room and board in exchange for working in the eating house – usually for very little or no pay, under grueling work conditions, and for an indefinite length of time. The wait-staff were referred to as *kaffireatniks*, a derogatory term used to describe people of Eastern European extraction who had white skin but served food to Africans, calling into question their whiteness not only because of their subservient role to non-whites but also because of their lack of economic standing in the community.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, African diamond workers made far more in wages than the *kaffireatniks* would ever earn and had the opportunity to leave Kimberley for better options. In contrast, most *kaffireatniks* were bound to their "masters," some of whom refused to allow them to leave the restaurant, marry, or even learn English.

¹⁰³ "The Botany Bay of the Cape," *Pall Mall Gazette*, June 9 1887. See also "The Diamond Fields of Kimberley," *The Belfast Newsletter*, February 27 1890, 3.

¹⁰⁴ Sherman, "Serving the Natives: Whiteness as the Price of Hospitality in South African Yiddish Literature." The question of Jewishness and racial hierarchy in southern Africa was extremely complicated. One Jewish man in Port Elizabeth voiced his displeasure in the *Jewish Chronicle* at being taunted by Africans, blaming missionaries for teaching Africans to be anti-Semitic: "You cannot conceive the amount of mischief missionary work produces among the children of Ham. They are brought from a state of heathenism, it is true, to a sort of religion; but will you believe it when I tell you that it is admitted by *every one* except by the missionaries themselves, that it were far better to leave them alone than to interfere and bring them to the fold of the 'lamb,' for then they became insolent, lazy and dishonest to the highest degree, or rather to the lowest depth? It is not at all uncommon for a black man now to sing out after a Jew, that gracious old triplet relating to a bit of pork and a fork, &c." "Our Port Elizabeth Letter," *Jewish Chronicle*, October 16 1874, 470. Hyman Henry Salomon, a Jew, was mayor of Port Elizabeth between 1873 and 1875. "South Africa," *Jewish Chronicle*, February 12 1875, 740.

As Shermann has found, Yiddish-speaking immigrants to Kimberley who found themselves as *kaffireatniks* learned a number of indigenous African languages before English, and many Africans learned Yiddish as well. These connections, the product of another facet of the diamond trade as contact zone, allowed some to participate in IDB; indeed, “Kaffir eating houses,” were notorious dens of illicit trading, and *kaffireatniks* were routinely accused of facilitating the trade, either for their own benefit or on behalf of the restaurant owner.¹⁰⁵ Certainly anyone who began their time in Kimberley serving food to Africans and eventually established themselves as respectable members of the community was suspected of IDB.¹⁰⁶ The degree to which the eating houses were major nodes along the illicit chain of diamond supply to Europe versus places that were disparaged in anti-IDB discourse through general late nineteenth century anti-Semitism is difficult to discern.

While low-level diamond traders found themselves being squeezed out of the legal market and major traders made strides to ingratiate themselves to either mining companies in Kimberley or jewelry houses in Europe, as early as 1886, the architects of the De Beers Consolidated Mines Limited amalgamation were envisioning a rough market combine. The

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. The association of IDB with Jews in general was one made early and often on the Diamond Fields, and in very public ways. The first instance publicized beyond the Fields occurred in 1873 when the Governor of the Cape Colony, Henry Barkly, characterized IDB as a Jewish-instigated phenomenon to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Kimberley. Specifically, he described a series of lynching incidents as resulting from the action of one "Jew Dealer" (who was fatally injured). The *Jewish Chronicle*, gaining word of the despatch, took up the case, arguing that "some sympathy should have been aroused in Sir Henry's mind for the 'Jew Dealer,' seeing that he was the victim of a cruel and savage assault perpetrated by a furious mob" and that Barkly neglected to mention "many persons...proved to be implicated in questionable transactions which led to the disturbances – persons who we presume were Christians..." Barkly's words caused quite a controversy in London and the Cape Colony at the time; the *Jewish Chronicle* characterized it as "Barkly's attack on the Jewish race" and "an attempt to vilify a class that has proved itself to be loyal and moral." See "The Governor of the Cape Colony and the Jews," *The Jewish Chronicle*, August 8 1873, 312 and August 15 1873, 336. The bulk of the *Jewish Chronicle's* coverage of South Africa in that year revolved around the question of whether South Africa was an hospitable place for Jews or not. See also *Jewish Chronicle*, October 8 1875, 452. Smalberger, "The Role of the Diamond-Mining Industry in the Development of the Pass-Law System in South Africa," 420. For a defense of Barkly see *The Diamond News* (Kimberley), September 11 1872, 2-3. Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947*, 60-1.

¹⁰⁶ The *Jewish Chronicle* remarked on a Port Elizabeth newspaper that reported the rise in status of a "dirty Polish Jew" as being suspect. "Our Port Elizabeth Letter," *Jewish Chronicle*, October 16 1874, 470. See also "Illicit Diamond-Buying in South Africa," *The Graphic*, October 13 1883, 361.

official Diamond Syndicate was brought into being in 1889, comprised of a series of diamond merchants who had an exclusive contract to buy roughs from DBCM. Any buyers outside of the combine had to buy from the Syndicate, under their conditions. This meant that not only could the Syndicate artificially inflate the price of rough diamonds, but, in theory, it could sell the stones to whom and however it liked.¹⁰⁷ For example, if a merchant wanted to buy three high-quality five-carat stones, the Syndicate could offer the stones in three parcels containing dozens of diamonds of ranging size and quality. To get the three he came for, the merchant would have to over-purchase and find ways to dispose of the unwanted stones. It was a system that favored bulk shipments and bulk buyers; as the number of stones moving from Africa to Europe increased, the variety of channels of distribution decreased. Bulk buyers, in turn, demanded concessions for patronage. To be sure, the practice of selling stones in lots or burses (so as to ensure a market for lesser-quality diamonds) dated back to at least the eighteenth century trade with India, but the scale of the Syndicate's monopoly over the trade was unprecedented. For example, while the Syndicate could standardize parcels so buyers knew more or less what they would be getting, the measures of standardization were set by the Syndicate; buyers who criticized the system would find themselves removed from the "Buyer's List" that was instituted in 1893. As one Birmingham newspaper characterized the "difficulties and perplexities that harass a diamond buyer":

The diamond merchants abroad do not grade their goods, but when a purchase comes along a parcel comprising good, bad, and indifferent stones is shown to him and he usually has to bid for the whole parcel. The grading, pairing, and selecting is done for the American market after the stones have reached our shores. By this means a purchaser is compelled to buy many goods that he would not were he allowed the privilege of selection.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Williams, *The Diamond Mines of South Africa*, Vol. 2, 151-67.

¹⁰⁸ "The Diamond Trade," *Daily Birmingham Post*, August 15 1893, 3.

Even within the buyer's list, there were allegations of unfairness: some buyers were afforded early opportunities to buy exceptional stones, others were only offered poor-quality stones, some were offered discounts, and so on.

Finally, and crucially, the Syndicate, affiliated as it was with DBCM, would control supply levels.¹⁰⁹ The benefits of this for the Syndicate were two-fold, as Wernher, Beit & Co (the successors of Jules Porges' empire) saw it: the combine could ensure that a regular supply was on offer in London every month, as opposed to rushes and droughts that encouraged speculative practices among buyers. Secondly, they could limit supply by having De Beers limit production by shutting down mines (as they did with Bultfontein and Dutoitspan in the 1890s), securing unknown amounts in vaults in Kimberley, or leaving piles of diamondiferous soil ("blue ground") unprocessed.¹¹⁰ The control of supply would compel buyers to accept artificially high prices and any other conditions the combine wished to impose on the trade.

In practice, however, it took decades for this hegemonic vision to be realized: Colin Newbury argues that it was not until at least 1901 that the Syndicate really began to wield the power it imagined in 1889. One of the major complications of the early combine was the fact that it answered to two boards, the Kimberley Diamond Committee and the London-based Board. Of course, some members of the Kimberley Committee as well as the London Syndicate were also board members of the DBCM (not to mention politicians in South Africa), but this caused as many conflicts of interest as it alleviated. The Kimberley Committee was loathe to allow the rough-selling segment of the trade to fully migrate to London, in part because of the interests of diamond merchants in Kimberley but also because the leaders of De Beers (such as Cecil Rhodes) liked to use the Kimberley Board to sell to favorites in South Africa, thus

¹⁰⁹ William Ford, "On Diamonds," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, December 15 1887, 375. See also, "Too Many Diamonds," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Sept 1 1888, 272.

¹¹⁰ Newbury, "The Origins and Function of the London Diamond Syndicate, 1889-1914": 11.

cultivating local political relationships. When buyers in South Africa found out that the rough price they had paid was actually higher than the discounted bulk buying London-based dealers enjoyed, there was a scandal.¹¹¹ The communication between Kimberley, London, and De Beers was inefficient and each held back information and stones from the other throughout the 1890s, exacerbating a three-tiered system of rough-stone selling. Rhodes had a Company stash of stones kept secret from the Syndicate and planned to sell them to raise £1 million for his schemes “in the North” in 1891. Unfortunately for him, he could not sell the diamonds without turning to a major diamond dealer, and the ones he was familiar with were members of the Syndicate. Julius Wernher and a few other Syndicate directors grudgingly agreed to sell the “reserve,” but the episode only served to underline the *ad hoc* nature of Diamond Syndicate selling in the 1890s.¹¹² What had been a relatively open and negotiable market in the early 1870s became a series of private deals with a handful of major players in the 1890s, not unlike the “buyers contracts” that prevailed under the system of Luso-Brazilian production. While DBCM and the Kimberley Committee urged high profits, borrowing, and expanding their enterprises in southern Africa, the London Board advocated moderation, regular dividends, and, if anything, limiting the Company’s power in South Africa. The two points of view were diametrically opposed.¹¹³

Differing interests aside, what severely hampered the Syndicate’s ability to control the rough trade was not internal to the Company: it was that demand for quality product continued to

¹¹¹ Ibid.: 10. This was not the first time discrepancies in the London and Kimberley markets appears. The *Pall Mall* quipped in 1887, “Importing coals from Belgium into London is not half so startling as the importation of diamonds into Kimberley. This is brought about, not by the lack of the output of the Kimberley mines, but by the market there being more buoyant than in London.” See “Sending Diamonds to Kimberley,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, February 26 1887.

¹¹² Rhodes did not try another stunt like this again. Ibid., 10-26. See also FS Philipson Stow, Life Governor of DBMC, to Cecil Rhodes, Sept 17 1890, De Beers Consolidated Mines, Mss Afr. s. 228 C7A, 4-29, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House (BLCAS), Oxford.

¹¹³ This opposition not only played out in the Diamond Syndicate but in the bifurcated London and Kimberley Boards of the De Beers Company, as well. See Newbury, *The Diamond Ring: Business, Politics, and Precious Stones in South Africa, 1867-1947*. See also Er Tymms, Secretary of De Beers London to WH Craven, Secretary of Kimberley Board, Private, September 4 1890, De Beers Consolidated Mines, Mss Afr. s. 228 C7A, 4, (BLCAS).

drop in the early 1890s, perhaps because the Syndicate was attempting to set the price for roughs too high but also as a continuation of the depression that began in 1873. It was only in 1894, when the American market looked like it was recovering, that the Syndicate's price-fixing plan could be put into effect with any gain.¹¹⁴

Manufacturing Segments

The depression alongside amalgamation of the production and rough distribution segments of the trade forced a restructuring of the manufacturing segments – cutting and polishing, and jewelry manufacture. The "rush" in diamond cutting in Amsterdam was over by 1875; diamond work became scarce. Similar to mineowners in South Africa who, in the face of the unforgivingly low price of diamonds in Europe, sought to turn a profit by minimizing the cost of hired labor, the diamond cutting factory owners lowered the (already low) price they would pay for piece-work, raised the rent for factory space, lowered the wages of direct employees, and laid off whomever they could. The coming of the Diamond Syndicate in 1889 did nothing to alleviate this depression. Cutters argued that the Syndicate's stinginess with supply unnecessarily limited the amount of work available for cutters and asked that if the Syndicate's role was to hold back stones, they find a way to hoard cut diamonds instead of roughs or blue ground.¹¹⁵ Another complaint was that the artificially high price the Syndicate attempted to set for roughs only limited the purchasing power of Amsterdam firms, precluding a decent profit margin for the manufacturers' segment of the chain.¹¹⁶

While several members of the Syndicate had business and family relations with the Amsterdam firms, by and large the Dutch could not achieve any serious leverage over the rough

¹¹⁴ _____, "The Origins and Function of the London Diamond Syndicate, 1889-1914 " : 16.

¹¹⁵ "The Labour Agitation: Brussels, May 2," *Times*, May 3 1890, 9.

¹¹⁶ Rudolf Hinrichsen (London Director) to Cecil Rhodes, De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd, 1890-96, July 11 1890, MSS Afr. s. 228 C7A, 1, Rhodes Papers, BLCAS.

stone combine to press their concerns. In part, this was due to competition: in the 1880s, Belgian firms had made great strides in cornering the cutting market for stones for "cheap ware." In 1889, and several occasions thereafter, Antwerp cutters petitioned the Syndicate to make a lucrative deal giving the Belgians exclusive rights to cut DBMC stones; the Syndicate refused, perhaps out of respect for its ties with Amsterdam but also because this "favor" neutralized any claims the Dutch had about the Syndicate being unnecessarily cruel to them. The Amsterdam firms would have to deal with whatever controls the Syndicate imposed on the trade, if only to keep their share of the middling to high quality stone market.

In Amsterdam, as the market declined and factory owners took measures to lower the cost of cutting, cutters found they could barely get by. The British consul in Amsterdam reported in 1890,

the resolution of a well-known company to reduce the production from the Kimberley diamond mines from four millions to two millions of carats per annum at once sent up the market price of raw diamonds in Holland 100 per cent. ... [regarding] the Dutch working lapidaries it would appear that their condition has not much improved since Eugène Sue in his 'Mysteries of Paris,' contrasted their abject poverty with the luxurious suggestions of their trade... For several months at the close of last year a great number of these men with their families were reduced, by the falling off in the demand for their labour, to absolute destitution.¹¹⁷

In response, cutters amalgamated their interests by unionizing. The Amsterdam union was known as the Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerker Bond (ANDB). A series of strikes in the late 1880s and 1890s in Amsterdam, Antwerp and even France brought their plight to the attention of readers on an international scale. In Amsterdam, the strikes were fairly successful, winning for some 8000 or 9000 workers higher wages and other concessions in terms of a shorter

¹¹⁷ *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Dec 15 1890, 388.

work week and shorter hours.¹¹⁸ The success of Dutch workers forced the cutting firms to raise their prices, thus raising the price of the cut stone for the manufacturing jeweler.

In turn, the manufacturing jewelers complained about the stoppages in supply and price hikes caused by the striking cutters. As it was, both manufacturing and retail jewelers made less from diamond jewelry than other types because late Victorian customers had specific demands of their diamond jewelry. Firstly, discourse about diamond beauty at that time was that the attractiveness of a piece containing diamonds rested with the rocks themselves and had little to do with the jeweler's craft. From a manufacturing point of view, there was nothing to be gained from investing time and precious metal in pieces that would go unappreciated. The fashion was for "light" diamond jewelry containing little silver or gold: in the International Exhibition of 1889 in Paris, for example, French jewelers embraced this trend to such a degree that British commentators could not tell how the rocks were being held in place and wondered if many pieces could be worn without losing half the stones. Secondly, customers were extremely well-informed about the price of diamonds: De Beers' Company statistics and rough and cut prices were published in daily Birmingham and London newspapers, for example.¹¹⁹ Already looking for deals, they were unwilling to pay for jewelry that cost significantly more than the stones themselves. Therefore, diamond jewelry did not inhere much profit for the manufacturing or retail jeweler because the markup diamonds already included once they reached Birmingham was considerable. As *Jeweller and Metalworker* put it in 1887:

The cheapness of diamonds has, no doubt, been the means of making diamond ornaments so much in request of late; but I fail to see that the manufacturer has been benefited to any very considerable extent by the low rate of the diamond

¹¹⁸ "The Labour Agitation: Brussels, May 2," *Times*, May 3 1890, 9. "French Notes," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Oct 1 1888, 291. Nico van der Zwet Slotenmaker, *Amsterdam : City of Diamonds (1586-1986)* (Amsterdam: Diamond Foundation, 1986), 54-5. There were a number of worker organizations that were implemented during the "Cape Time" as well. See "Diamond Workers' Society," *Jewish Chronicle*, March 14 1873, 731.

¹¹⁹ "Sending Diamonds to Kimberley," *Pall Mall Gazette*, February 26 1887.

market. The demand for diamond jewellery has found increased occupation for the setter, but it has been at expense of the gold worker. A fashion calls for a display of stones, without an equal display of gold cannot be so profitable to the manufacturer as it would be were the honour equally divided between gold and stones. A rise in the diamond market should be indicative of a return to a style of work which, while not forgetting the gem setter, will allow of a fuller scope for the goldsmith's art; in short, if the public can't have their value in stones they will take it in gold, which, being fashioned on the manufacturer's own premises, can certainly be sold to greater advantage to himself than if he had to purchase it as a finished article.¹²⁰

Though diamond jewelry formed the "backbone of the trade," for Birmingham's Jewelry Quarter, this was a bittersweet circumstance.

In 1887, as the production, distribution, and cutting segments of the commodity chain were undergoing many kinds of amalgamation, so too did the manufacturing segment in Birmingham. Specifically, the Birmingham Jewellers' and Silversmiths' Association was formed. It claimed to speak for the estimated 15 000 manufacturing jewelers who were situated in the city's western division, the Jewelry Quarter. As the Association saw it, the Quarter was the behemoth of Birmingham's economy, directly supporting around 50 000 people or 10% of the city's population, employing more hands than any other single industry and trading in exorbitant amounts of precious material. About fifty tons of gold and silver moved through the Quarter every year, and the number of precious stones was hinted at by the fact that the jewelry district's Post Office circulated three times the amount of registered letters and parcels than any other town in the United Kingdom, save London. All in all, the Association estimated that the Quarter annually worked up material of a total value exceeding £2.25 million, a figure that is around £180 million today.¹²¹

¹²⁰ *Jeweller and Metalworker*, December 1 1887, 368.

¹²¹ Birmingham's population in 1891 census was 478,113. "The Bankruptcy Bill of 1890," Minutes of the Jewelers and Silversmiths Association, MS1646/1, 113-14, Birmingham City Archives.

The formation of an Association can be seen as both a move to create a powerful special interest group to lobby government on local as well as national-imperial levels and as a way of internally regulating the trade; or, as the Association worded it, “to protect and foster the interests of the Trade.”¹²² In claiming to speak for all associated with the industry, the Association effectively eclipsed the voices of non-members: traders who were new to Birmingham (many of them Eastern European Jewish immigrants), who could not afford the annual membership fee (a guinea in 1890), who had been shunned by the Association for bad business practices or other reasons, and traders who specialized in “cheap ware” which the Association routinely decried as embarrassing and detrimental to the trade.

In terms of the diamond industry, the Association was significant in two ways. The first was that it harbored "ambitions rising somewhat beyond those of an ordinary trade protection society."¹²³ It sought to intervene in tastemaking and police the aesthetic production of the trade. While the inaugural meeting was called “to discuss the widespread depression and to see what steps, if any, can be taken to effect an improvement" one of the key technologies of improving the trade, and the jewelers' position within it, was to attack the "lack of Fashion” going on in Britain in general and bring about "a revival in the fashion of wearing jewellery – and especially of the heavier descriptions.”¹²⁴ Of course, heavier jewelry was not diamond jewelry. The first strategy the jewelers came up with to produce a taste for heavy jewelry was to approach the Princess of Wales, likely the biggest fashion celebrity of the day, and see if she would wear their selections. After months of working through the Home Secretary, Lord Salisbury, the

¹²² "The Bankruptcy Bill of 1890," Minutes of the Jewelers and Silversmiths Association, MS1646/1, 113-14, BCA; "Rules of the Jewellers and Silversmiths Association," November 25 1889, MS 1646/1, 3, BCA.

¹²³ "The Paris Exhibition," *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 22 1889, 6.

¹²⁴ Minutes of the Jeweller's Association, July 30 1887, MS1646/1, 93, Birmingham City Archives; "Rules of the Jewellers and Silversmiths Association," November 25 1889, MS 1646/1, 3; "The Princess of Wales and the Local Jewellery Trade," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 1 1887, 163.

Association was told that though the Princess would enjoy seeing the jewelry, she could not enter into any sort of endorsement deal and insisted on paying for pieces she might want. The jewelry was sent; the Princess purchased some; and she wore it in public on more than one occasion -- keeping up her end of the unofficial bargain, though to no sensational effect.¹²⁵ Another Association strategy, and this one having more impact over the longer term, was to sponsor a technical school for training in the craft of jewelry-making. With the technical school, the Association hoped to control what was on offer to the customer (another way of influencing fashion, to be sure), and create a credentialing system for jewelry-making, thus shutting out craftspeople of "low taste" and "questionable standards."¹²⁶ In this way, the Birmingham Jeweler's Association sought to subtly turn British buying away from diamonds and towards jewelry that inhered a higher profit margin. This was the jewelry that was made by the more established members of the Associations in contrast to the population of immigrant newcomers who, argued the Association, were flooding the market with tasteless cheapware.¹²⁷

Yet, though the Association wanted to move away from any reliance on diamonds, what is perhaps most significant about the organization in terms of the diamond industry is how the Association came to condone the De Beers and Syndicate monopolies – despite the fact that they would *not* seem to be in the manufacturers' best interest, just as they were not for diamond cutters. For example, in the pages of the London-based manufacturing publication *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith* there is a palpable fear and anxiety about the developing "corner in diamonds" in the 1880s and early '90s. One commentator for the journal put it plainly, "The

¹²⁵ "Future of the Jewellery Trade," *Birmingham Daily Post*, August 4 1887, 5.

¹²⁶ October 30 1889, Minutes of the Jewelers and Silversmith's Association, MS 1646/1, 105; "School of Art Committee," 161; "Report of the School of the Sub-Committee for the year 1889 to February 26 1890," 171-2; June 30 1890, 192.

¹²⁷ For grumbling about cheapware, see "The Jewellery Trade in 1896," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, January 1 1897, 17.

trade are feeling sorely the tyranny of this monopoly."¹²⁸ While that anxiety was mimicked in early coverage of the Syndicate in *Jeweller and Metalworker* – the Birmingham-based mouthpiece of the Association – it became conspicuously absent after about 1895.¹²⁹ After that, commentators were more apt to conclude that the monopolies were the only thing conserving the value of the diamond chain from obliteration, such as in this 1896 article:

Diamonds maintain their position, simply through the great Combine. This was the result of the far-seeing policy of Mr. Cecil Rhodes, which may be a little further explained, as it has lessons even for the Birmingham jewellery trade.... The company, ...very wisely restrict the output in order to maintain the price. By this they keep up the rate of wages; they are able to remunerate well their managers and agents, as well as pay good dividends to their shareholders. Beyond this they are keeping up the value of diamonds by whomsoever held, in ever part of the world.¹³⁰

The Association's stance on the Syndicate can best be understood in the context of its relationship with Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies between 1895 and 1903, mayor of Birmingham between 1873 and 1876, and MP for Birmingham West (the Jewelry Quarter) from 1876 until 1903. The politician's relationship with his constituency was a close one; in fact, it was partly at Chamberlain's urging that the jewelers formed an Association in the first place, so as to amalgamate their requests for trade legislation and the like and thus cut down on the MP's correspondence workload.¹³¹ In effect, he created the most powerful special interest lobby in Birmingham until 1914, devoted to his patronage. It was at the annual Jewellers' Association dinner that Chamberlain unveiled his major political projects from year to year, amongst thoughts on the aesthetics of Indian jewelry, and the Association kept up a keen

¹²⁸ "Markets: Diamonds," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, Mar 1 1893, 168-9.

¹²⁹ "The Corner in Diamonds," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, December 1 1889, 385. This is one of the last truly critical takes in *Jeweller and Metalworker* on the Syndicate.

¹³⁰ "The Jewellery Trade in 1896," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, January 1 1897, 17.

¹³¹ Chamberlain to AC Green, July 22 1889, Minutes of the Jeweller's Association, MS1646/1, 464, BCA.

correspondence with his office for the duration of his tenure.¹³² The *Town Crier*, a satirical newspaper in Birmingham, heralded Chamberlain, "The Greatest Jeweler of Them All!" following the Boer War, making fun of and celebrating the politician's ties to the Jewelry Quarter (See Figure 4.2).¹³³ As Chamberlain supported Rhodes and the De Beers monopoly (albeit grudgingly), so too did the Birmingham Jewellers' Association, believing that by accepting the monopoly, the Quarter would be gaining other political benefits that went beyond diamond jewelry profit margins.¹³⁴ In this way, and by amalgamating themselves after a fashion, the most powerful manufacturing jewelry segment of the diamond commodity chain in Britain came to condone the amalgamation of the production and rough distribution segments of the chain.

Conclusion

The trend towards amalgamation affected the meaning of diamonds to the consumer, as well as the retail and post-retail trades in profound ways. To own a diamond became the measure of cultural enfranchisement. As one 1885 *Times* commentator quipped, "Every

¹³² The jewelers fastidiously planned their annual dinner around Chamberlain's presence. See "Annual Dinner," January 1890, Minutes of the Jeweller's Association, MS1646/1, 159; March 17 1890, 165; December 22 1890, 231; December 24 1890, 235-6; January 27 1890, 522. See also MS1646/2, October 12 1891, 235; January 11 1892, 261; MS1646/3, 185, 308. Chamberlain's Jeweller's Association dinner speeches were widely reported: see Minutes, 565. For example, an admirer in South Africa was able to read the speech in its entirety. See DJ Irving to Chamberlain, May 26 1903, JC29/5/9/2, I Correspondence, UBA: "Like hundreds of thousands of people, I have read your Birmingham speech with great interest..."

¹³³ "The Greatest Jeweller of Them All," *The Town Crier*, January 11 1902, 9. For evidence of Chamberlain's political dealings with the Jeweller's Associations see "Rebate on Silver Goods," Minutes of the Jeweller's Association, MS1646/1, 198, July 14 1890, BCA; September 1 1890, 200; June 1 1891, 293; May 30 1891, 294. Regarding plate duties and hallmarking (a huge proclivity of the Association that, through the Association's urging, became an issue for Chamberlain) see Minutes of the Jeweller's Association, MS1646/1: April 4 1889, 435; April 10 1889, 447-50; July 29 1889, 458-64; October 11 1889, 474-5; November 11 1889, 488; March 3 1896, 160-2, BCA. Regarding bankruptcy legislation and colonial trade see MS1646/2, 243-55; MS1646/3, 56. The Association's committee made a note to canvas influential members of the Diamond Syndicate, financiers, and local members of Cape government to become members. See December 2 1895, Minutes of the Jeweller's Association, MS1646/2, 129, BCA.

¹³⁴ Chamberlain to Lord Grey, July 3 1896, JC10/6/1/4, 8-12, The Joseph Chamberlain Collection, , Correspondence with Lord Grey, University of Birmingham Archives, Birmingham. See also August 21 1896, Chamberlain to Grey, Private, JC10/6/1/6, 2: re: Transvaal and Rhodesia, "in the present state of the country, administration by a chartered Company is likely to be much more satisfactory than direct Imperial control; and further, I have declared my own opinion in favour of Mr. Rhodes' continued presence in the Country." See also Chamberlain to Cecil Rhodes, July 31 1895, JC10/6/3/2, Correspondence with Cecil Rhodes, UBA.

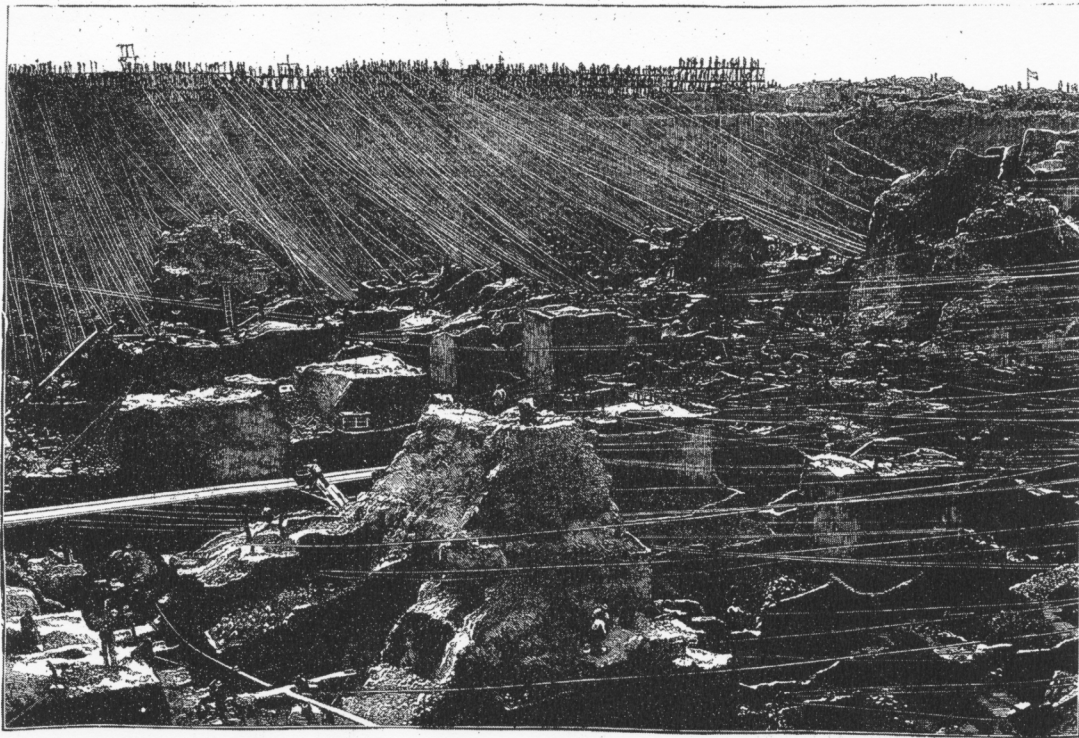
civilized lady, and a multitude of civilized men, expect to possess a few diamonds for their personal adornment"; "[diamonds] are no longer unattainable except for the very rich or the very extravagant."¹³⁵ The same article characterized the "virtual monopoly" Kimberley enjoyed on the diamond market as a "wonderful windfall."

In order to examine how diamond appreciation was bound up in larger anxieties about national-imperial stability characteristic of the late Victorian period, Chapter 5 will analyze discourse about "Illicit diamond buying." IDB was not only an obsession of South African politics but Victorian readers-consumers. In terms of the meaning of diamonds in British culture, De Beers' control of the industry became a part of the value of diamonds – literally and symbolically -- just as one of the gemstone's classic assets, its facility for exchange, decreased. The two trends were inversely constitutive. Thus, the conditions of the diamond commodity chain were intimately bound up in the meanings of diamond consumption by 1893; South African colonialism had not only a material but a culturally formative impact on the metropole. Circa 1800, diamonds were criticized for upsetting the status quo by facilitating the rise of *nabobs* in British society; the persistent association of diamonds with "oriental" politics and culture compelled many to derogate them as a contaminating, feminizing force in "British" culture, such as in the case of the Crown's appropriation of the Koh-i-Noor in 1851. While many tried to show how Brazilian diamonds bolstered British global-imperial power in the first half of the nineteenth century, particularly through the register of academic science, it was not until the late nineteenth century and the rise of De Beers that diamond wealth came to be appreciated by consumers as a tool of social control both "at home" and across the empire.

This consumption and retail aspect of the diamond commodity chain was intimately related to the trend towards amalgamation from production, to distribution, to manufacturing that

¹³⁵ *Times*, April 20 1885, 9.

I examined in this chapter. As I examine in the following chapter, the details of these amalgamations were put on display for exhibition-going consumers to enjoy, alongside their diamonds.

Figures

THE DEEP DIGGINGS

Figure 4.1: *The Graphic's* 1873 depiction of Kimberley's Deep Diggings



THE GREATEST JEWELLER OF THEM ALL.

Figure 4.2: The Birmingham *The Town Crier's* caricature and celebration of Joseph Chamberlain as a member of the Jewelry Quarter in 1902

Chapter 5: Retailing the Commodity Chain: Diamonds at International Exhibition

Chapter 4 dealt with the South Africa-centric diamond commodity chain as it went through a period of amalgamation after 1873. The monopolization of the production and rough diamond distribution segments of the commodity chain compelled further kinds of amalgamation in the manufacturing segments of the chain that had significant effects on, among other things, local economy and politics in Britain. This final chapter details how metropolitan consumers came to appreciate the ever-tightening control of the diamond market as part of the meaning of diamonds in late Victorian society. International exhibitions, I argue, by being the most prominent and dynamic stage for diamonds and diamond jewelry available to retailers, were particularly instrumental in the construction of diamonds as metonyms of social control and cultural enfranchisement.

Prior to the rise of De Beers, while diamonds maintained a central place in the spectacle on offer at international exhibition, their meaning was unstable and open to challenge, as I explored in Chapter 2 through my discussion of the Koh-i-Noor at exhibition. Diamonds could symbolize the civilizing mission, benevolent majesty, and scientific progress; or oriental decadence, imperial decay, and irrationality. Each meaning was as enticing as it was problematic to the fairgoer-consumer. After 1873, however, just as the commodity chain became more streamlined, so too did the meaning of diamonds on display at international exhibition. A proliferation of diamonds alongside information about diamond mining and South Africa mining exhibits meant that a sanitized version of the entire diamond commodity chain was on display at exhibition. The South African colonial government, working increasingly in tandem with the De Beers Mining Company, presented fairgoers with evermore elaborate displays about Kimberley: from photographs of the plots to models of machinery to working machines to, ultimately, in

London in 1886 and again in Chicago in 1893, the spectacle of a "working diamond mine", complete with tons of imported "diamond dirt," over a dozen African laborers, white overseers, and observation decks for fairgoer-overseers. The diamond trade was dramatically intertwined with Britain's activities in southern Africa.

Thus, exhibition-goers came to "place" themselves within the diamond commodity chain and comprehend the trade as fundamental to British authority in Africa and white supremacy writ large. In this way, African colonialism was commodified for metropolitan consumption alongside diamonds and as such, as design historian Dipti Bhagat observes, consumers were "buying more than a diamond."¹ Exhibitions ensured that knowledge about where diamonds came from and how they were manufactured was aired, debated, and informed opinions about who could and should wear what sort of diamond jewelry. The conditions of production inhered in the meanings of diamond consumption, in other words. While diamonds symbolized the difference between the proverbial haves and have-nots, the experience of diamonds at exhibition -- and the centrality of exhibitions to Victorian consumer culture -- compelled buyer-fairgoers to appreciate this difference on a global scale, where the relationship between producer and consumer appeared naturally mediated by the imperial-colonial state and by racial and gender hierarchies and where subtle differences in diamond appreciation put a finer point on who, in terms of nationality, ethnicity, gender, and race, was deemed the most civilized. The international exhibition phenomenon of the latter half of the nineteenth century played a formative role in developing diamonds as symbols of a socio-cultural enfranchisement that went far beyond the category of class, encoding ideas about the linkage between privilege, whiteness, "proper" gender performance, beauty, and "respectable" consumption.

¹ Dipti Bhagat, "Buying More Than a Diamond: South Africa at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886" (dissertation, Victoria & Albert Museum/Royal College of Art, 1996).

Importantly, the commodity chain on display at international exhibitions by 1886 was set against widespread knowledge about (and fascination with) Illicit Diamond Buying (IDB). Exhibitions offered the "licit" commodity chain, one where African workers, Jewish "middlemen", and women consumers performed their roles without tension and for the benefit of the status quo; where colonial spaces provided the raw materials for metropolitan manufacturing and consumption; and fashion compelled the culturally enfranchised to dress according to the dictates of national-imperial taste. Yet, alive in every diamond exhibit was the suggestion of the illicit chain, the trading that occurred outside the purview of the DBCM and the Syndicate, that supposedly facilitated African subversion of imperial rule and the social mobility of Eastern European Jews in British society. Fear of IDB mingled with discomfort caused by the idea of diamond theft in general: as more consumers were able to own diamonds after the South African discoveries, collectively there was more to lose through the democratizing portability of diamond wealth. What had long been a desirable trait of the gemstone – its ability to store an amount of wealth wildly disproportionate to its size – became a source of anxiety. In the worst case scenario, if lucrative stones "fell into the wrong hands," diamonds had the potential to become the vehicles of significant social disruption. International exhibitions at once dramatized this danger and dispelled it: the shepherds of the legitimate commodity chain, working through the proper authorities, sought to stamp out the illicit, protect the consumer, and ultimately the status quo. Thus, the late Victorian embrace of the diamond monopolies can be seen as yet another way that contemporaries sought to alleviate their anxieties about crumbling national-imperial stability in step with the disruption of race, gender, and class hierarchies.

To examine this late Victorian stabilization of the meaning of diamonds as metonyms of British authority, this chapter surveys diamonds at international exhibition after 1851. A

complete list of international exhibitions held between 1851 and 1900 would reach over a hundred entries; for this reason, I chose to survey exhibitions that garnered the most attention from Britons and British jewelers in particular, judging by the coverage in trade publications. Specifically I looked at the Paris Universalle (1855), London International (1862), Paris International (1867), London 2nd Annual International (1872), Vienna International Weltausstellung (1873), Philadelphia Centennial (1876), Cape Town South African International (1877), Paris Universalle (1878), Amsterdam International Colonial (1883), London Colonial and Indian (1886), Paris Universalle (1889), Chicago Columbian Exposition or World's Fair (1893), and the Paris Universalle (1900). Major studies have been conducted on each one of these fairs and certainly, just as the 1851 display of the Koh-i-Noor is the subject of an entire chapter in this dissertation, it would be possible to devote a chapter to the diamonds shown at each of these exhibitions, the diamonds were that plentiful and the archive is that rich. Instead, I have chosen to sacrifice that level of detail in the hopes of gaining a wider perspective on the shifts and continuities in how diamonds were shown and received at exhibition and to appreciate the cumulative effect of a half-century of diamond extravaganzas on the consumer public. While undoubtedly each international exhibition was informed by its local/national context, exhibition organizers were also keenly aware of the content and structure of antecedent and concomitant exhibitions, building upon and against these efforts. Thus, as different as London, Paris, Vienna, and Chicago exhibitions were in terms of time and place, there was also a great deal of sameness about them, in what was displayed, how it was displayed, and what sort of international audience/diamond customer it attracted. To offer some preliminary examples of this consistency: Hancock's, a major British jewelry house and one known for its diamond work, barely changed its exhibit between 1851 and 1876; the models of diamond-mining machinery put

forward by the Cape government were standard exhibition fare from 1877 onwards; and there were live diamond-cutting demonstrations, usually put on by the Coster firm of Amsterdam, at every international exhibition I surveyed.

To be clear, diamonds showed up in dozens of places at international exhibitions after 1851, from the obvious (jewelry stalls, crown regalia exhibits, diamond-cutting and mining displays) to the less predictable (exhibits of weaponry, furniture and interior design, drilling machinery, and meteorites, for example) and on the bodies of many fairgoers, themselves. Rather than describe every stone at exhibition, in the pages that follow I focus on the jewelry, regalia and cutting and mining displays because of their close association with the diamond market and the amount of diamond talk they compelled in the print media with each exhibition. Readers should be aware, then, that these were not the only sites where fairgoers came into contact with gems, though they are the sites where fairgoers would go to look at diamonds, specifically.

The first section of this chapter discusses the different registers and meanings of diamond jewelry at exhibition before and after the advent of South African mining. Just as South African mining techniques borrowed from mining operations in Brazil and India, the Kimberley mining exhibits were crafted and operated within an already rich discourse on diamonds and diamond jewelry at exhibition that encoded knowledge about the conditions of diamond production. Jewelry, royal collections, and cutting exhibits were abundant before 1867; after, they were on offer *ad infinitum*. In her look at shopping and consumption, Rappaport quoted one theorist who argued it is not so much "the objects consumed that count in the act of consumption, but rather the unique sense of place."² The diamonds and diamond jewelry on offer at exhibition both

² As in Erika Diane Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure : Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 5.

before and after the "rush" compelled fairgoers to appreciate a unique sense of place they carved out for themselves *through* diamond appreciation. Discourse about so-called "peasant jewelry," while universalizing peasantry, subtly showed that diamond appreciation in Britain reflected the nation's high level of civilization and prestige on a global stage all the while enforcing the idea that diamonds, however many "rushed" to Europe after the diamond finds of 1867 and however low the price dropped, were *not* for peasants. They automatically labeled their wearers to be sophisticated and cosmopolitan. Discourse about national taste and character as performed through diamond jewelry created British aesthetics as protective of diamond worth and the diamond trade, as well as propriety and racial purity.

The second section considers "monster diamonds" and royal regalia. Monster diamonds prompted fairgoers to imagine an international competition based on exceptional diamonds and impressive regalia. Each monster diamond had its own "biography," its own story of movement from an exotic or colonial space to the metropole for exhibition and their cumulative stories made up a kind of monster diamond commodity chain for fairgoers to delight in. As Charles Reed observed, "Every nation has its diamond." Thus, the monster diamonds at international exhibition symbolized the geopolitics of the age, and the fairgoers experience of them "placed" the exhibition-goer into a category of privilege and power.

The final sections of the chapter detail how the cutting and production segments of the diamond commodity chain, particularly after 1873, instilled an understanding of the consumer's place in the commodity chain amidst the diamond jewelry on offer at exhibition. Exhibitions displayed a tensionless vision of the licit chain of diamond supply to Europe. This vision was built against a proliferation of knowledge about illicit chains and as such compelled the viewer to understand themselves as actively participating in the structure of the legitimate trade.

While this chapter looks at various different types of diamond experiences on offer at international exhibitions in the latter half of the nineteenth century and how these experiences developed and became more elaborate, what is crucial to appreciate is how all the diamond information was thrown at the fairgoer at once within the space of an exhibition. Fairgoer-consumers would have been keenly aware of where diamonds came from and how they were mined and manufactured, what they meant to Britain both economic and symbolically, and how, by participating in diamond consumption, they were perpetuating the commodity chain. Thus, the meaning of diamond and diamond consumption, certainly by 1893, was locked into a narrative of British imperialism in South Africa and social hierarchy at home and throughout the empire.

* * *

In covering the jewelry stalls on display at the Paris Universalle of 1855, the correspondent for the *Daily Mail* could not resist pontificating on how the refinement of diamonds mimicked the civilizing process of the exhibitionary experience, itself:

Nature gives us diamonds in the rough. If society took a tithe of the trouble with man that it does with the diamond it would cut a much better figure than it does, and present a much more brilliant spectacle. No doubt there are sermons in stones, and these precious stones sparkle with meaning – their dazzling brilliancy being an irresistible comment upon the importance of polishing the rough raw material – of educating in short. We never see a single glittering stone without falling into this train of thought; the display of diamonds we saw on Saturday gave rise to a crowd of such thoughts.³

As the reviewer suggested, he would have had ample opportunity to make this connection in 1855 and in virtually every exhibition after it: diamonds were the cornerstones of exhibitions. The jewelry stalls, regalia displays, and the "monster diamond" exhibit (or exhibits) were more than just standard exhibition fare -- they were necessary attractions after 1851. As one

³ "Mr. Hancock's Jewels for the Paris Exhibition," *The Daily News*, May 14 1855, 3.

commentator for the 1867 Paris fair quipped, "A Universal Exhibition is nothing without a blaze of jewellery. You cannot have too much of it. Its success with the million is certain."⁴

Diamonds, specifically, attracted fairgoers like no other spectacle and could be counted on to do so. Importantly, this was a truism before diamonds were discovered in South Africa and Europe found itself awash in the ever-more-affordable commodity; the South African finds merely accentuated this trend. Exhibitions were diamond-encrusted affairs from the start.

With 1851 as the acknowledged baseline of comparison, each subsequent fair sought to outdo its predecessors with evermore elaborate jewelry displays: the volume of diamonds on offer increased exponentially across the century. An early example of this one-upmanship is the London International of 1862: enthusiastic commentators claimed "there never before was got together so brilliant and valuable a collection of diamonds, and never so many particular stones of enormous value, and each with a history of its own."⁵ Other articles referred to the "great blaze of gems,"⁶ and "the river of brilliants guarded by the most unimpressionable policemen."⁷ Exorbitant money values were tossed around: whereas the jewelry shown at the 1851 Great Exhibition was estimated to have been worth £1,700,000 exclusive of the Koh-i-Noor, 1862 boasted £4,000,000 "and to that we have to add not only the great Koh-i-Noor, but a rival diamond of equal value –viz. the Star of the South, which is set in the centre of magnificent stones, each of which might be a king's ransom."⁸ Thirty years later, well after the establishment of Kimberley, the hyperbolic descriptors remained the same while the actual numbers of diamonds on display had increased perhaps a hundred-fold. At Chicago's World Fair in 1893,

⁴ George Augustus Sala, *Notes and Sketches of the Paris Exhibition*, (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1868), 188.

⁵ "The International Exhibition," *The Daily News*, May 6 1862. See also "Gems and Jewels of the International Exhibition," *The Daily News*, September 9 1862, 3: "The display of diamonds and other jewels in the International Exhibition probably exceeds any ever before collected under one roof." See also, "The International Exhibition," *Times*, May 3 1862, 11: "But the whole Exhibition is most unusually rich in precious stones."

⁶ "The International Exhibition," *Times*, May 3 1862, 11.

⁷ "Our Way Through the Exhibition," *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, May 17, 1862, 318.

⁸ "All the World A-Maying!" *Aberdeen Journal*, May 7, 1862.

Tiffany and Co.'s exhibit, one among dozens of others jewelers', was alone valued at \$2,000,000 (about £500,000) and featured the "Million Dollar Case" of diamonds, "a collection of gems, singly and in combination, such as seldom before was gathered in so small a space."⁹

Even excepting the jewelers' displays, the centrality of gemstones to exhibitions was often literal: the Koh-i-Noor was, of course, located in the central nave in the Crystal Palace in 1851 and it was again in 1862, alongside the Star of the South and other diamonds. Vienna in 1873 featured the Russian crown jewels, the largest collection of diamonds of any European monarch, which included the famous Orlov diamond, and the Chicago World's Fair highlighted American acquisitions: the Tiffany Diamond and the Hope. In the 1855, 1867, 1878, 1889, and 1900 Paris Universalle exhibitions, pride of place was reserved for the French crown jewels, showcasing the famous Mazarin and Regent (Pitt) diamonds. They were housed in the very center of the Palais de l'Industrie. Napoleon III's collection was perhaps three times the size of the jewelry of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette and, in addition to the Regent (136 carats), boasted a crown containing 5206 brilliant-cut and 146 rose-cut diamonds, and two swords bejeweled with 1506 rose-cut diamonds and 1576 brilliant-cut diamonds respectively. These details were the only descriptions of the exhibition for readers of *The Ipswich Journal and Cambridgeshire Advertiser* (Ipswich, England) and *The Hull Packet and East Riding Times* (Hull, England), to offer a sense of how the French crown jewelry came to eclipse most other exhibits at the fair.¹⁰ Perhaps deliberately evoking associations between diamonds and the

⁹ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair : An Historical and Descriptive Presentation of the World's Science, Art, and Industry, as Viewed through the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893...* (Chicago: The Bancroft Company, 1893), Book 4: 147-8.

¹⁰ "Paris, July 14," *The Ipswich Journal* (Ipswich, England), Saturday, July 21, 1855, 1; "The Paris Exhibition," *The Hull Packet and East Riding Times* (Hull, England), Friday, July 20, 1855, 7.

"East," and thus subtly making fun of the French crown's property, the correspondent for the *Times* quipped that visitors to the display would have to veil their eyes.¹¹

Not only were lavish jewelry and gemstone displays necessary for an exhibition's success, fairgoers came to expect them. To the reporter for the *Leeds Mercury* in 1867, exhibitions themselves could simply be reduced to the need for "ladies [to] exhibit their dresses and bonnets, jewelers their diamonds, pickpockets their effrontery, and pastrycooks their best patties."¹² George Augustus Sala, fiction writer, contributor to the *Illustrated London News* and *Daily Telegraph*, and always one for purple prose, commented in 1867: "Barren, indeed, would be the Exhibition without a 'blaze of triumph' in the way of jewels. They are like the stock-pieces of which theatrical managers bethink themselves when the exchequer is running low – old favourites which are sure to 'draw,' certain to command a 'run,' which can be warranted to 'bring the swells into the stalls.'"¹³ This was the goal of exhibition organizers in 1878, who even sanctioned the selling of lottery tickets for prizes that included a £2000 (10,000 francs) selection of diamond jewelry to fairgoers.¹⁴ In elaborating on the crowd-pleasing work jewels, especially diamonds, did at exhibition, Sala also inadvertently exemplified the *ambivalent* ways in which gemstones functioned as symbolic metonyms of the international exhibition itself, rehearsing the civilizing ethos of the exhibition, drawing contrasts between the value of production and consumption, excavating information about networks of global trade, and compelling a

¹¹ Ibid. Interestingly, Parisian organizers did nothing to subvert this royal focus when the Third Republic was established after 1870 -- the French government aimed to attract buyers for the collection beginning in 1873 and used exhibitions to advertise their holdings. "The Sale of the French Crown Jewels," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, March 15 1886, 109-10.

¹² "The Paris Exposition," *The Leeds Mercury*, June 1 1867.

¹³ Sala, 189.

¹⁴ "The Exhibition at Paris – the Lottery," *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*, August 27, 1878, 2. The lottery quickly sold out its 2 million tickets and printed 4 million more for a total of 6 million tickets sold at one franc each -- a huge success. See also "Paris Exhibition," *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, October 12 1878 and "The Paris Exhibition and the Lottery," *Freeman's Journal*, October 21, 1878.

kaleidoscope of narratives that both collapsed and redrew spatial, temporal, and socio-cultural boundaries:

A Jacquard loom, a Stephenson's locomotive, a Howe's sewing-machine, a Stanhope press, a Volta's pile, a Golvani's battery, a Daguerre's silvered plate, a Talbot's flask of collodion, have had far more influence on civilization than all the pearls that Cleopatra could have dissolved in vinegar, than all the rubies that Augustus the Strong lavished on his concubines, than all the emeralds with which the Arab soldans encrusted the shrine of the Mosque of Granada, than all the diamonds that ever came from Ind or Brazil – that were ever cut by the Amsterdam lapidaries – that merchants ever chattered over with kings and emperors; but the world passes by the loom, the locomotive, the sewing machine, the printing press, with a "Dear me!" or a "very wonderful, I dare say!" and, suppressing a rising yawn, hastens away to fasten down like bees on the glass case which holds the Duchess of Sennacherib's wedding jewels, or goes into ecstasies over the Duke of Pampotter's jewelled hawk; or Mr. Grimgribber's blue brilliant, or Sir Isaac Ingot's sapphire as big as a plover's egg, or the late Prince Evercrazy's diamond breeches. And I do not quarrel with the world for doing so. Give me the Koh-i-noor, and keep it dark, and I will turn Jew to-morrow.¹⁵

Here, Sala's flippant passage is just the most overt example of the kinds of information, diamonds-at-exhibition could churn up for their audience, reminiscent of the *Daily Mail* quote I examined above. Not only does it show that Sala knew the basics about diamond production and manufacturing and expected his readers to follow him through this tangent, but that, for him and his readers, the global sweep of this information was bound up in the exhibition experience, itself. Sala's self-effacing enthusiasm about the bejeweled extravaganza is instructive: it was for him (and his readers) a guilty pleasure, a frivolity -- one normally associated with the extravagant upper-class or the irrational East or the materialistic Jew, one that perhaps a "respectable" person would not allow, but an indulgence that he was afforded in the space of the exhibition. While jewels, for him, did not particularly symbolize progress or do any larger social and cultural work, they were nonetheless mesmerizing and this was exactly the kind of entertainment Sala wanted from his exhibitions in 1867.

¹⁵ Sala, 189-90.

Exhibition organizers were keen to deliver a jewelry extravaganza to patrons in large part because they thought it would guarantee female attendance at the fairs, the logic being that men could enjoy the industrial machinery and women could enjoy the diamonds -- though as Sala's enthusiasm above indicates, plenty of men enjoyed the jewelry-and-gemstone displays as well. If anecdotes from newspapers are anything to go by, the organizers were not wrong in their assumption that jewelry was something female visitors wanted to see. For example, the correspondent for *The Ladies* reported that at the jewelry stalls of the London International in 1872, "we heard a fair neighbour exclaim, 'This is a perfect paradise!' We are half-inclined to agree with her, for certainly [there's no] more enchanting place for those who love beauty and gems and delicate works of the jeweler's art -- and who among our readers does not do so?"¹⁶

For British women, in particular, an international exhibition afforded a freedom to jewelry shop that was perhaps less readily available in London. In her history of the West End, Erika Rappaport notes how Bond Street, the home of most of the well-known jewelry shops in London, "had long been famous as a man's street." Shops there "catered to this upper-class masculine clientele. Given the presence of such wealthy and dissolute masculinity, it is not surprising that such areas were also famous sexual marketplaces." Women who wanted to shop there needed male relations, chaperons, or servants to accompany them unless they wanted to brave having their virtue called into question.¹⁷ Thus, the famous jewelry shops of London catered to a male clientele that presumably bought gifts for females. While certainly there were

¹⁶ "Jewelry at the International Exhibition," *The Ladies*, May 11 1872, 151.

¹⁷ Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure : Women in the Making of London's West End*, 10, 151. There is also the issue of womanhood and credit to consider: the establishment of jewelry stores on a "man's street" can be read as manifestation of anxieties about a wife's or daughter's ability to purchase goods on her husband's or father's credit. In the gendered logic that women could not control their spending, the need for a male chaperon to jewelry shop would cut down on a man's risk. See Margot C. Finn, *The Character of Credit : Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740-1914* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Erin Skye Mackie, *Market a La Mode : Fashion, Commodity, and Gender in the Tatler and the Spectator* (Baltimore ; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure : Women in the Making of London's West End*, 48-73.

women (many of them aristocrats) who maintained a very lively, direct relationship with the jewelers of Bond Street and the spread of middling-range jewelry houses and fake gemstone establishments into New Bond and Regent Streets, as well as the rise of department store shopping, encouraged female jewelry-shoppers, women were less likely to shop for jewelry for themselves in the way that they would shop for dresses or hats (the kind of shopping that Rappaport focuses on).¹⁸ As Marcia Pointon has explored, jewelry that had been given to them as gifts from male family members or that they had inherited was the jewelry that women most proudly wanted to display – and the pieces that incurred the least amount of criticism regarding indulgent or vain behavior.¹⁹ Suffice it to say that while towards the end of the century typical jewelry-shopping became less encumbered for women, particularly with the rise of "cheapware," it still carried with it a number of encumbrances that appeared not to exist at exhibition. Indeed, the occasion of an exhibition created not only an opportunity to view and shop for jewelry, but a reason to buy it that stood outside of the usual familial milestone occasion: as a souvenir of the exhibition itself.

Jewelry and Diamond Jewelry at Exhibition

In studying the rise of consumer society in Britain, the exhibition hall maintains a fairly hallowed place in the historiography, beginning most prominently with Thomas Richards' *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England* (1990) wherein he argues that the Great Exhibition set

¹⁸ For descriptions of elite jewelers' dealings with aristocratic women, see George Fox, *An Account of the firm of Rundell, Bridge and Company, the Crown Jewellers and Goldsmiths on Ludgate Hill*, unpublished manuscript, written between 1843-1846, Victoria and Albert Museum Archives; A.M.B, *The Story of Garrads: Goldsmiths and Jewellers to Six Sovereigns in Three Centuries, 1721-1911*, (London, 1912), 99, 102-8. For information about Edwin Streeter's shop on New Bond Street see Patrick Streeter, *Streeter of Bond Street* (Harlow: Matching Press, 1993), 74. See also "Benson's of Bond Street," *Illustrated London News*, Jan 13 1900, 65. For information about the Parisian Diamond Company (a place that specialized in fake diamonds) on Bond and Regent Street, see *The Illustrated London News*, Jan 13 1900, 57; "Ladies Page," Jan 20 1900, 92.

¹⁹ Marcia Pointon, "Women and their Jewels," in *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830*, edited by J. Batchelor and Cora Kaplan, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), 12. See also Marcia Pointon, *Strategies for Showing : Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture, 1665-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), Marcia Pointon, "Intriguing Jewellery: Royal Bodies and Luxurious Consumption," *Textual Practice* 11, no. 3 (1997).

the mold for Victorian consumerism, advertising, and spectacle.²⁰ Subsequent writers on exhibition and museum culture like Jeffrey Auerbach, Annie Coombes, and Tony Bennett have, unsurprisingly, tended to support the centrality of exhibitions to British consumer culture formation.²¹ Writers interested in shopping and consumption in general have tended to, if not completely decentralize, at least complicate the place of exhibitions in consumer society, noting that exhibitions represented a particular and peculiar experience that occurred in the larger context of the rise of department stores and shopping culture, the turn towards creating domestic spaces as "showrooms," and increased readership of fashion magazines and other print culture designed to sell products.²²

What is important to note is that for the jewelry market (as opposed to other fashion and commodity markets) international exhibitions in the latter half of the nineteenth century were the hubs around which the retail trade operated. Just as diamonds were central to exhibitions, so too were exhibitions central to the diamond market. A major exhibition drew in the global supply of diamonds for at least one year, possibly more, driving up prices throughout the market and creating what became a fairly regular demand cycle. When manufacturing jewelers observed that diamond jewelry formed "the backbone of the trade" that did not necessarily indicate that demand was coming from jewelry-wearers – it was likely just as much from exhibitors and other jewelers looking to cram as many diamond pieces as possible into their displays for sparkling

²⁰ Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

²¹ Jeffrey Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995), Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture, and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994), Maria Grever and Berteke Waaldijk, eds., *Transforming the Public Sphere: The Dutch National Exhibition of Women's Labor in 1898* (Durham: Duke University Press).

²² Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press; London: Eurospan [distributor], 2007), Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End*.

effect. This relative consistency buoyed the trade throughout the global depression of the 1870s, '80s and early '90s, in ways that aided the establishment of large-scale diamond trading companies and specifically De Beers, companies that needed stable demand in order to entice investors and later introduce price-controls. Exhibitions provided demand when little else did.

For retailers, each new exhibition offered an opportunity for established jewelers, up-and-coming designers, and middling-class specialists to showcase their talents in a comparative atmosphere. The venue functioned for jewelers as a primordial version of how today's film festivals and "Fashion Weeks" do for filmmakers and fashion designers, respectively; exhibitions were one of the only places where jewelers and jewelry were the center of attention and could command a wide audience in their own right, not as auxiliaries to dress fashion or gatherings of the rich and famous. The jewelry world, and particularly the British trade, looked to the next international exhibition to assess current trends and predict future ones. It was not until after the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876, for example, that European jewelers came to acknowledge and fear Tiffany's status as a world-class, cutting-edge jewelry designer. Tiffany's style became synonymous with British jewelers' assessments of what Americans wanted and the Birmingham Jewelry Quarter produced pieces accordingly.²³

This is not to say that the jewelry stalls at exhibition were categorically different from jewelry shops themselves in this period, particularly when it came to diamonds.²⁴ The "diamond glare" effect characteristic of exhibition halls carried over into jewelry shops and vice-versa. As a commentator for the 1878 Paris Universal quipped, "Let it be remembered that the principle of public exhibition is included in every shop window in the world"; a similar sentiment had been

²³ "Diamond Field Notes," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, Jan 2 1893, 135.

²⁴ "Representative Windows," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, February 1 1893, 155; "Great Exhibition of Gems," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, Oct 1 1895, 606; "French Notes," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Dec. 15 1888, 371.

expressed in 1866 when one writer asked, "After all, what are the Great Exhibitions but a sort of collective window display?"²⁵ As I discussed in the previous chapter, there were drawbacks, too, for jewelers who emphasized diamond jewelry – as exhibition-organizers and customers alike expected them to do – because it caused them to devote time, resources, and shelf-space to items that inherited a lesser profit margin than "heavier" pieces.²⁶ Manufacturing jewelers, in particular, saw the situation as a vicious cycle of demand-and-supply that could not be easily diverted: the public expected a show of diamonds, the jeweler invested in diamonds to draw in customers, the volume of diamond jewelry took away space from other pieces, other pieces were not advertised, diamond jewelry was priced to sell because the jeweler had so much of it, the public bought cheap diamonds instead of costly ones, the jeweler could not afford to produce non-diamond jewelry, and so on. Joseph W. Tonks, a founding member of the Birmingham Jewelers Association and jury member for the "bijouterie" section at the Paris Universalle in 1889, complained that this kind of exhibition imperative stifled British creativity, particularly vis-à-vis American and French designers because, with London at the center of the diamond trade, it was British jewelers above all who were expected to deliver the diamond jewelry.²⁷

Not only did exhibitions set the tone for jewelry selling at large, but they became huge sites of buying and selling for the middling trade and "cheapware" specialist by 1867. While the big exhibitors of the 1850s and early '60s were the names people expected to see – the crown jewelers, the major houses – as the correspondent for the *Aberdeen Journal* noted, the rich were not buying enough to make the exhibition experience profitable for jewelers. "Among the

²⁵ *The Illustrated Catalogue of the Paris International Exhibition, 1878* (London: Virtue & Co. , 1878), Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure : Women in the Making of London's West End*, 28.

²⁶ See *Jeweller and Metalworker*: Dec 1 1878, 369; "On Novelties," Jan 1 1881, 2; "Notes from La Belle France," August 1 1888, 229.

²⁷ "Jottings in Birmingham," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, December 1, 1889, 266; "Past and Present Fashions in Jewellery," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, December 15 1896, 1320; "Birmingham," January 15 1897, 78. See also "Paris Exhibition Awards," *Times*, September 28 1889, 5.

specialities [sic] which seem to attract popular observation, we may mention the mines of gold and jewelry...where jewels, and gold, and silver work are exhibited in a form in which artistic design aids materially in heightening the effect of the riches agglomerations of the rarest gems. In one small French case, in the south-west court, there is exhibited jewelry to the value of £100,000." He continued, "The question naturally occurs to one, who is to be the purchaser?"²⁸

Thus between the 1850s and '60s there was a decided shift down-market in the jewelry on offer at exhibition. At the 1862 London fair, for example, in contrast to the British crown jewelers like Hunt & Roskell, the Garrards, or Hancock, Edwin Streeter and his partner Harry Emanuel (whom I discussed in Chapter 3 in connection with the diamond discoveries in South Africa) pitched their wares to the mid-range market and did so unabashedly, proclaiming that their jewelry was "machine-made" and their involvement with the diamond market so extensive that they were able to undercut the price of diamond jewelry in elite houses.²⁹ Certainly their display contained the sparkle to draw in the crowds – a £30,000 diamond necklace was their standout piece – but they included plenty of wares that everyday fairgoers could afford. Because Streeter and Emanuel were the only British jewelers at the exhibition to cater to the middling market, praise was heaped upon their exhibit (the French contingent had taken full advantage of the exhibition to capture middling class consumers). Figure 5.1, the *Illustrated London News*' engraving of the 1862 British jewelry stalls, is a testimony to not only the popularity of the jewelry quarter at the fair, but also how Emanuel's display incurred considerable attention. Prior to 1862, it was unlikely that Emanuel's shop would have elicited attention or praise. The way the artist situated Emanuel's kiosk in the left, mid-ground of the engraving in Figure 5.1, dominating the more high-profile houses of Hunt & Roskell, Storr & Mortimer, and Elkington, underlines

²⁸ *The Aberdeen Journal* (Aberdeen, Scotland), May 14 1862.

²⁹ Patrick Streeter, 18.

Emanuel's prominence at the exhibition. [Insert Figure 5.1]³⁰ By the Paris Universalle of 1867, almost every jeweler was offering a variety of price-ranges.

In terms of aesthetic critique and jewelry fashion, the diversity in pieces that the shift to a larger market afforded could not have been more welcome. Instead of greeting the influx of affordable jewelry with blanket snobbery many critics were delighted – it gave them something to talk about. Sala noted, "It behooves the critic, I take it, to do something more than clasp his hands, or turn up his eyes, or smack his lips, or murmur 'Pretty, pretty, pretty!'"³¹ From a critical perspective, the elite market in Europe was fine but boring, lacking especially in variety. The correspondent for the *Times* complained that the sameness in "high" jewelry was due to the fact that most shops from New York to St. Petersburg employed French workmen.³² This was an overstatement, to be sure, not least because products reflect the customer as well as the maker: the rich could command the best available precious materials and aristocratic fashion in the 1850s and 60s was conservative-cosmopolitan in a way that did not cultivate difference or allow for meaningful comparison.

"Cheap jewelry," opened up a new level of engagement for fairgoers and aesthetes that went beyond affordability, as *Jeweller and Metalworker's* critic of the Vienna Exhibition of 1873 explained: "Nationalities have a separate and distinct kind of jewellery. This does not apply so much to the more valuable and costly works in which precious stones are introduced, as these are produced in only a few of the European nations, which from their high-class character are generally similar in style. But the difference is more apparent in jewellery worn by the middle

³⁰ As in Patrick Streeter, 27.

³¹ Sala, 192.

³² "The Great French Exhibition," *Times*, September 16 1867, 10; Arthur McKEwan, "Foreign Jewelry," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, July 15 1874, 187. It might have been going too far to characterize the European jeweler and gem-trading demographic as specifically French. "Continental" is more accurate and contemporaries might have been more apt to refer to the milieu as "cosmopolitan" in ways that gestured towards the Jewishness of many jewelers and gem-traders.

and lower classes."³³ Thus, if, as Sala imagined, the purpose of the international exhibition was to allow for "contrast and comparison," particularly along national-imperial lines, the rise of cheap jewelry at exhibition ensured that the jewelry exhibits were as much a part of this nationalistic ethos as any other.³⁴ In other words, the meaning of the jewelry exhibits on offer entered a whole new level of overt contestation at the time of the South African diamond rush; international exhibitions encouraged fairgoers to compare and contrast ornamental culture from around the world, allowing them to draw up an anthropological, hierarchical map of civilizations throughout space and time based on jewelry, in keeping with other comparative, anthropological extravaganzas on display.

Cheap jewelry also gave the jeweler an opportunity to show off his skill and ingenuity in producing affordable ornaments with "lesser" and less-used materials: smaller diamonds (they would be called "diamond chips" today) glued together to look like large stones, aluminum, mirroring, semi-precious material like malachite or coral, colored glass, enameling, plating, filigree, machine-produced parts, and so on.³⁵ The correspondent for the *Birmingham Daily Post* exalted in the challenge arguing, "Cheapness, no doubt, is a great merit," and as the journalist for *The Times* envisioned it, cheapwares were the gateway to more lucrative jewelry-buying: "people who begin with cheap jewelry are gradually led on to dear."³⁶

The explosion of difference, in real and imagined ways, in jewelry on offer promised fairgoers that the exhibition-site would deliver something above and beyond what they could

³³ Arthur McKEwan, "Foreign Jewelry," July 15 1874, 187.

³⁴ Sala, 194. Italics as in Sala.

³⁵ The term "diamond chip" gives the impression that they are chips cleaved off during the process of cutting larger diamonds. This is false. Diamonds chips are just small diamonds that have been ground and polished like every other diamond. The business of cutting and polishing a diamond reduces its size by a quarter to a half— the diamond that is grinded off is diamond dust and is used to cut/polish other diamonds, no chips are produced. *Jeweller and Metalworker*, September 1 1880, 183.

³⁶ "Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition," *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 6 1876, 6; "The Great French Exhibition," *Times*, September 16 1867, 10.

gain from a trip to the local jewelry row. Indeed, the international exhibition advertised an experience that was by definition beyond the local, just as the jewelry on display became more locked into the localizing discourses of national taste and "peasant" culture. As other material culture at exhibition served as markers of progress and progressiveness -- weaponry, architecture -- and even the bodies of "authentic natives," so too did jewelry. This imperial facet of jewelry appreciation, audible in treatises on beauty from Plato to Kant to Ruskin, became, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, an indelible part of the culture of the market, on a quotidian level, inside and outside of the exhibition hall. Passages from *Jeweller and Metalworker*, a trade publication designed to deliver information of interest to middling-range jewelers *and their customers*, reveal how pervasive ideas were about the connection between jewelry and civilization. One 1874 article, using the language of comparative races, argued,

To say that the art of personal adornment has played a great part in the civilisation and progress of races would not be an assertion unwarranted by facts. From the undoubted articles produced by the workers in gold and silver of a country an estimate can be formed of that country's ideal of the beautiful. It is from their art of combining graceful and beautiful forms in ornamentation and decoration that we know how far the ancient Trojans and Egyptians had advanced in the march of civilisation; and it is by the greater success in such things, and consequently greater wealth and knowledge, that we shall be judged in our turn. A nation seeking to satisfy none but physical wants leaves nothing behind worth inheriting and dies without leaving a trace existence behind.³⁷

Jewelry, in this way, was revealed as a marker of civilization – not a discourse new to this period, but one that found full articulation in the exhibition setting and influenced the general market in turn. Nations were to be judged on what kind of jewelry their citizenry preferred. This direct linkage between material cultural and international and racial authority became a mantra for the producers of *Jeweller and Metalworker* as they struggled to justify jewelry consumption in the context of a global depression after 1873. One 1877 correspondent for the magazine

³⁷ "Utilitarianism and Art," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, October 15 1874, 255-56.

argued that jewelry appreciation is an index of civilization as well as a universal indicator of humanity:

The jewellery trade is a product of a certain state of civilization, which demands articles of rare and valuable material, wrought with some delicacy and refinement, and to be used as objects of personal ornament. This trade ministers not to the actual wants, but to the taste for luxuries inherent in human nature; and therefore it must be expected that when periods of industrial and commercial depression occur, the demand for luxuries, and therefore for jewellery will be proportionately if temporarily diminished. But this is only half an answer to the question. The taste for decoration begins with the savage when he tattoos his body, fashions his anklets and armlets, strings his necklaces of beads and wampum, and decorates his dress, his utensils, and his weapons. In some respects this desire for ornament is even stronger with the savage than with the civilised man. And to show how strong, how irrepressible, this state is, we have only to examine periods of depression in the jewellery trade, and we shall discover that the real demand for such adornment is very slightly diminished though that demand is supplied in a less expensive manner.³⁸

The mapping of humanity based on class, race, and nation through ornamental culture was most apparent in the trend to highlight "peasant jewelry" at exhibition, beginning at the International Exhibition in London in 1872, which contained "trinkets collected from almost all countries of Europe, as well as from different parts of Asia and Northern Africa."³⁹ The hierarchies the organization of the exhibition developed were both subtle and explicit. Much Chinese and Japanese ornamentation was downgraded to "peasant" level despite being elite material culture because it was made of materials that Europeans did not consider precious or particularly attractive – jade and lacquerware for example. As Sala had it, "The Chinese, who may be as old as the Egyptians, if not older, marvellous carvers and painters and enamellers as they have always been, have never done anything notable in the way of jewellery properly so

³⁸ "The Jewelry Trade in 1877," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Jan 1 1878, 194-5.

³⁹ "Jewelry at the International Exhibition," *The Ladies: A Journal of the Court of Fashion & Society*, July 13 1872, 362. Though *The Ladies* centered on information about the royals, the aristocracy, and the "stuff" of high fashion, its readership was decidedly middling class and mostly female. Edwin Streeter, Harry Emanuel's partner, were two jewelers devoted to middle-priced wares, for example, who advertised in *The Ladies*.

called."⁴⁰ Other exhibitors chose to classify their wares as "peasant jewelry" in order to impress vis-à-vis other peasant jewelries, despite the fact that it was unlikely their pieces were inexpensive or quotidian. The Ceylon delegates, for example, offered eleven cases of gold work as peasant jewelry at the Vienna Weltausstellung in 1873, playing into orientalist fantasies that in "the East" lavish ornamentation was common.⁴¹ Temporal context was also not present with the peasant jewelry showcase as ancient Egyptian artifacts were put alongside modern Russian pieces, peasant material culture being deemed timeless and of the "other."

The 1872 exhibition in London was arranged in such a way as to lead fairgoers through the peasant jewelry cases and then into the British jewelry section, offering a subtle progressive narrative of beauty, taste, and power, with Britain (and "British" diamonds) at the top of the hierarchy: "The sightseers flowed in and out of the Belgian and French annexes, but appeared to pass over the remarkable collection of peasant jewelry in the lower rooms of the east gallery with a careless eye that turned from Indian bangles and Norwegian chains of silver to feast on the glittering diamonds in Messrs. Hancocks' cases."⁴² For all the work this may have done to bolster pride in British taste, some commentators were disturbed by Britain's apparent lack of culture. The correspondent for *The Ladies* magazine wrote, "Judging from the specimens around us, the delight in such things would seem to be something like universal among the lower orders of mankind, and not to be confined to any particular branch or branches of the human family, but the cold North, the sunny South, and the distant East alike furnish us with abundant and characteristic examples in this field of popular taste. Why is it that if we except trashy

⁴⁰ Sala, 196.

⁴¹ "British Colonies at Vienna," *Times*, April 7 1873, 7. See also "Indian Section, South Kensington Museum," *Times*, May 15 1880, 2.

⁴² "Whit-Monday: The International Exhibition," *Times*, May 21 1872, 8.

Birmingham shams, there is no jewelry among our own peasantry?"⁴³ By 1876's International Exhibition in Philadelphia, Irish and Scottish jewelers had rediscovered and created Celtic design jewelries to showcase indigenous designs of Ireland and Scotland. The pieces proved to be popular with customers though jewelry and exhibition critics still pondered why if there was Scottish and Irish indigenous jewelry, there did not seem to be distinctly English peasant jewelry. *The Ladies* concluded, "Is it that [the English] are more philosophical or more stolid to things of beauty? We are unable to tell, but the fact remains, and as it certainly does not arise from great poverty, we fear it is one evidence among many that beyond mere animal existence the English peasant takes but little pleasure in life, or in the things of life."⁴⁴

Statements such as those and interest in the entire "peasant jewelry" genre put into stark, though not unpredictable, relief how the issue of jewelry in Britain was bound up in class demarcations. English peasantry did not wear jewelry; they did not wear diamonds. "Peasant jewelry," as typified by commentators in the 1870s and 80s, signaled a uniquely local articulation of what it meant to be human, a humanity that the writer for *The Ladies* snobbishly felt was lacking in the English peasantry. As the *Pall Mall Gazette* had it, nothing could be "more pure in art" than peasant jewelry.⁴⁵ While the explosion of different jewelries, and commentaries that marked these differences, allowed British experts to pathologize all kinds of "foreign" jewelry, it also created a palpable anxiety about what exactly was "British taste," and what it ought to be. The classism alive in *The Ladies* commentary reveals an anxiety about what exactly English taste, English materials, and by extension British taste, was, and, moreover, hints

⁴³ "Jewelry at the International Exhibition," *The Ladies: A Journal of the Court of Fashion & Society*, July 13 1872, 362.

⁴⁴ TC Archer, "Scottish Jewellery," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 15 1874, 159; JW Tonks, "Style in Jewelry," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 1 1874, 147-53; "Frankish and Celtic Jewelry," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, November 15 1879, 174. For the quote see "Jewelry at the International Exhibition," *The Ladies*, July 13 1872, 362.

⁴⁵ "England at the Paris Exhibition," *Pall Mall Gazette*, October 23 1878, 4.

at how British-English jewelry symbolized engagements that went *beyond* the local, making the idea of English peasant jewelry inconceivable despite discourse touting the universality of ornamental culture. In other words, diamonds labeled a British wearer instantly sophisticated and cosmopolitan; by definition the stones could not comprise peasant jewelry. However obvious this might seem for a luxury commodity such as diamonds, it must be borne in mind that in 1872 and after, more diamonds flowed to Europe than ever before and the price – for rough and cut – dropped to a level that suddenly made them available to people who had been excluded from diamond buying prior to the South African finds. With the rise of the paste and glass gemstone market still to come in the 1880s, discourse about peasant jewelry reserved diamonds for the privileged – or rather privileged status was reserved was the diamond owner – despite the fact that diamond-owning no longer was in the strict purview of elites. Discourse about peasant jewelry offered an anti-democratic construction of diamond appreciation and was constructed against the market reality that, with prices dropping and production high, diamond ownership was becoming more democratized.

Understanding their own tastes vis-à-vis "peasant jewelry" was only one way that fairgoers experienced a unique sense of place while jewelry shopping at international exhibition. Pleasant jewelry threw up cultural knowledge about class, cosmopolitanism, and civility; it also brought up questions of national taste. Diamond appreciation at exhibition was not a simple case of who did and did not appreciate diamonds on a global scale but also *how* they appreciated them that reflected (and created) enfranchisement in national-imperial culture. The explosion of diamonds available to jewelers after the South African discoveries allowed for more diamonds of various qualities and kinds to be used in a variety of ways. Discourse developed that codified a uniquely British way to appreciate diamonds as opposed to "other" (read: foreign) ways. The

aesthetic and commercial aspects of these contrasts were interlinked; choices that were made due to market imperatives, such as Indian jewelers' use of "inferior," yellowish diamonds in their designs because the "superior," whitest diamonds were not sold to India, were often naturalized by aesthetes as preferences that reflected unique national or indigenous tastes. Practices in jewelry were interpreted as insights into national character, the customer-citizen's desires synonymous with the jeweler's offerings. Major "other" national tastes in jewelry in the British imaginary were, firstly, the manufacturing leaders in the field – in France, the United States, and Germany – followed by the "traditional" centers of jewelry know-how – in India and Italy. Critiques were built upon the kinds of materials used, their authenticity, the color combinations used, and the utilitarian quality of the pieces and while almost all British commentators found British design superior, in the language of their critiques we can see how the taste for "British" jewelry supported British control of the diamond market and created the image of privileged Imperial Britain as white. Moreover, this aesthetic discourse prescribed a way for women to perform their whiteness through wearing diamond jewelry.

France was one of, if not the major "other" for British aesthetes in the nineteenth century. In the 1850s and '60s, French jewelers were widely acknowledged to be the industry's standard-bearers both in terms of design and manufacture; as one journalist put it, "the jewelers of Paris have a fame that spreads over the civilized world."⁴⁶ Their trade was impressive, commanding not only France and French colonies but supplying much of South America (despite British activity there), Turkey, Russia, and southern Europe. German, British, and American manufacturers combined to chip away at this marketshare, the Germans gaining the most by taking over the Latin American trade in the 1880s.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ "The Paris Exhibition," *The Daily News*, May 28 1867.

⁴⁷ "The French Exhibition," *Reynolds Newspaper*, April 28 1867.

While British commentators felt that their jewelers had closed the gap in terms of design sophistication by London's 1872 exhibition, still fashion in jewelry were gauged by what the French were doing. French jewelers were often respected for their sense of "freedom, originality, and lightness," as well as their long-standing centrality to the European luxury trades.⁴⁸ Wrote Birmingham aesthete Arthur McKEwan, "There is among the French jewellers a constant effort after originality, a straining to bring out something new; in doing so they are aided by the natural artistic genius they possess in a very high degree, enabling them to set aside a precedent and past historic models of art, to attempt to create or create a style for themselves, and thus they show a greater boldness in working out an idea than Englishmen."⁴⁹

On the other hand, this originality, argued British commentators, sometimes seduced French consumers into appreciating the ridiculous and impractical – in ways that threatened to lower the value of the piece. This charge was made about diamond jewelry specifically: "[They], as a rule, prefer light and almost flimsy articles of jewelry, which make a good deal of show, at a comparatively small cost. These articles are pretty, and look well in the glass cases of the merchant; but they soon wear out; the stones drop from their setting; the tongues of brooches and the springs of bracelets loose and detached; it is a wonder if the ornaments are not altogether lost."⁵⁰ By 1878, British observers complained that French jewelers were treating diamonds in too cavalier a fashion, exalting in the low price and quantity that of the gemstone that was available to jewelers after 1873 – to the detriment of settlers in Kimberley. The trend was to create jewelry where the settings were so subtle it was difficult to tell how the gemstones were

⁴⁸ "English Jewelry in the Vienna Exhibition," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, November 15 1874, 278.

⁴⁹ Arthur McKEwan, "Foreign Jewelry," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, September 15 1874, 231-2.

⁵⁰ "The Great French Exhibition," *Times*, Sept 16 1867, 10.

fastened in place, whether the piece be for the head, hair, ear, neck or dress.⁵¹ The idea that a wearer would knowingly risk losing a gemstone and pay no mind to replacing it struck British aesthetes as foolish, wasteful, disturbingly haughty, and very French. In contrast to the seeming disrespect the French had for the value of diamonds (and by extension the diamond trade), French aesthetes (and some British commentators as well) saw British pieces as "heavy," and "clunky," placing too much emphasis on securing the gemstone and not enough on the artistic success of the item -- which struck them as very British.⁵²

Some British commentators intoned that some carelessness with diamonds on the part of the French might have had something to do with the quality of their diamonds. It was well-known that French jewelers excelled at diamond setting, but it was British buyers who truly had access to the best stones given London's centrality in the diamond trade. So as the first-class gems stayed in London (more and more the case as the Diamond Syndicate became established in 1889), the second-class was sold to French and American buyers, and the remainder went to Russia, the Middle East, and India.⁵³ One British critic in 1878 argued that the apparent low

⁵¹ "Belfast Jewellery for the Paris Exhibition," *The Belfast News-Letter*, April 29 1878, 5. "Jewellery at the International Exhibition," *The Ladies*, May 1872, 137.

⁵² "Paris Exhibition Papers," *The Daily News*, June 11 1878, 6.

⁵³ French buyers routinely complained that they were cut out of access to the best gemstones during the first decade of the diamond rush in South Africa. In a move that likely spurred De Beers into amalgamating distribution in the late 1880s, French buyers tried to set up their own diamond buying syndicate in 1881. Of course, De Beers was a multinational corporation from its inception, with French, Dutch, and German shareholders accounting for more than 50% of shares, though the company's leadership was mostly British and American. Complaints about who had access to the best diamonds were common and perhaps drove the company to sell in "parcels" (not unlike the way the stones were sold in Golconda in the early 19th century) or batches that contained a number of stones of varying quality. While this way all buyers, in theory, had access to the best stones, they were also all forced to buy up the dregs of the market. This led to considerable concern about setting up a global system of diamond evaluation in the late 19th century, to ensure fairness. No international agreement was made on what constituted a "carat," for example, or a diamond of "perfect water." Instead, as the monopoly strengthened, De Beers was able to dictate industry standards, devising what is now known as the "metric carat" and instituting an ever-burgeoning number of classes and grades for judging diamond quality which, at times, have not made sense to buyers. As a monopoly, they were able to impose other conditions: for example, until recently the system of ranking diamond quality could be changed at any moment, the company still can decide who and who not to sell diamonds to, buyers are obligated to buy parcels before they have had a chance to examine the stones, and the appeals process for asserting that parcels were unfairly advertised is maintained by the company. Stefan Kanfer, *The Last Empire: De Beers, Diamonds, and the World* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1993).

attitude the French had towards diamonds, or their exaltation in the democratization of diamond-ownership that could occur after 1873, lowered the value of the gemstone and diamond appreciation in French culture. In turn, the famed jewelers of Paris were producing for a lower class of customer and that reflected in their workmanship: "the Parisian diamond sellers' best customers now-a-days appear to be actresses, parvenus, and ostentatious foreigners from over the Atlantic, and the result of this has been to give a meretricious complexion to their art. In England, on the contrary...sterling worth and solidity are still in demand."⁵⁴

As De Beers and the emerging Diamond Syndicate colluded to control the diamond market, decreased the quantities gemstones on offer in Europe and attempted to increase the price beginning in the mid-1880s, French jewelers responded not by redesigning their jewelry to include less diamonds, but by increasing their reliance on "Parisian diamonds," or fakes. If the lightness of French jewelry irked British commentators in the 1870s, the way that French jewelers and the jewelry sections at Parisian exhibitions integrated imitation materials into "authentic" jewelry displays completely horrified them, increasingly so after 1867. It seemed, to them, the height of social and economic perfidy. French artists were extremely good at making imitations, to the point of having a monopoly on these "perfect pastes." French customers (as well as international ones) embraced "Parisian diamonds" (fakes) to an alarming degree, a degree that threatened to subvert the legitimate, authentic diamond trade: "they are worn in quantities by personages whom people will credit easily with the glory of possessing stores of real stones."⁵⁵ This trend only increased throughout the depression and a journalist for *The Daily News* spelled out the social ruse of false jewelry using the example of a pearl necklace,

⁵⁴ "Paris Exhibition Papers," *The Daily News*, June 11 1878, 6.

⁵⁵ "The Paris Exhibition," *The Daily News*, May 28 1867. See also "The Great French Exhibition," *Times*, Sept. 16 1867, 10.

It is sad that a French lady who has a valuable pearl necklace often orders an exact imitation of it in sham pearls, and habitually wears the latter to obviate the risk of loss or spoiling. As her friends are aware that she has a true necklace, they take the counterfeit *au sérieux*. One day under a stress of pecuniary circumstances, the genuine pearls are privately sold, but the lady goes on wearing the counterfeit all the same, and nobody is any the wiser.⁵⁶

Of course, the tactic of substituting fake gemstones into otherwise authentic pieces and occasionally wearing paste imitations of known pieces had been an aristocratic and middling-class mainstay since the late eighteenth century. When George IV had a serious inventory taken of his crown jewelry in the 1810s, he found that the majority of it was paste.⁵⁷ What was deeply disturbing sixty-odd years later was that, as people's literacy in real gemstones improved, so did gemstone fakery; even the expert could be baffled, as was the case with the *Daily News* critic: "The French have grown so clever at imitating pearls, that a jeweller in this Exhibition shows a necklace which purports to be a mixture of true pearls and false, and he challenges his customers to single out the real ones if they can. Nobody had yet succeeded when I myself made an ineffectual attempt."⁵⁸ *Jeweller and Metalworker* complained, "imitation diamonds, quartz diamonds, and glass diamonds have been placed upon the market in quantities, and it is difficult to distinguish many of these the genuine article."⁵⁹

The advertisement of this imitation ware, especially alongside authentic pieces, denigrated the whole work of the exhibition – which was to show legitimate commodity chains, after all -- argued the *Pall Mall Gazette*, when referring to Paris' jewelry stalls in 1878 and again in 1889.⁶⁰ Commenting on the fake jewelry on offer at the London Exhibition of 1872, *The Ladies*, in paraphrasing the most famous British aesthete of the Arts and Crafts movement, John

⁵⁶ "Paris Exhibition Papers," June 11 1878, 6.

⁵⁷ A.M.B, *The Story of Garrads: Goldsmiths and Jewellers to Six Sovereigns in Three Centuries, 1721-1911*, (London: Stanley Paul and Company, 1912), 94-99.

⁵⁸ "Paris Exhibition Papers," *The Daily News*, June 11 1878, 6.

⁵⁹ "Diamond Cutting and Polishing," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, May 15 1872, 177.

⁶⁰ "England at the Paris Exhibition," *Pall Mall Gazette*, October 23 1878, 4. See also "The French Exhibition," *Reynold's Newspaper*, April 28 1867.

Ruskin, reasoned: "Mr. Ruskin has said that no woman of true refinement will wear false jewelry, and we believe that he is right, for in doing so she must lend herself to a deception which will be repugnant to her moral sense."⁶¹ The stakes of the "deception" to which *The Ladies* referred went beyond being a window into a woman's trustworthiness; they spoke to the stability of the nation-empire as whole. The national economy operated on a gold standard, after all, and diamonds were also used as currency in ways that had higher stakes for Britain than it did for France. Throughout the nineteenth century, gold rush after gold rush rocked Western economies, and from New South Wales to South Africa to the Canadian north, it appeared that the British controlled a majority of the world's gold. In silver, it was likely that the United States had the upper hand, though that was as important a trade as gold. Thus, it was through jewelry that the material lifeblood of British economy – imperial and financial – was most directly connected to aestheticism, performance and spectacle, gendered consumption, and women's bodies. It was through jewelry, always implicitly and primarily connected to women's bodies in a local scale, that the symbolic and material definition of the "precious" was proscribed and negotiated. Jewelry symbolized the intersection between public and private interests, the personal and the political, the economic and the romantic, and if the veneration of land ownership reflected a proudly local and localizing interest, venerating the artistic arrangement of gold, silver, and diamonds on women's bodies gestured to an arena of significance that went well beyond the local. As art historian Marcia Pointon has argued, jewelry was to women what land was to men, and the normative union of controlling interests in property and currency spoke to a gendered symmetry in maintaining imperial-national economic health.⁶² Imitation jewelry

⁶¹ "Jewelry at the International Exhibition," *The Ladies*, June 22 1872, 305.

⁶² Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan, *Women and Material Culture*, 63

undermined the logic of this performance in ways that British commentators found extremely threatening, however popular the items were at exhibition.

French gem-makers responded that imitations were works of art in their own right and if they were sold as imitations then no crime had been committed. For example, one jeweler who specialized in selling "Diamante" brilliants wrote to mineralogist Nevil Story-Maskelyne of the British Museum to plead for his advocacy regarding the imitation trade, which *The Times* had vilified as fraudulent. "My stones are avowed artificial gems. I just claim them as successful imitations. I am anxious that the public should be made aware through your *authority* [so] that the confusion [is dispelled.]"⁶³ There is no evidence that Story-Maskelyne sought to set the record straight with *The Times*.

Of course, the shunning of imitation work did not extend to large numbers of British consumers: there was a significant market for imitation ware in Britain, particularly for paste diamonds.⁶⁴ The expansion of the imitation trade was controversial among British jewelers who were at once anxious that "cheap wares" would spoil middling-class spending and jealous of French jewelers' supremacy in the "imitative arts." As the depression after 1873 set in, jewelers preferred to make imitations: as diamond prices increased, the paste market was one that was entirely in the manufacturing jewelers' hands and while lower and middling class customers might not buy authentic diamonds (whereas the rich always would), they might be enticed to buy imitation ones. Imitation ware was simply necessary for women who found they had to perform their station (or aspirations) through wearing gemstones but could not afford to do so. This, argued one jewelry correspondent, was the true democratization of diamond appreciation:

⁶³ Ernest Tate to N. Story-Maskelyne, Jan 1880, Nevil Story-Maskelyne papers, Natural History Museum Archives, DF 5001/15.

⁶⁴ "Paste Diamonds," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, February 15 1884, 35. For information about the Parisian Diamond Company (a place that specialized in fake diamonds) on Bond and Regent Street, see *The Illustrated London News*, Jan 13 1900, 57; "Ladies Page," Jan 20 1900, 92.

"Commerce, appreciating the value of the real stone, said that a good imitation would meet an immense demand by those who could not afford, but would still wish, to display the sparkling gems. . . Thus all the world wears diamonds, the rich and the poor together, and the jeweller is the maker of them all."⁶⁵ Ironically, British aesthetes' anxiety about the use of authentic gemstones in jewelry vis-à-vis French design ran counter to the reality of precious metal use in the two countries. France and later Germany's laws about adulterating silver and gold were much more stringent than in Britain -- one of reasons that overseas customers preferred French and German jewelry exports.⁶⁶

In the commentators' anxiety about French veneration of the "imitative arts" and somewhat flippant attitude to diamond-ware we catch glimpses of how diamond distribution was a crucial marker of privilege in British culture not to be toyed with, how the democratization of diamond ownership, different from simple diamond appreciation, seemed to materially threaten that privilege. This anxiety was also palpable in commentaries on American diamond aesthetics, where stereotypes about the United States as a land of excessive consumption appeared to be borne out in diamond sales. Within an international exhibition culture increasingly built around the blaze of diamond jewelry, the major critique of American items (and customers) was that they were *too* diamond-encrusted. Wrote the correspondent for *Watchmaker, Jeweler, and Silversmith*,

The fondness of the Americans for diamonds is notorious, and it is often carried into an extravagance closely associated with vulgarity and bad taste. . . [L]adies at the seaside now adorn their bathing costumes with the costly baubles. . . This craze was initiated by one young woman who thought her diamonds might be stolen if left in her bathing house. Others of the fair sex, who are nothing if not imitative, determined not to be outshone in the display of glittering adornments.

⁶⁵ "Artificial and Imitation Diamonds," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, January 1 1886, 7.

⁶⁶ "The Great French Exhibition," *Times*, September 11 1867, 10; "The Great French Exhibition," *Times*, September 16 1867, 10.

The fashion would soon become too ludicrous to last if male bathers wore their huge shirt-studs and rings and their enormous watch chains.⁶⁷

Another commentator for the *Watchmaker* wrote, "The 'nouveaux riches' of America can boast, with some show of justice, that they possess, if not the rarest of diamonds, certainly the greatest quantity."⁶⁸ Neither the French nor the American brand of diamond appreciation translated completely for British aesthetes who seemed to expect and demand a higher degree of respect for quality diamond-ware from British customers. In the British articulation, diamond ownership subtly encoded respect for the status quo of the diamond trade that was not as prevalent in the French and American forms, if British commentators are to be believed.

Lightness and imitation gems aside, the French along, with Continental jewelers in general, tended to set diamonds in gold as opposed to British designers who preferred silver settings.⁶⁹ The silver versus gold question first became a major point within the commentary for the 1867 Paris Exhibition. One critic rationalized this difference in terms of diamond quality:

If we go to Mr. Hancock's exhibition, we cannot help admiring the purity and splendour of his stock of diamonds; we perhaps remember how apt the French are to set their diamonds in gold, the meaning of which is that they are content with an inferior quality of stone, and hide this inferiority in the yellow tinge which the gold imparts; and we may take pride to ourselves accordingly.⁷⁰

Here we can glimpse how Victorians imagined that setting diamonds in gold masked the "purity" of the gemstone, where purity refers to the stone's whiteness or colourlessness. In another commentary on why the French would prefer gold settings, the aesthete for *The Times* argued that it had less to do with the diamond's qualities and more to do with the customer's skin colour.

⁶⁷ *Watchmaker, Jeweler, and Silversmith*, October 1 1889, 79. See also "Jewelry – Its Features, Phases, and Fashions in America," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Oct 15 1884, 274; "Increased Use of Jewelry Among Americans," March 1 1887, 76; George Kunz (of Tiffany's), "The Diamond in Various Aspects," July 15 1888, 211.

⁶⁸ "The Ladies of France and Their Diamonds," *Watchmaker, Jeweler, and Silversmith*, Sept 2 1889, 70.

⁶⁹ "The French Exhibition," *Reynold's Newspaper*, April 28 1867; "The Great French Exhibition," *Times*, Sept 16 1867, 10; "English Ceramics and Jewelry at Vienna," *Times*, June 10 1873, 5.

⁷⁰ "The Great French Exhibition," *Times*, September 15 1867, 10.

Weaving an elaborate argument, the commentator began with the supposition that jewelry, unlike other ornamental design, is about showing skin:

Jewelry is this Exhibition follows a law of progress the very opposite of that which obtains in gold and silver plate. In plate we see the efforts of the artists to variegate the colour of the precious metals as much as possible; in jewelry, on the other hand, we can see a general but somewhat unconscious effort of the leading artists to moderate the tone of colour. Now this is curious, for a jewel is essentially a thing of bright colour, and to reject or to moderate colour in jewelry seems almost like an attempt to set at nought its character. In these matters, however, we must consider carefully the nature of the object obtained.⁷¹

Whereas plate was meant to be the primary ornament in a table-setting, jewelry's function was to augment a woman's beauty. Thus,

colours are to be used in the adornment of a surface which is itself beautifully adorned. To the human eye the human skin in its perfection is the fairest thing in nature, and presents the most wonderful of all tints...A pretty woman should be sparing of personal ornaments. She does not need them, and they are only intrusive. But if use them she must, then at least she must be careful of the colours. Gems of more decided colour...may show in a woman's dress, and even in her hair, but they must not go near her skin, as a general rule, if that skin be fine.⁷²

It followed that fair skin was beautiful and that the art of the jeweler was to show off that fair skin, indeed progress in terms of jewelry could be measured by how well jewelers were able to show off fair skin. He argued that jewelers could not rely on any classical standard to inform their design because British jewelers catered to a whiter market: "people begin to fancy that if they get an article of jewelry which is 'pure' in the historical sense it will be pure in the artistic sense. Does it follow that because an Assyrian, an Egyptian, or an Etruscan lady, with a dark, olive tint of complexion, thought fit to adorn herself with much gold, therefore it would be right for an English girl to strew her forehead with gold coins or her neck with little gold baskets?"⁷³

⁷¹ "The Great French Exhibition," *Times*, September 11 1867, 10.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

Thus, because the French supplied Latin America with its jewelry, French efforts to show off skin colour were fundamentally different from British jewelers:

The Brazilian comes upon the stage in the most extravagant costume, with a face of coppery tint, that reddens with the effect of many libations. For this glaring individual the Frenchman caters to a great extent...But what matters it to us in these northern latitudes that the people of southern lands set off their dusky hues with splashes of radiant colour? We have to study complexions the most delicately coloured, that require far different adornment; and it will be found that nearly all the best jewelry in the Exhibition is more quiet in colour than it has ever been in modern times...Those...who...are ready to pave a woman's neck with emeralds, take care, by surrounding them with heaps of diamonds, that these enormous masses of green shall not come into immediate contrast with the flesh.⁷⁴

This commentary contains a kind a biological, racialized fashion imperative rooted in skin color, associating whiteness with the global North and English beauty and non-whiteness with the foreign and gaudy. It disciplined the jewelry-wearer as much as the jewelry-maker: in order to perform her Englishness, a woman had to exhibit the whiteness of her skin *through* her taste in jewelry: silver and diamonds next to the skin, color insulated by whiteness. Conversely, the commentator also prescribed markers of non-white, un-English taste: a profusion of color and “inappropriate” use of gold. The stakes of making an inappropriate jewelry fashion choice were then to throw a person’s racial and national identity into question. This only bolstered the diamond market because it made diamonds always the "safe" choice and a necessary component of jewelry that featured other gemstones. The article hinted that in pitching their wares to customers with white skin in the colonies and Britain, British jewelers were not implicated in the vulgarizing of European jewelry. By 1873, critics noted that French designers were beginning to set diamonds only in silver – interestingly, just as they were beginning to lose their hold on the

⁷⁴ “The Great French Exhibition,” *Times*, September 11 1867, 10.

Latin American market -- and by the Paris Universalle of 1889, the practice was ubiquitous in British, French, German, and American exhibits.⁷⁵

Another seemingly British trend in jewelry that incurred language about "purity" and racialized undertones was known as the "One Colour Rule" in the pages of *Jeweller and Metalworker*: "the theory that a jewel should have but one prevailing colour, and that the dress on which it is worn should harmonise with it."⁷⁶ White diamonds, then, were the only gemstone that could be used in conjunction with a stone of one colour; in "tasteful" British jewelry shops, a customer could find an emerald and diamond necklace but not an emerald and ruby one. The rule was also supposed to apply to bouquets of flowers. Jewelry critics built up the "One Colour" discourse in opposition to German and Indian designers who valued the mixing of gemstones of different colors, not to mention the mixing of materials -- the Germans incorporated wood and leather into some designs and Gujarati jewelers often used enamelling alongside precious gemstones.⁷⁷ While German jewelers argued that a variety of colors in a piece enabled women to wear their jewelry with any dress, British commentators decried this as a vulgarization of gemstone aesthetics, a "one-size fits all," democratized approach to jewelry production that was distasteful. Tonks characterized German design as a clever ploy to streamline production, keep costs down, and play to, as he had it, the lowest common denominator in taste the world over. If this was a conscious decision by jewelers in Hanau and

⁷⁵ "English Ceramics and Jewelry at Vienna," *Times*, June 10 1873, 10.

⁷⁶ "The Jewelry Trade in 1877," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Jan 1 1878, 194.

⁷⁷ In this vein, Russian jewelers were accused of being "too oriental" in their designs: "more or less gorgeous, [but] bearing the traces of barbaric taste and Oriental splendour." The special Vienna Exhibition correspondent for *Times* in 1873 went on to note that, unlike the other European exhibitors who offered a wide price range of jewelry, the Russian exhibits were almost exclusively high-end; this, he reported, revealed that there was no middle class in Russia, which again proved the nation's "Oriental" and "barbaric" stage of development. See "Eastern Europe in the Vienna Exhibition," *Times*, July 1 1873, 4. Similarly, Romanian jewelry "[is] thoroughly Oriental, and smacks strongly of barbarism." There was a thriving Russian middling class trade in goods: London and Amsterdam jewelers and gem-traders depended in no small measure on Russian orders for the middle-class trade. See "Markets: Diamonds," *Watchmaker, Jeweler, and Silversmith*, May 1 1893, 56.

Pfozheim, it worked: by the 1880s, German manufacturers had taken over the lucrative Latin American trade and, in the minds of Birmingham jewelers, were honing in on British colonial markets.⁷⁸

As I discussed in Chapter 2 in the context of the Koh-i-Noor's display in 1851, the relationship between British and Indian jewelry aesthetics was vexed, predicated on appropriation and denial of that appropriation. While Indian jewelers such as Framjee Pestonjee Bhumgara of Bombay or Messrs. P. Orr and Sons of Madras sold their products in Europe and North America, British commentators denied their success, berating Indian design as being too exotic, "oriental," and hopelessly local -- only suitable for Indian buyers.⁷⁹ In a comparatively sympathetic reading from *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Indian design was described thusly:

The surfaces were covered with a profuse display of rubies and emeralds, further embellished with very brilliant enamels. With this feature noticeable is also the difference in the way the gems are displayed to what they are with us. In English jewellery the stones usually form part of the design, and in so doing contribute to increase its beauty and worth; in using a number of stones we seldom isolate them, but usually mass them in some ornamental form, subordinate to the shape of the article on which they are placed. In the Indian Jewellery the general contour or shape is not so much studied. . . almost any ground would serve, the placing of the stones having very little relation to the form of the ground work. An English workman, in placing a number of stones on a round shield, in all probability would choose some form to allow him to mass the stones in the centre. The Indian scatters them all over, and not placing two together, they look as if they had dropped on accidentally; but still the stones are so related to the enamels used in conjunction with rubies, it would be such a subdued colour as lilac, or a contrast, as white; but the Indian freely uses a red, not alone, but in conjunction with white and black; . . . it prevents the single stone being seen to the best advantage.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ "The Depression of Forty Years Ago," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 15 1884, 15; "The Jewelry Trade in 1877," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Jan 1 1878, 194.

⁷⁹ "Indian art by Dr. Zerffi," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 15 1874, 161.

⁸⁰ Arthur McKEwan, "Foreign Jewelry," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, August 1 1874, 194. See also "Swami Jewelry," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, October 1 1876, 436. See also George CM Birdwood, *Paris Universal Exhibition of 1878: Handbook to the British Indian Section*, (London: Royal Commission, 1878), 68-76.

In contrast, aesthetes argued that British jewelry followed the "One Colour" rule, indelibly separating itself from Indian design. They imagined that this rule held for British jewelry above all, but was also recognized by French and North American designers. By 1889, exhibition commentators noted that while the one colour theory "has held sway for a long time," French designers and notably Tiffany & Co. were beginning to break it by mimicking the look of flowers with their enamelled designs.⁸¹ British design, they argued, would be the last bastion of the theory.⁸²

International exhibitions, then, enabled a host of "diamond talk" to be aired around the subject of jewelry and compelled each fairgoer-jewelry-shopper into placing themselves within the socio-political map of jewelry and diamond jewelry appreciation. Aesthetic rules denoting a specifically British version of privilege built around whiteness and diamond appreciation were gradually codified in this discourse, disciplining jewelry designers, customers, and wearers alike. It was not enough to simply wear diamonds, they had to be performed "correctly" in order to signify enfranchisement within British imperial culture. Of course, with individual exhibitions, jewelers were not particularly interested in intervening in the *longue durée* of jewelry fashion, having instead the more practical and immediate goals of attracting interest and selling pieces: in as much as there were unspoken rules about what was appropriate jewelry, these rules were broken to deliver exactly the kind of spectacle jewelry stalls promised at exhibition. This imperative sometimes eventuated in the display of the macabre and bizarre: jewelry made from human body parts, such as a necklace of eyeballs, seventeenth-century leather pieces made from "the hide of woman", a ring with a large red and green stone in it purported to be made out of the body of a Russian aristocrat's wife, and all kinds of items made from hair, bones, and even

⁸¹ "The Jewelry in the Paris Exhibition – First Notice," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, July 1 1889, 203.

⁸² "The Jewelry Trade in 1899," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Jan 1 1900, 15.

fingernails.⁸³ It is important to note that most body-part jewels were made from women's bodies, literally objectifying women in jewelry discourse in ways that remind us how the Koh-i-Noor was anthropomorphised in 1851 (as I discussed in Chapter 2), and how the connection was often made between women and gemstones, women *as* gemstones.

Jewelers also attempted to engage fairgoer-customers with topical, fad pieces that often featured diamonds, particularly after diamond prices dropped in the 1870s and 80s: diamond-encrusted, "Sacred Elephant Jewelry" to celebrate the Zoological Garden's exhibition of an albino elephant in 1884; diamond-encrusted plaques devoted to swift racehorses; charms to protect wearers against bad luck incurred through playing "Ouija," a Parisian sensation in 1886; diamond pins to commemorate the discovery of a new star in the Auriga constellation of the Milky Way galaxy; "swami jewelry" to memorialize the Prince of Wales' tours in India in 1875; diamond-tipped, golden arrows for the lady learning archery, a fad in 1888; pieces inspired by any and all archaeological finds from Pompeii's jewelry to the Ashante royal gold to Aztec finds; and, of course, pieces designed to commemorate royal milestones be they coronations, weddings, births, deaths, or jubilees.⁸⁴

Exploiting the connection between jewelry and the rich and famous was key for drawing onlookers and press coverage. The central pieces of Hancock's offerings were, famously, the jewels of Lord and Lady Dudley, which contained among other things several necklaces made of large and impressive diamonds. As the section from Sala included towards the beginning of this chapter demonstrates, people would line up to see "the Duchess of Sennacherib's wedding

⁸³ *Jeweller and Metalworker* wondered if some of these exhibits were even legal given that it was illegal to have a person stuffed like one would have an animal stuffed; see July 2 1881, 124. See also: "A Wife Concentrated in a Ring," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 1 1890, 180.

⁸⁴ "The White Elephant," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, February 15 1884, 35 – the exhibition was coordinated by Barnum; *Jeweller and Metalworker*, May 15 1886, 169; "The Ouija," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, February 16 1886, 61; *Jeweller and Metalworker*, April 1 1888, 97; "New Star in the Milky Way," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, February 15 1892, 56.

jewels, [go] into ecstasies over the Duke of Pampotter's jewelled hawk; or Mr. Grimgribber's blue brilliant, or Sir Isaac Ingot's sapphire as big as a plover's egg, or the late Prince Evercrazy's diamond breeches."⁸⁵ This celebrity-jewelry appeal went beyond international exhibitions. South Kensington Museum, for example, featured special exhibitions of socialites' jewelry, Madame Tussaud's waxworks in Marylebone usually had replicas of pieces worn at recent balls and operas to accessorize their celebrity mannequins, replicas were also made for use on the stage – a major site of spectacle for Victorian audience-consumers, and department stores like Debenham's advertised auctions of jewelry of the famous as a way of promoting the store in general.⁸⁶ High-end houses such as the crown jewelers Hunt & Roskell or Garrard's often displayed pieces they were working on for aristocrats, but this advertising strategy extended to the middling retail market as well. Edwin Streeter, the New Bond Street jeweler partnered with Harry Emanuel, campaigned hard to have the Princess of Wales' wedding gifts which mostly consisted of diamond jewelry displayed in his shop, and other jewelers followed suit with other celebrity weddings. By the late 1880s, it had become standard practice for jewelers to display a house piece and announce that it was made for someone famous – whether or not that person had commissioned the item or even came to buy or receive it.⁸⁷ In this way, jewelers familiarized the public with aesthetic rules for jewelry display and information about who owned what pieces.

Thus, through the jewelry on offer in the jewelry stalls at international exhibition, fairgoer-consumers were compelled to "place" themselves within a field of competing national-

⁸⁵ Sala, 189.

⁸⁶ See Debenham's adverts in the front and back of Charles A. Payton, *The Diamond Diggings of South Africa: A Personal and Practical Account*, (London: Horace Cox, 1872); "Madame Tussaud's Exhibition," *The Observer*, June 9 1889, 7; "The Female Beauty Gallery," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Feb 15 1880, 40; "An Exhibition of Diamonds," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, April 15 1881, 71; "The Princess of Wales Presents at South Kensington," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, July 1 1876, 291. Like Tussaud's, in the context of the Paris Universalle in 1867, one Parisian confectioner made lifesized sugar-and-wax mannequins of aristocratic women from the First and Second Empire – decorated with real diamond jewelry. Said *The Daily News*, "Paste, forsooth! They carry about their waxen necks diamonds of the first water." "The Paris Exhibition of 1867," *The Daily News*, January 3 1867.

⁸⁷ Patrick Streeter, xx.

imperial tastes, and perform their enfranchisement into respectable, privileged society through enjoying the proper kind of diamond jewelry. The fact of the diamond market – the quantity and quality of diamonds available to the consumer, its distribution on a global scale, and its monopolization – was never far from aesthetic considerations about diamond jewelry.

Regalia and "Monster Diamonds"

The pieces at jewelers' stalls and on sale at exhibition were one kind of spectacle held out to the fairgoer-consumer as a possibility, something they could own or aspire to own. In other words, a spectacle that they could possibly enjoy in their own domestic space. In contrast, there was another kind of jewelry shown at exhibition that was, by definition, unattainable for the quotidian fairgoer and beyond price: regalia collections (crown jewels) and "monster diamonds." Many monster diamonds, such as the Koh-i-Noor, were part of regalia collections; and monsters that had been newly unearthed were often touted as being destined for inclusion in some variety of crown jewels. Because crown jewels were linked to the body of the sovereign both literally and figuratively, a close encounter with the King's crown, for instance, was like a brush with royalty. Pieces that made up the "Crown Jewelry" could also be cherished for their relic status, having thought to have been passed down from sovereign to sovereign, their longevity a symbolic testament to the perpetuity of monarchical (Crown and crown) rule.

In *The Invention of Tradition*, David Cannadine, before he was really famous, showed how the concept of the "Crown Jewelry" and many of the ceremonies associated with it, like ascensions, were created in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries despite the fact that contemporaries believed them to have dated back to time immemorial.⁸⁸ The explosion of diamonds and monster diamonds on offer after the South African discoveries allowed monarchs

⁸⁸ David Cannadine, "The Context, Performance, and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', C. 1820-1977," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Terence Ranger and Eric Hobsbawm (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

to embellish their collections in order to keep up with and ignite the imaginations of their subjects. The royal monster diamond, however, seemed to be able to take on a persona of its own, as I discussed in Chapter 2, and after the popularity of the Koh-i-Noor display in 1851, no exhibition was complete without at least one giant piece of crystallized carbon: while 1851 featured the Koh-i-Noor and India Blue (Hope) Diamonds; Paris in 1855 displayed the Regent or Pitt Diamond among other French crown jewels; London's 1862 exhibition showcased the Koh-i-Noor again, this time alongside the Star of the South, a recent Brazilian find; Paris' 1867 fair again displayed the French crown jewels including the Regent (or Pitt); and Vienna in 1873 featured the Russian crown jewels which contained the famous Orlov Diamond as well as the Austrian Yellow and Dreisden Green. By the late 1870s, monster diamond finds in South Africa were fairly regular, and these gemstones, such as the Porter Rhodes Diamond, the Jubilee, and the Great White or Imperial, were featured in the Parisian exhibitions in 1878, 1889 and 1900, as well as the Chicago Worlds Fair which also featured the Hope in 1893. Because the monster diamond exhibits were always popular, the crowds around them were used to gauge exhibition attendance. In the 1862 London Exhibition, for example, days of low attendance were described as those when onlookers did not have to jostle for space in front of the Koh-i-Noor and Star of the South.⁸⁹

Intense interest built up in the monster diamonds of the world from 1851 onwards, as well as the royal regalias of the world, and this interest brought an explosion of different meanings for each gemstone as the stones were seen and discussed in a multitude of contexts, for a variety of reasons, from the commercial to the monarchical to the national to the imperial-colonial. Indeed, the boundaries between these demarcations were indelibly blurred in this

⁸⁹ "The International Exhibition," *The Daily News*, September 15 1862. The Star of the South was removed from the exhibition in August 1862 with no explanation. "The International Exhibition," *The Daily News*, August 27 1862.

discourse. The circumstances of each monster diamond display were subtly different from exhibition to exhibition, stone to stone. While the Koh-i-Noor in 1851 was shown by the crown, in 1862 it was shown as a joint display between Garrards of London and the Coster diamond-cutting firm of Amsterdam. The Star of the South was shown by Coster as well alongside other Brazilian finds. The East India Company exhibited the Darya-i-Nur in 1855. The Eureka Diamond and other subsequent South African finds were sometimes shown in the context of the South Africa exhibits, sometimes by jewelers in the jewelry section, sometimes by diamond cutters. The Russian regalia was featured in the jewelry quarter and virtually stood in for all Russian jewelry at the 1873 Vienna exhibition. The French government was always behind the showing of the Regent diamond, whether it served a monarchical or republican state. As I discussed in regard to the Koh-i-Noor in Chapter 3, the context of the exhibit in some ways determined the meaning of the gemstone in the exhibition, whether crowds would read the Koh-i-noor, for example, as a symbol of conquest in India (1851) or a mascot of European diamond-cutting prowess (1862). Thus, each stone was deployed to do specific advertising work for whomever exhibited it – jewelers, a colonial state, a mining company, diamond-cutters, a monarchy or aristocrat – but over the space of several exhibitions, one stone could be deployed in a number of ways. Moreover, more often than not there were several monster diamonds on offer at a given exhibition, causing commentators to compare and contrast them, and as the century wore on, it became almost impossible to write about one famous diamond without mentioning a host of others. In this way, a monster diamond discourse developed out of exhibition culture, a discourse that created a pantheon of diamond celebrities at once always associated with each other as well as the details of diamond production, manufacture, and appropriation.

Monster diamonds and monster diamond discourse found ever-increasing currency outside of the exhibition halls, in ways that only propelled the popularity of these diamonds at exhibition. The British Museum and, beginning in the 1870s, the Natural History Museum, in London have displayed glass replicas of the Koh-i-Noor and other famous diamonds for at least 150 years, positioning them as ambassadors to the mineralogy cases. As the diamond scientist James Tennant noted, a burst of interest in the literal crown occurred when the Tower and its collection of jewelry was selectively opened to the public in the 1860s; this interest compounded when the admission fee was done away with in 1875.⁹⁰ While we can see the international exhibition as bolstering interest in the Tower and vice-versa, in 1862, the year of London's "Festival of Industry," the two competed for attendees. Exhibition-goers intent on seeing the Koh-i-Noor complained that Beefeater guards at the Tower were telling people that the *real* Koh-i-Noor was in the Tower and the one on display in Hyde Park was a fake. Jewelry and department stores also displayed these replicas in the hopes of attracting customers. The practice was so widespread that it became the pet peeve of mineralogists Nevil Story-Maskelyne and Lazarus Fletcher because there was no governing body to certify the realism of replicas. They complained that the Kensington department store Harrod's, in particular, often displayed mockups that were patently larger than the real diamonds.⁹¹

Edwin Streeter, the Bond Street jeweler, was especially enterprising when it came to using celebrity diamonds to advertise his business, positioning himself as an expert with his 1877 publication of *Precious Stones and Gems*, the bulk of which was devoted to diamonds, his 1882 publication of his *Great Diamonds of the World*, and finally *The Koh-i-Nur Diamond: Its Romance and History* (1895). While experts pointed out dozens of inaccuracies, Streeter's

⁹⁰ James Tennant, "The English State Crown," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Nov 1 1875, 636.

⁹¹ L. J. Spencer to Asscler, 4 Dec 1909, NHMA, DF10/50, Pk1; DF 17/63, "Notes on Diamond Models in the Museum Collection"

writing was nevertheless esteemed for its drama and romance, a recipe for success that Streeter had learned from his partner, Harry Emanuel's, foray into the publishing world with *Diamonds and Precious Stones* (1867). Complimenting his authorial identity, Streeter's shop famously contained a case of replicas devoted to "Great Diamonds of the World," and the jeweler was instrumental in showcasing (and trying to sell) monster South African diamonds, such as the Porter Rhodes, which his shop exhibited in 1880.⁹² While the monster diamond experts of the mid-nineteenth century were scientists – Story-Maskelyne, Tennent, Brewster, for example – by the 1880s, this had become a crowded field also containing jewelers, popular writers, and aesthetes (such as William Jones, FSA, who published *History and Mystery of Precious Stones* in 1880), much to the chagrin of academic mineralogists. Whereas Story-Maskelyne used the “romance” of big diamonds to “sell” mineralogy to the general public in the 1850s and 60s, his successor, Lazarus Fletcher, refused to indulge this kind of pedestrian interest. A reporter for *The Strand* magazine, for example, wrote to Fletcher in 1895 asking for his help with a story about monster diamonds, romance, and the mineralogy collections. Fletcher responded: "I grieve to say there is nothing romantic about mineral specimens. People come into the Minerals Gallery occasionally in a more or less romantic frame of mind, but there is no record of any visitor having left the Minerals Gallery and indulged in Romance again: minerals have a wonderfully sobering effect on all that have to do with them. If you find yourself in the neighbourhood, have any time, and will look in to see me, I shall be happy to show you what we do for the Visitors of the Museum, if it would not depress you too much."⁹³

The profile of monster diamonds was so high that events that included them elicited intense interest in Britain. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the French

⁹² Patrick Streeter, 74.

⁹³ Sir Lazarus Fletcher to W.G. Fitz-Gerald, Nov 5 1895, DF 10/57, Notes on the Colenso Diamond..., NHMA,

government used the occasion of Paris exhibitions to advertise the crown jewels. Several subsequent auctions took place where the French government attempted to offload the *Diamantis de la couronne* and were events in and of themselves. A correspondent for *Jeweller and Metalworker* (JM) described the 1887 auction:

As may be easily supposed, the gathering of buyers and spectators was a large one, and admission to the best places was by ticket. So much has been written upon the precious stones marked down so prosaically in to-day's catalogue that it is needless to enter into the legends of the Regent, the seven jewels of Mazarin, and other world-renowned gems. To-day's sale was carried on according to the ready-money system, forty-eight hours only being given to the buyer to complete the purchase after payment of a deposit. The weight of the stones is not guaranteed where they form part of the setting of Crown jewels... To-day's spectacle was thought so interesting that special seats were reserved for Senators, Deputies and certain high functionaries.⁹⁴

Tiffany and Co. were the major buyers on the day and the writer described the prices they bought at as "good."⁹⁵ Other defunct crown jeweleries were advertised and disposed of in a similar manner and as a matter of public record, most notably Queen Isabella II of Spain's collection in the 1870s. Importantly, the abdicated queen chose London to be the auction market for her jewels, the 1874 lot contained diamonds in the amount of 12 million francs. The New York version of *JM* took a fairly blasé attitude to the whole affair, in contrast to the excitement generated by the sale of French crown jewels: "It is announced that Isabella, ... who was in the Queen business in Spain a few years ago, is about to sell off a few more bushels of jewels. She does this every few weeks, and the fact gives rise to the surmise that she must be in the pawnbroking business in the intervals between sales, or is employed to dispose of bankrupt stocks."⁹⁶ Indeed, by the 1880s, as more and more aristocrats felt the effects of the global

⁹⁴ "Sale of the French Crown Jewels," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, May 15 1887, 158.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ "Notes from all Quarters," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Nov 15 1874, 283; "from *New York Jewelers' Circular*," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, Jan 15 1879, 9.

depression, jewelers in New York, Paris and London complained that the high-end retail market had become a second-hand, auction-house affair.⁹⁷

One of the major collections that took up space in the Victorian imagination was undoubtedly the Russian crown jewels, on display at international exhibitions beginning with the Vienna Exhibition in 1873. Not only was it the largest collection of diamonds in Europe, but it was one frequently in the public spotlight. Elaborate coronation ceremonies in 1855, 1883, and 1894 were described in tremendous detail in the British press. The coronation of Tsar Alexander III, which took place in Moscow in 1883, two years after the shocking assassination of his father Alexander II, was a diamond-studded spectacle brought home to British readers via the illustrated papers. *The Graphic* ran multi-page coverage that included a narrative of the transportation of the Russian regalia from St. Petersburg to Moscow, an extended account of the coronation ceremony and piece-by-piece descriptions, histories, and engravings of the crown jewelry, such as in Figure 5.2.⁹⁸ Of all European regalis, the Russian collection impressed with the sheer number of diamonds in its inventory, as the caption in Figure 5.2 explicates by noting that the Czar Ivan, Peter, and Czarina Anna Ivanovna crowns contained 900, 847, and “about 2500,” diamonds, respectively.⁹⁹ This laundry list was a shorthand way of enhancing the illustrations, inviting readers to imagine a diamond extravaganza as well as recall ones they had already witnessed at exhibition or in jewelry store windows. Indeed, it was possible that some

⁹⁷ “French Notes,” *Jeweller and Metalworker*, August 15 1888, 247.

⁹⁸ “The Coronation of the Czar,” *The Graphic*, June 2 1883, 547, 547-62. The June 2 1883 coverage of the Russian coronation partially eclipsed interest in a more domestic royal event: the 64th birthday celebration of Queen Victoria.

⁹⁹ “The Coronation of the Czar – the Russian Crown Jewels,” *The Graphic*, June 2 1883, 553. The Russian collection featured more diamonds than even the Portuguese collection which had been amassed through Brazilian tribute. The Russian regalia is somewhat unique among European regalis in that the vast majority of it was purchased, including the celebrated Orlov Diamond. The Orlov was so named because it was supposed to have been given to Catherine II by one of her lovers and political allies, Grigory Grigoryevich Orlov, though it was well-known in Victorian discourse that Catherine had commissioned Orlov to purchase the diamond from an Armenian merchant. In contrast, the major diamonds in the British and the Portuguese collections were derived from tribute or plunder. The French collection had a reputation for being acquired through conquest, as well, but the providence of many gems was hard to know for sure as they were hidden and changed hands so many times during the late eighteenth and nineteenth century.

readers had directly viewed the Russian crowns, on display at the Vienna Exhibition in 1873. Victoria's second son, Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, married Alexander II's only daughter, Marie, in 1874, in consecutive, lavish Greco-Russian and Anglican ceremonies in St. Petersburg, and coverage of these ceremonies only enhanced the attention the Russian regalia received from British readers in Vienna. *The Graphic's* nineteen-page coverage of the wedding included engravings of the regalia (including the Orlov imperial scepter), multiple illustrations of the couple in various crowns, and accompanying text that explained the history the regalia and the Orlov diamond in particular.

The Orlov diamond in British discourse often served as a muted symbol for the tensions and connections between Britain and Russia, as well as their respective claims on Asia. This was because the Orlov and the Koh-i-Noor were inextricably linked in Victorian discourse: both stones were from India and there was widespread speculation that they were different halves of the Great Mogul, a mega-rock of some 787 carats claimed to have been seen by Tavernier during his Indian travels. Indeed, as he admits in the preface, as much as Wilkie Collins based *The Moonstone* on the Koh-i-Noor, he also based it on stories about the Orlov, particularly the details about the diamond forming part of an Indian idol's eye.¹⁰⁰ The mounting Russophobia that characterized British attitudes in the second half of the nineteenth century played out in a contest between monster royal diamonds of familial providence: the Koh-i-Noor, a symbol of Britain's imperial prowess, re-cut so as to have the flaws removed and to make the gemstone sparkle versus the Orlov, also known as the Russian Black because of the unique dark fleck the diamond has at its center, retaining its "oriental" cut and set atop the imperial sceptre.

Given the density of information on monster diamonds available to Victorians in the second half of the nineteenth century, promoted and bolstered by diamonds at exhibition, it is not

¹⁰⁰ Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (New York: Random House, 2001, c. 1868), xxiv.

far-fetched to talk about a collective monster diamond imaginary, a widespread understanding of symbolic global power based on the ownership of big diamonds and diamond jewelry. The comprehensiveness of this imaginary can be found in unlikely places in the archive, in ways that underline just how prevalent discourse about diamonds was post-1851, such as in the didactic sermon, "Diamonds in the Dust: A New Year's Address for Sunday School," written by Sir Charles Reed in 1866. Reed, an advocate for popular education, somehow felt it was appropriate to recite a commercial description of a handful of the world's large diamonds in the space of his treatise:

The Koh-i-noor, the great diamond of England, which I dare say you saw at the Exhibition of 1862, is valued at £276,768. Every great nation has its diamond. The Russian one was stolen by a soldier from the eye of a heathen god in one of the Indian temples. He had £90,000 given him for his unlawful prize, and it is now valued at £140,000. The diamond of the crown of France is worth £141,058. The Austrian, bought at a mineral stall as a rock crystal, for a few pence, is worth £153,682; and the Portuguese is almost priceless, the enormous sum of £5,644,800 being the supposed value of this one stone.¹⁰¹

The printed version of Reed's treatise even includes a diagram of the Koh-i-Noor which perhaps a Sunday School teacher could have passed around to the children for dramatic effect during the lesson, yet another kind of exhibition for the famous gemstone. In the space of the lesson, Reed rehearses at length all sorts of knowledge about diamonds delivered in the form of a moralistic tale about "Simple Simon," who finds what turns out to be the Koh-i-Noor in a gutter. He relates false but pervasive knowledge that diamonds were venerated in biblical times; information about the process of diamond cutting (as I discussed in Chapter 3); and other details about the rigors of diamond mining. Reed's lesson is an example of how pervasive and complex knowledge about diamonds was after 1851, how casual information about diamonds, often monster diamonds, was never delivered as a single fact or message (a la "Diamonds are Forever") but rather came as a

¹⁰¹ Charles Reed, *Diamonds in the Dust: A New Year's Address for Sunday School*, (London: Sunday School Union, 1866).

package almost always containing or encoding information about where diamonds came from and how through their distribution and appreciation people could understand difference in terms of gender, class, race, ethnicity, geopolitics and so on.

The effect of international exhibitions' reliance on monster diamonds and celebrated jewelry to draw crowds did more than compel an imaginary map of world geopolitics through diamond ownership or instill widespread diamond appreciation amongst people who did not necessarily own diamonds. The astonishing level of diamond literacy fairgoers and newspaper readers gained, on a casual level, the degree to which it was general knowledge that who owned what diamond or what piece of jewelry and what those pieces looked like, manifested certain expectations of owners of these pieces. In other words, it mandated how certain individuals were to perform their privileged and/or subject positions within imperial culture. A popular pastime in London was aristocrat-watching. As Reed describes, schoolchildren and other people who found themselves with free time, would stakeout the fashionable areas of city – Belgravia, the West End, Kensington – and entertain themselves by watching elite come and go in their carriages:

[Simon] would lounge along the side of some of the fashionable squares, and when he saw an awning over the front door, and a carpet laid down across the pavement, he would hook himself on the railings by his arm, and watch the blazing lights, peep in at the open door, admire the bespangled and powdered footmen, and then the fine people who alighted there to dine. He did not envy the splendour, nor, as other boys, looking down the area, did not covet the dinner; he simply wanted to feast his eyes on the horses, the trappings, the armorial bearings, the stars and ornaments.¹⁰²

At times, the crowd could be vocal about the entertainment not being up to their expectations. This is clearly seen with regards to jewelry-wearing in the visit of the Shah of Persia to London in early July 1889. What the *Pall Mall Gazette* described as “big crowds” greeted the Shah as he toured the city between July 1 and July 6, attending balls, the opera, the ballet, Buckingham

¹⁰² Ibid., 6.

Palace, and receiving visitors. On the evening of the 2nd, he took in an opera, “The Arabian Nights,” at Covent Garden that was also attended by five princesses, Lord and Lady Rothschild, and a number of other aristocratic guests. The Princess of Wales wore her “famous diamond tiara” and the *Pall Mall* described the scene: “all over the theatre it positively rained precious stones, and there was hardly a lady on the grand or pit tiers who did not ‘sport’ something magnificent in the way of a ‘head-piece.’” The Shah, on the other hand, was dressed comparatively demurely: he wore a number of diamonds but did not wear “his famous aigrette” containing the Shah Diamond, the largest in the world, or his famous emerald. The Shah was booed by the crowds, to the half-embarrassment, half-amusement of the *Pall Mall* reporter. The next night he took in a play at Leicester Square and again the scene was a diamond spectacular, with the Princess of Wales wearing her “famous grandtiara” a piece of diamonds and sapphires. This time the Shah wore more diamonds, but still the crowds were not amused, heckling him to wear his famous pieces. The reporter for the *Pall Mall* asked Spencer Churchill, the Shah’s handler, why the Shah had not worn his aigrette or the emerald: “[Churchill] tells me that he did his best to persuade his Majesty to wear [them] on this occasion, but his Duskiness refused, as he does not care for ‘dressing up.’” Finally, on the 5th of July, the Shah wore the famous gemstones (presumably against his will) to Albert Hall and was cheered. Under the title “The Circus Side of Royalty,” the *Pall Mall* described the “many-wived Shah” as owing “no small part of his piquancy in the eyes of the crowd to his polygamous domesticity. Then, again, the Shah is at least a despot, a man with power of life and death in his hands, who can put an army in motion by his word, and who recognizes no law higher than his own sovereign will and pleasure. Add to all this the charm which is exercised by jewels, and we need go no further to discover the real nature of the popular interest in a Shah who wears an emerald as big as a hen’s egg and powders

his uniform with diamonds.” The *Observer* concurred, "The crowds who come to look at his Majesty of Persia, and to admire his jewels, and to cheer him as he passes through the streets are little if at all interested in the newspaper controversy – on the question of whether the Shah is or is not a 'barbarian.'"¹⁰³ The *Pall Mall* went on to say that because the “monarchical and aristocratic managers of the Constitutional Show have brought out all their circus properties in order to do him honour” his tour was a success.¹⁰⁴

The privileged identity that diamonds marked was contingent upon the individual performing their privilege in mandated ways, through donning their famous jewelry and through creating diamond spectacles. The audience demanded it. Victoria's wearing of the Koh-i-Noor (in a necklace) to the opening of parliament in 1867 – one of the few times she wore it in public – should be understood in the context of the anticipation of French crown jewel spectacular that was about to open in Paris. The queen was playing her own role as a famous diamond owner.¹⁰⁵ In another context, the commentator for *The Ladies: A Journal of the Court of Fashion & Society* expressed approval at the turnout to the "Official Reception to the 2nd Annual International Exhibition" in London, because "the ladies, for it is to them the success of [a] event must be attributed, were most magnificently dressed, thereby giving the arena the appearance of a huge flowerbed, filled with the most beautiful exotics whilst diamonds glittered on the necks like dewdrops on lilies."¹⁰⁶ It was a lady's duty to wear her diamonds and provide the proper ornamentation to events of that sort, in order for both the event and the lady's attendance at it to be successful.

¹⁰³ "The Visit of the Shah," *The Observer*, June 30 1889, 4.

¹⁰⁴ *The Pall Mall Gazette*: "Visit of the Shah," July 1 1889, 2; "The Shah and His Visitors," and "Shah-Seeing," July 2 1889, 4, 6; "Shah at the Opera," July 3 1889, 4; "The Shah's Visit to the Guildhall," July 3 1889, 4; "The Shah and the Jews," July 4 1889, 4; "The Shah at the 'Sassooneries'," July 5 1889, 4; "The Circus Side of Royalty," July 6 1889, 1; "The Shah at Albert Hall," July 6 1889, 4.

¹⁰⁵ "The Opening of Parliament" and "Court Circular," *Times*, Feb 6 1867, 6, 12; "Social Topics," *Manchester Times*, May 11 1867.

¹⁰⁶ "Official Reception at the International Exhibition," *The Ladies*, May 4 1872, 136.

In the case of the demands placed on the Shah during his visit to London, as it was with the Indian government's demands of the "Indian Princes" to wear their best diamonds to the Imperial Assemblage of 1877 and the royal Jubilees of '87 and '97, not only did the Shah have to perform his station as a royal aristocrat but he was pressured to "play oriental" for a Western audience.¹⁰⁷ As I discussed in Chapter 2, the association of diamond appreciation with India and the Middle East – the stuff of the Arabian nights – was pervasive throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The "diamond dusting" of the Shah's uniform must be read as the result of a cultural negotiation between performer and his audience. The fact that a predominantly white, middling-to-lower class British crowd could feel entitled to the spectacle of an appropriately bejewelled Shah, entitled enough to voice their displeasure if their expectations were not met, offers us a glimpse into how racism, imperialism, and orientalism mitigated any simple reading of class subordination in this dynamic. Certain identities had to be performed through diamonds in order to maintain the status quo. This episode also hints at the success of exhibitionism in Victorian culture: the more the public saw of the jewelry of the rich and famous, the more they felt entitled to see.

Thus, the experience of regalia and monster diamonds at exhibition, though the everyday fairgoer could not purchase them (except for the French jewels later in the century), compelled fairgoers to experience a certain sense of place within global geopolitics. The various narratives of each monster diamond acquisition (from India, from Brazil, from South Africa) and its showings, combined into what might be thought of as a monster diamond commodity chain that facilitated the movement of major pieces of material culture from colonized to colonizer, from

¹⁰⁷ To negotiate between the performance of "Westernness" and "Easternness" was a trick for Dulip Singh as well. See Michael Alexander and Sushila Anand, *Queen Victoria's Maharajah : Duleep Singh, 1838-93* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980). For an 1893 American corollary of this in the context of the Chicago World's Fair, see "Diamonds His Hobby," *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 15 1893, 13, on "Abubaker, the Sultan of Johore."

the producers to the consumers, from the once powerful to the now powerful. The movement of monster diamonds showcased the fault lines of global power in ways that delighted fairgoers because they, themselves, were placed within the chain, within the privileged group that got to enjoy the "power" of the monster diamond. That privilege to see famous diamonds was a meaningful one and when denied it, crowds protested vehemently.

The Chain on Display

While the jewelry stalls and the discourse they generated worked on fairgoer-consumers to understand themselves as diamond jewelry appreciators and understand diamond jewelry as crucial to the policing of hierarchies of privilege, a number of other exhibits simultaneously compelled fairgoers to comprehend their acts of consumption vis-à-vis the diamond commodity chain. These were namely the diamond cutting exhibits of Amsterdam and, beginning in 1872, the mining exhibits that detailed Kimberley production.

What is most significant about how knowledge of the means of diamond production and supply was available alongside aesthetic and consumption-related information about the product in the space of the exhibition is that oftentimes the two sides of the market – production and consumption – were shown in close proximity to one another and were even blended together. In other words, an opportunity to learn about diamond mining and cutting was never far from the opportunity to buy diamond jewelry or see a monster diamond. Fairgoers were compelled to "place" themselves at the end of a vast commodity chain and understand their actions in consuming diamond jewelry as integral to that chain. By educating consumers about the various segments of the chain, a number of players hoped to raise interest in diamond buying and the diamond market.

This education began at the jewelry stalls themselves. Often jewelers included "raw" or uncut diamonds in their displays as a way to emphasize the transformative effects of the jeweler's craft. The British house Hancock, for example, always showcased a selection of loose diamonds in various stages of manufacture (rough, cut, half-set) and Hunt and Roskell even included a diamond-cutting demonstration in their 1862 exhibit.¹⁰⁸ Whereas it would be unusual to walk into a jewelry store today and be able to view rough diamonds, this was an important component of jewelry displays in the latter nineteenth century. Moreover jewelers used information about the trade to advertise diamonds and advertise the jeweler's powerful position within the commodity chain. There is no better example of this than the insignia for Edwin Streeter's advertisements in the 1880s and '90s. (See Figure 5.3) Streeter was a major advertiser in *The Times* and *The Illustrated London News* and ran his full-page ads for Streeter and Co., Ltd., "The 'World's' Jewellers," with the insignia shown in Figure 5.3 containing the banner, "Gems & Pearls: From the Ends of the Earth." [Insert figure 5.3] The diamond-centricity of his message is clear as Britannia, holding the imperial orb, sits atop a world in which the eastern section of Brazil, Ellore (also known as Golconda, the infamous region of Indian diamond production) and Kimberley come under her light.¹⁰⁹ Streeter advertised himself as uniquely positioned within the diamond trade to deliver the best diamond jewelry to his customers; in doing so, he also position consumers as uniquely positioned on a global level to enjoy the fruits of the diamond trade, as if the world was ordered to deliver gemstones to Britannia. English- British taste, when it came to jewelry, necessarily registered in an imperial cosmopolitan vein. Streeter's, as well as the crown jewelers' exhibits, show how the fact of where diamonds came from and the vicissitudes they

¹⁰⁸ "Gems and Jewels of the International Exhibition," *The Daily News*, September 9 1862, 3.

¹⁰⁹ See Advertisement, *Illustrated London News*, October, 1886 (as in Streeter, 65); Advertisement, *Times*, June 23 1897, 8.

passed through to make their way to the consumer were major components of what jewelers advertised to customers.

Other segments of the diamond trade sought to advertise themselves to metropolitan fairgoers – potential diamond owners and potential investors alike. The Coster diamond cutting firm of Amsterdam was particularly keen to dramatize diamond cutting for fairgoers. Noting the popularity of the Koh-i-Noor exhibit in 1851, Coster used his connection with the British royal family gain their permission to show the stone again. Beginning in 1862, the Albert Coster diamond-cutting firm's diamond-cutting and diamond-setting demonstrations, usually in the Dutch section of the exhibition, were staples of worlds fairs and, as Coster cut many of the monster diamonds in Europe, often his displays began with the monster diamond exhibit and enticed fairgoers into the Dutch section. In 1862, the Dutch had a monopoly on the diamond-cutting trade in Europe; by the mid-1870s France and Antwerp had begun to chip away at this supremacy and Tiffany developed his own in-house cutters. This meant that France and the United States often foregrounded their own diamond-cutting demonstrations at exhibitions, attempting to dislodge Holland's almost automatic place in the fair-enthusiast's imaginary map of the diamond world.¹¹⁰ Whatever the case, these practices linked the final product with the process of production: "raw" diamonds were never out of sight and out of mind at exhibition.

As I discussed in Chapter 2 in the context of the Koh-i-Noor, the diamond-cutting discourse thrown up by international exhibitions was triumphalist, Europe's (and Holland's) indelible contribution to the world of jewelry and beauty appreciation. Diamond-cutting was revealed as a major industry that produced jobs, redeeming diamonds and the diamond trade as useful and necessarily of general public interest rather than a guilty pleasure.

¹¹⁰ John Hollingshed, *A Concise History of the International Exhibition of 1862...*, (London: Her Majesty's Commissioners, 1862), 123.

Coster's displays became more and more elaborate, peaking understandably at the Amsterdam International Colonial in 1883 where an entire building was devoted to demonstrating diamond cutting and the diamond trade.¹¹¹ His cutting displays typically included hourly or ongoing demonstrations of diamond-cutting machinery and hundreds of diamonds, sporting the evolution of cuts and various fashions in brilliant cutting on offer from the firm. In honor of Coster's connection with the British monarchy, he named what he considered to be the perfect brilliant cut "The Victoria," and it was the most popular cut between 1873 and about 1893. Parisian and Belgian cutters referred to the design as the "Parisian" and the "Antwerp," respectively.¹¹² At the 1878 Paris Universalle, while the Amsterdam cutting industry was experiencing a devastating depression, French cutters took the opportunity to dominate at exhibition. The display the Roulina firm of Paris set up next to the French jewelry section was described thusly:

The thick plate glass windows which surround the model polishing works are continually occupied by people watching the swiftly revolving discs on which the rough diamond in a setting of lead is laid. Few can imagine that the dirty-looking cone covered in oil and diamond dust is tipped with a stone which when finished will be worth so much a carat, and form part of some costly necklace, or grace the ears of some lady of fashion. There are Cape and Brazilian diamonds in the rough, looking like crystals, and there are stones cut and ready for mounting, reflecting the light from their many facets. The eager crowd watch each detail of the process without wondering what can induce their fellows to give fabulous sums for, and set rich store by, mere crystals which science can reduce to a drop of water, of no real use to any one, and only valuable because we cannot find them like oyster shells in the gutter.¹¹³

The commentary throws up all kinds of imagery that fairgoers could connect with the scene at hand and the meaning of diamonds in general. By pointing on the dirtiness of the process, the commentator underscores the redemptive moment in the diamond's biography, to

¹¹¹ "The Amsterdam Exhibition," *The Leeds Mercury*, September 17 1883; "The Amsterdam Exhibition," *The Belfast N-L*, August 17 1883, 6.

¹¹² "The Art of Diamond Cutting," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, July 1 1893, 17.

¹¹³ "Exhibition Notes," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, September 1 1878, 323.

"grace the ears of some lady of fashion" and the lengths (figurative and literal) that the stone had gone through to reach the customer. The dirtiness of the cutting process also perhaps indicated, in anti-Semitic discourse, an association with Jews and middlemen, the cutting process being a middle segment of the chain. Through the intervention of the cutter, a rock becomes a gemstone – it is "cleaned," while the cutter remains dirty. The diamond transcends its proverbial birthplace (which the commentator points out as the Cape or Brazil) and its middle passage to become white light. While the expert is able to rise above the narrative the display suggests, he notes that the crowd is transfixed but the transformation.

Not to be outdone, the Coster firm responded at the 1889 Paris Universelle with a larger dramatization, this time literally spelling out Amsterdam's claim to the diamond-cutting world in diamonds:

To see diamond cutters at work is always a treat for the public. The most attractive place of that kind at the Exhibition is the Dutch dwelling in the style of the sixteenth century, built in bricks with quaint windows, whose frames are of real Delft. Besides witnessing the various stages of that interesting work, such as roughing, cleaving and polishing by new processes, the visitors can see in the centre of the place diamonds assembled to represent a great variety of designs, arranged at best advantage in an octagonal glass-case. You would see, for instance, on three lines: *Taillerie de Diamant, Bons frères, Amsterdam*, written in diamonds of various sizes; then an Eiffel Tower, thirty centimeters high, in half-relief; next a crown, etc., etc.¹¹⁴

The sixteenth century setting is significant: the Dutch exhibit harkened back to a time when Amsterdam truly owned the cutting trade – the brilliant cut being popularly (and erroneously, according to Lenzen) attributed to a Dutch lapidary in the late fifteenth century.¹¹⁵ The sign, "*Taillerie de Diamant, Bons frères, Amsterdam*," meant Diamond Cutting/ Fraternity/

¹¹⁴ "French Notes," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, July 15 1889, 225.

¹¹⁵ Godehard Lenzen, *The History of Diamond Production and the Diamond Trade*, trans. F. Bradley (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 71-81.

Amsterdam – denoting that the industry productive and tensionlessly unionized, as opposed to at odds with itself and frequently on strike, and comprised of men.

Beyond the progressive message of diamond cutting in general at exhibition after 1851 and the refusal to let the meaning of diamonds be constructed solely on the basis of the finished item, what is significant about these diamond-processing demonstrations is what they left out. As I discussed in Chapter 3, prior to 1840, diamond cutting was a cottage industry, often practiced by entire families. With the development of steam-powered cutting and polishing machines, entrepreneurs like Coster established factories and hired men and boy apprentices, excluding women from becoming cutters. British mine owners in South Africa, as they began to limit production and inflate the price of diamonds in the late 1880s, put pressure on Dutch firms to lower their overhead which meant *diamantbewerker*s were paid less and thousands were laid off, as many as 7000 in 1890 or about half the workforce. The workers unionized, attempting to pressure the cutting firms, several strikes ensued. At the same time, women entered the diamond cutting, polishing, and setting workforce as never before – not only in Holland but in Britain, France, and the United States -- much to the apparent horror of readers and writers of jewelry trade publications. There were tensions between Dutch and British jewelers, traders, and diamond workers over access to the best diamonds involved in the trade, and these tensions mounted as Anglo-Boer difference increased in Africa. Finally, the *diamantbewerker*s represented a predominantly Jewish workforce within a climate of growing anti-Semitism in Europe from the 1870s on, meaning that their unionization was interpreted as a racial and ethnic threat to the international status quo, not simply a class-based one.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ See *Jeweller and Metalworker*: "Diamond Cutting and Polishing," May 15 1872, 177; "Cutting Diamonds," July 1 1875, 505; "Diamond Cutting by Girls," June 15 1877, 93; "Exhibition Notes," Sept 1 1878, 323; "Diamond Cutting in Belgium," June 1 1881, 108; "Amsterdam Notes," Aug 15 1886, 279; "Mr. Coster," July 1 1887, 193; "The Diamond Industry of Amsterdam," Nov 1 1887, 326; "French Notes," Oct 1 1888, 291; "Exhibition Notes,"

Despite these considerable underlying tensions, the diamond cutting exhibits presented a tension-free set of labor and international relations. Demonstrations, designed to proselytize the craft involved in diamond cutting as well as the technical expertise, did not include female workers, "disappearing" them in the public register. Anglo-Dutch relations appeared as close as they ever were – for example, the 1883 Amsterdam exhibition featured a large diamond that had a portrait of Victoria engraved in it by a Dutch artisan – and while with each new exhibition journalists called attention to the fact that most cutters were Jewish with increasing frequency, the commentary generally ended there.¹¹⁷ Thus, the cutting exhibits portrayed to fairgoers a world of happy, productive Jewish middlemen, laboring away in "their" branch of the commodity chain to deliver clean, white diamonds to admiring consumers.

The Production Segment

While in the 1850s, 60s, and 70s, jewelers and diamond cutters tended to work together to promote diamond appreciation, neither group dramatized diamond mining to any notable degree. Coster exhibited "Brazilian diamonds" as such, beginning with the Star of the South in 1862, with the goal of showing how "American diamonds" were as high-quality or "white" as Indian diamonds were reputed to be. This was half the logic of displaying the Star alongside the Koh-i-Noor and it was a practice that informed the Cape Colony exhibitors as they strove to advertise the quality of South African diamonds from 1873 onwards, combating the "yellowish

July 15 1889, 225; "At a meeting," Jan 1 1890, 2; "Amsterdam Notes," Dec 15 1890, 388. See also "A History of Diamond Cutting," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, June 1 1893, 315. See also Henri Heertje, "De Diamantbewerkers van Amsterdam," D.B. Centen's Uitgervers-Maatschappij N.V., Amsterdam, 1936; Coronel, Samuel Mozes, "De diamantwerkers te Amsterdam; eene hygie'nische studie," *Nederlandsch Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde*, 1884, 1-18.

¹¹⁷ For a description of the engraved diamond see "The Amsterdam Exhibition," *Times*, June 18 1883, 5: "an exhibition of diamonds and diamond cutting attracts the attention of all the lady visitors to the exhibition and a great many of the gentlemen. Upon one large diamond is engraved a small portrait of Her Majesty the Queen of England. The engraver was the late Mr. C. de Vries, jun. But how he managed to engrave upon a diamond, or the nature of the tools which he employed, is not explained."

tinge" myth.¹¹⁸ The Brazil entries also included rough diamonds, as did the Australian and United States entries, but again it was only the unrefined products shown, not the process of diamond mining.¹¹⁹ The lack of Brazilian mining extravaganza, always on offer in the travelogues I discussed in Chapter 1, can be explained by the fact that non-Brazilian contract holders (namely British ones) were responsible for mining operations. British companies, especially those who profited from Brazilian slave labor, had nothing to gain by advertising their involvement in the chain and nor did the Brazilian government.

This is not to say, however, that some of the details of Brazilian diamond mining did not have a presence in exhibition discourse. On the contrary, commentators, compelled to talk about diamonds at exhibition before the rise of South African mining, devoted considerable space in their columns to filling in readers about the conditions of Brazilian mining, generating a kind of virtual exhibit of Brazilian mining for the armchair fairgoer. The *Daily News*, for example, included this lengthy narrative in their coverage of "Gems and Jewels of the International Exhibition":

The diamond mines of the Brazils were formerly worked only by the Portuguese government. Slaves were used for washing the gravel and searching its contents. The slave happy enough to find a stone-weighing or exceeding 17 carats was crowned with flowers and obtained his freedom. They are now, however, sought for by many adventurers in spite of the Brazilian government....The slave who is washing a panful of sand and water supposed to contain any diamonds is narrowly watched by his master. They are such expert thieves that if not watched with the utmost care they will secrete the diamonds in the very teeth of their masters. They are expert professors of legerdemain, and can transfer a diamond from the revolving basin of sand and water to their mouth with the utmost ease. They contrive to throw the stone on the nail of their thumb as they toss the contents of the basin round for the purpose of examining its contents, then, by a dexterous jerk they throw the diamond into their mouth. The skilful master, to circumvent this piece of cunning, watches the eye of the slave as a practised fencer watches

¹¹⁸ As the correspondent for *Jeweller and Metalworker* said, responding to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, "A visit to the Colonial Exhibition will show that there are diamonds from Africa as fine and white as from any other mines." "Diamond Cutting and the Turners' Company," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, August 15 1886, 284.

¹¹⁹ Hollingshed, 119.

that of his adversary. He knows that he cannot jerk the stone into his mouth without measuring the distance with his eye. The first suspicious glance he seizes the slave by his throat, and makes him disgorge his spoil.¹²⁰

By and large the focus in the above is on what would become known to exhibition-goers in the context of the Kimberley exhibits as the "illicit diamond trade", though the writer never uses those words. The drama of the description is, of course, the competition – the fencing match -- between slave and overseer both seem formidable adversaries. As such, the reader knows that while the slave is caught in some instances, he succeeds in others and this mitigates the violence done to him by the overseer.

The fascination with and drama of slaves concealing diamonds and trading them is also a lengthy and imaginative tangent in Sala's description of diamonds at the 1867 Paris Universalle:

With the supplementary guardianship of a *sergent de ville* outside, and of the criminal code and Cayeene in perspective, diamonds may be said to be much safer in Paris than they are in their native Brazil. There the unhappy slaves who are employed to wash the gravel in which the precious toys are found are forced to work naked, lest they should secrete them about their garments, and to sing lustily while they wash (on the principle of the grocer's apprentice who was bidden to whistle while he filled the jam-pots), to obviate the possibility of their occasionally popping a diamond into their mouths. The slave who finds a stone is bound to clap his hands three times; thereupon comes an inspector, who takes the diamond and weighs it. If it be above a certain weight the burly negro gets a gratification, and in certain cases his freedom. If he endeavours to steal or to hide a diamond, he is mercilessly flogged. With all these precautions it is calculated that one-third of the diamonds found in Brazil, are, as a preliminary measure, stolen and "smuggled" [sic] by their servile finders. After as reasonable time has elapsed the slave-owners are glad to compound the felony, and to buy the jewels from the agents of the thieves; so that in the end, although by a very roundabout and clumsy process, something like a balance of power between capital and labour is obtained.¹²¹

¹²⁰ "Gems and Jewels of the International Exhibition," *The Daily News*, September 9 1862, 3. Legerdemain is "sleight of hand."

¹²¹ Sala, 205-6.

Just as in the previous passage, there is a "balance of power" between worker and overseer and the generic slave, derogatorily described as a "burly negro," seems more than capable of physically withstanding any violence done to him. The gains workers make from their "thievery" again mitigates the violence of their working conditions in the above passage as does the chance of freedom, a kind of lottery, for the miner-slaves. The description of physical violence, hiding stones in body cavities, and nakedness becomes pornographic when we consider the amount of repetition narratives of this kind received in Victorian print culture about diamonds, enabled in the two instances above by international exhibitions. Sala's flippant style intones that the information he gives the reader is meant to be pleasurable. Again, it was diamonds on display that elicited these narratives, *not* Brazilian mining exhibits, underlining how the pleasure Victorians gained from diamond appreciation derived in part from what they knew of the conditions of diamond production. Discourse about Brazilian "thievery" anticipated, and in no small way determined, the full-blown "illicit diamond buying" discourse that developed around Kimberley mining and mining compounds, most fully on display at exhibition in Chicago in 1893.

In contrast to the lack of Brazilian displays on offer, exhibits about Kimberley mining and Cape diamonds were available to fairgoers almost as soon as the rush to South Africa began. The Cape Colony began advertising its diamond deposits as early as 1867: the Eureka diamond (about 10 carats) was put on display at the Paris Universalle that year but to little effect. The diamond was yellowish and substantiated contemporary claims that if the South African finds

were real – which was still a point of contention in 1867 – African diamonds were off-color, and not of the same quality as Brazilian and Indian diamonds.¹²²

After the 1867 effort, however, the Kimberley mining exhibits began to get evermore elaborate. In 1872, the exhibit consisted of a series of drawings and photographs of the diggings shown alongside rough diamonds. While the exhibit elicited a great deal of interest, there was no party in advertising diamond production to build a giant display: the mines were owned by thousands of independent operators at that moment and the Cape Colony, not technically involved in the area, was not interested in paying for a Kimberley exhibit. Indeed, organizers admitted that the photos that were on offer at the 1872 effort were an afterthought, only put up when fairgoers complained that there was nothing about the Diamond Fields. The Cape exhibit continued to include photos and diamonds throughout the 1870s. In 1885, the year closed compound mining was introduced to the Fields and the moment when the De Beers Mining Company was still negotiating with holdout rivals for their production monopoly, interested parties in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, London, and Kimberley decided to pool their resources and produce a world-class exhibit to advertise the diamond mines in the upcoming South African International Exhibition and travel to other international exhibitions thereafter.¹²³ They commissioned J.L. Fry to create "working models illustrative of diamond mining in the early days." Thus, the display on offer at Port Elizabeth, London in 1886, and Paris in 1889 consisted of an evolution of machinery:

One model showed the system followed in 1873, when the Kimberley mine was only about 100 feet deep, and the one hundred separate hauling gears were each

¹²² Ian Balfour, *Famous Diamonds*, (London: Christie's, 2000), 97-102. For an account of the disbelief in South African diamonds see Harry Emanuel, *Diamonds and Precious Stones : Their History, Value and Distinguishing Characteristics, with Simple Tests for Their Identification*, 2nd ed. (London: John Camden Hotten, 1867).

¹²³ Charles Cowen, ed., *The South African Exhibition, Port Elizabeth, 1885; Lectures, Prize and Other Essays, Jury Reports and Awards* (Cape Town: The "Argus" Print and Publishing Co. Ltd., 1886), ix-xi, 36-39. The Exhibition was opened by the Governor of the Colony, Sir Hercules Robinson who was also on the board of the De Beer Mining Company.

worked by four natives... Another model showed the cradle which in 1874 replaced dry sorting, and ten years afterwards was followed by the greatly improved rotary machines. A model of horse whim... served to show the process of hauling ground in 1874 to the period when the steam engine was utilized... Another model showed the process of the present day in the shape of washing gear... Mr. Blackbeard, managing director of one of the companies, exhibited a... gravitational washing machine... This model... was worked by steam in the machinery annex and attracted close attention. Further illustration was afforded by some excellent photographs and plans showing the appearance of the different mines, &c, at various periods since 1872 to 1885.

Next to the machines, the "most interesting of all," was a glass case, "carefully secured," of some £40,000 worth of diamonds:

They served the important purpose... of showing how diamonds appear when first found; the different sizes, colours and qualities; and how they can be imitated in appearance. Models were shown of the earliest and most celebrated stones that have been found in the mines... Amongst them were a large number obtained from illicit dealers by the Detective Department, and under the Diamond Trade Act forfeited to the Colonial Government. The illicit trade in diamonds is one of the most extraordinary phases of Diamond Fields life, and exhibits features of a most remarkable character. Some imitation diamonds were also shown, and demonstrated the ingenuity brought to bear upon rascally transactions.¹²⁴

The commentator for the Port Elizabeth exhibition went on to note that at the upcoming Colonial and Indian fair to be held in London in 1886 there would also be a diamond cutting demonstration put on by the English firm Ford and Wright available to fairgoers. From the above, it is clear that "illicit diamond buying", or IDB as it came to be known as, was integral to this new Cape exhibit as was the "monster diamond" phenomenon. Disdain for the imitation market as fundamentally malevolent invigorates the commentary in ways that recall the jewelry aesthetes' disdain for particularly French imitations.

At the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in 1886, crowds watched "blue ground", also known as "diamondiferous soil," processed by the working models. But there was an added feature of the exhibit that far eclipsed any efforts Kimberley exhibitors had gone to in the past:

¹²⁴ Cowan, 37-38.

the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition featured five Africans "washing" the diamondiferous soil, running the ground through the machines. As Dipti Bhagat has noted, not only did African bodies become a spectacle in themselves for exhibition goers, but the exhibit revealed them as "available labour for colonial industry."¹²⁵ Figure 5.4 is the *Illustrated London News*' coverage of the exhibit. Semi-naked with what would be read as indigenous jewelry, the Africans present the picture of exoticism; importantly, they are not wearing diamonds.¹²⁶ The *Daily News* was delighted to report that "the stone found when the Queen witnessed the washing of blue ground is being made into a brooch. The stone has been cut and polished by Messrs. Ford and Wright [at exhibition], who submitted three designs to the Queen."¹²⁷ This narrative was depicted in Figure 5.4, the reader is shown the production, manufacturing, and retail/consumer segments of the diamond commodity, all taking place in from of the watchful eyes of the exhibition-goers. To look at the illustration, the eye is immediately drawn to the figure at center: the African worker. Moving clockwise, the washing machinery comes into view, then the box in the upper lefthand corner that contains the diamond cutter (his Jewishness, perhaps, suggests by his clothing). The box is definitive: he is contained within it not only in the illustration, but by the onlookers also evident on the other side of the glass at his workstation. Center top is the box that contains an illustration of the brooch, ostensibly for Victoria but she is absent in the illustration, so the image only depicts the manufactured piece. Completing the visual circle are the metropolitan exhibition-goers, staring intently at the African washers, literally overseeing the

¹²⁵ Bhagat, "Buying More Than a Diamond: South Africa at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886", 78. Bhagat includes this contemporary description of a picture of the exhibit: "To the right is seen a part of the rotary washing machine, near which stands, with his back to the spectator, the Gealeka Kafir, Silos by name, 6 feet 2 inches in height. Towards the centre of the picture, Mafeana, the Fingoe, is rocking the cradle, behind which stands the little bushman, Klaas Jaar, 4 feet 6 inches high, who is distributing the 'ground' over the sieve. On the left, a Tambookie Kafir, a man who has faithfully served the Cape Government for twenty years, is directing the water on the cradle. Behind the sorting table, stands the Krooman, James Smart."

¹²⁶ *Illustrated London News*, October 16 1886.

¹²⁷ "Cape Colony at the Exhibition," *The Daily News*, September 14 1886, 3.

entire process. It is a visual rendering of the diamond commodity chain from producer to consumer and, importantly, the consumer at the end of the process is actually supervising the chain, containing the workers within the circle, just as the diamonds are gained out of it. The queen, being gifted another colonial diamond, plays the part of the (absent) passive female consumer and in this way does not invite any of the criticism that erupted around her appropriation of the Koh-i-Noor in 1851.

Thus, a sanitized, "legitimate" version of the entire process of diamond jewelry construction – from mining to cutting to setting – was displayed for fairgoers in 1886. Reporters deemed the effort "interesting" and "popular." In contrast, in Paris in 1889, the writer for *Jeweller and Metalworker* thought while "another building invites the public to examine the mining processes employed at Kimberley, this cannot be so thoroughly attractive for the common run of visitors" as the diamond cutting extravaganza put on by the Dutch.¹²⁸

The De Beers Mining Company's exhibit at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 would be a diamond and diamond mining extravaganza on a much higher level than anything before it. Having bought out or merged with the remaining mining companies in Kimberley, De Beers displayed itself at the Chicago fair as a benevolent monopoly synonymous with the colonial project in South Africa. Its Chicago display was a huge investment for the company, and a strategic one: unlike other international exhibitions in Paris, Vienna, Amsterdam, or New York, the 1893 fair was held in a city that was not already known for its diamonds and in a country where diamond sales had begun to skyrocket, to recall the British critics' disdain for American diamond-buying. Instead of forwarding a monster diamond exhibit to boost sales or a massive jewelry display or even a mountain of diamonds – Nevada state

¹²⁸ "French Notes," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, July 15 1889, 225.

displayed a giant pyramid of silver, after all, -- the De Beers mining company, in an almost synonymous connection with the Cape Colony, advertised its mining system.

In January, 1892 as requests for exhibition space at the upcoming World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago flooded the Fair's Board of Control, the Commissioner for the Cape Colony announced his requirement for no less than 10,000 square feet. His "special wish" for the South African section was to exhibit the process of diamond mining - not through photographs, models or machinery but by showing the public a fully-functioning cross-section of a Kimberley mine. Two thousand tons of diamondiferous soil, yielding an estimated 2 carats per ton, he proposed, would be shipped from South Africa as ballast, to be worked by "Native Zulus...in the charge of an overseer" and under the watchful eyes of fairgoers.¹²⁹ While the London and Paris exhibits of "live specimens" of "native labour" displayed only a few Africans, the Chicago exhibit promised at least a dozen.

Press coverage of the Cape Colony/De Beers exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair invariably fixated on three related points: first, the commercial potential of the still-unworked diamond soil; secondly, the security that was in place to protect this potential wealth; and finally the appearance and character of the Africans miners. The security for the exhibit was as much a part of the spectacle and meaning of the display as any other component. Elsewhere at the Fair there were massive jewelry exhibits and single large diamonds valued into the millions of dollars, but, as the *Chicago Daily Tribune* put it, "not one of them is so closely watched as this great pile of dirt."¹³⁰

The pile of dirt turned out to be not as big as originally planned: the Cape Colony "brought on 150 tons of diamond soil filled with rough stones to the value of more than

¹²⁹ "Cutting and Polishing Diamonds," and "Have Not the Space to Give," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jan. 27, 1892, 10; "Diamond Mining at Jackson Park," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar. 11 1893, 2.

¹³⁰ "Gems in the Dirt," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 28 1893, 25.

\$250,000" – a far cry from the 2000 tons originally projected, but still an impressive amount.¹³¹

In the month the Fair opened, the *Tribune* ran a specific article on the back part of the exhibit with the headline, "Gems in the Dirt" and subheadings, "Treasure-Trove Exhibit from South African Mines", "1,200 Bags of Diamonds", and "Gigantic Zulus Guard the Precious Gems Day and Night."¹³² This was not about the working display housed in the Mining Building of the fair, but rather an enclosure kept in Jackson Park, about 500 yards away from the main display, where the majority of the diamondiferous soil was kept. A wire ore carrier strung up with iron buckets hauled the diamond ground to the Mining Building daily.

It took more than a month into the fair before the main exhibit was operational; in the meantime, the backlot occupied the imaginations of fair commentators. In the *Tribune's* early coverage, the issues of security, exorbitant wealth, and an intense curiosity about African workers preoccupied the writing. The article which ran on May 28th begins with a hushed air, describing concentric levels of security and surveillance:

Three giant Zulus from South Africa spend twenty-four hours each day inside a circular high board fence just south of the Sixty-fourth street entrance at Jackson Park. Around the homely inclosure [sic] Columbian guards¹³³ are constantly patrolling, the watch being changed every four hours. About the fence runs an electric wire so arranged that a touch will sound a loud alarm gong.¹³⁴

Figures 5.5 and 5.6, the illustration that accompanied the newspaper article and a photo of the scene from De Beers' official pamphlet of the fair respectively, depict the "diamond compound." Voyeurs, readers gained access to this secret world: "Peering through the little opening which leads into the interior there is nothing in sight but a row of dirty brown bags and a pile of common-looking rock." The reader learned that as dramatic as these protective procedures were,

¹³¹ "Diamond Mining at Jackson Park," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar 11 1893, 2.

¹³² "Gems in the Dirt," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 28 1893, 25.

¹³³ Columbian guards were members of the US army who had been commissioned to secure the Fair.

¹³⁴ "Gems in the Dirt," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 28 1893, 25.

they were little in comparison to the potential value of the commodity under protection: "this same rough board fence encircles what may yet prove to be rarer and more valuable than all the wealth of the Indies.... Elsewhere magnificent displays of gems, but not one of them is so closely watched as this great pile of dirt."¹³⁵

The article fixated on the African guards, themselves, both as part of and adding to this spectacle of security and diamond-value fantasia:

With Mr. Cundhill [special agent of the De Beers company] are the three South African natives, black as blackest paint, and each of them several inches over six feet in height. The interesting names of these Zulus are Mr. Kummie, Mr. Koobee, and the other is so unpronounceable that it has been shortened to George. The Zulus sleep in a tent among the sacks of diamonds. They think Chicago is a decided failure and heartily wish they were at home. They are extremely tony in their way and yesterday objected vigorously to dragging a cart full of ore up to the Mining Building, such work, according to their standard, being fit only for convicts.¹³⁶

Moving into the main exhibition hall, this spectacle of security continued: the main exhibit which was surrounded by a high partition, with plate glass windows, and the gate through which the workers were led in and out of the mine was guarded by "one of the Zulus...armed with a war club with [a] massive ivory head."¹³⁷ White De Beers overseers were within the display as well as outside the partition, vested with watching the workers (as opposed to onlookers) at all times.

Importantly, just as in the 1886 exhibition, there was a final layer of security and surveillance: the viewers, themselves, became overseers of the African workers – both symbolically and literally, as crowds congregated on a platform above the mock "mine" to view the exhibit. The affective conditioning of this proximal relationship was made overt when some

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ "1893 – De Beers at the World's Columbian Exposition," HM Baker Associates, prepared for De Beers Consolidated Mines Limited, December 1967.

onlookers went as far as to alert the Exhibition's security that a rough gem had been concealed by one of the "Zulus" beyond the notice of the official overseer.¹³⁸ Everything was staged to insulate African workers from the fairgoing crowds, and vice-versa, ostensibly for the sake of the security of the diamonds; in effect, it created and policed a binary relationship between African diamond producers, coded as untrustworthy, and Western consumers, implicated in the task of keeping these workers under control.

This relationship was teased out for fairgoers in other ways: a British scientist resident at the Cape, Dr. J.W. Matthews (memoirist of the rise of the Diamond Fields whom I discussed in Chapter 3), gave lectures about the diamond mines during the fair, in which he described Kimberley society as simply bifurcated: "The people are of two classes, and they must be either men of money or men who work."¹³⁹ He went on to describe the mines, taking particular time to justify the compound system as necessary due to the "native's" natural proclivity toward alcohol and aptitude for "stealing":

The natives work these mines, supervised by white men. They are kept in compounds, large iron fenced stockades, where drink is kept away from them, and they are searched every time they come out of the mine.... After a while in the stockade, which is provided with good accommodations, hospitals, baths, and the like, they take to it very kindly and are glad to be there. Like the North American Indians, they have been corrupted by contact with the white man, and would now sell their souls for drink. They will steal a very valuable diamond and hide it anywhere, up their nostrils, in their mouths, or any such place, or even cut a slit in their arms to hide the diamond in. Then, when they get outside they sell it to a trader for a drink, and the diamond may be worth a thousand dollars. All sorts of tricks have been resorted to by them to conceal the diamonds. The Free State line, the line between that and the Dutch State, is only six miles from Kimberly. If illicit diamond buyers get the diamonds across the boundary they are safe. The line is well guarded by English detectives, but in spite of them lots of diamonds

¹³⁸ Norman Bolotin and Christine Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition: The Chicago World's Fair of 1893*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 157.

¹³⁹ "They Find Gems Rich and Rare," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 4 1893, 16. See Josiah Wright Matthews, Eric Rosenthal, and Ena Cloete, *Incwadi Yami; or, Twenty Years' Personal Experience in South Africa* (London: S. Low Marston Searle & Rivington, 1887).

are stolen....A native never steals but drink is the cause. Then he will steal in spite of everything.¹⁴⁰

Here, Matthews paints a picture of Africans as unfit consumers, useful only as producers of diamonds: there is no room in his description for a case where a diamond could be "safely" in the possession of an African, moreover there is no "safe" place for the African worker *outside* of the diamond mining compound. Layered overtop of the workers and overseers binary is another obvious binary operating in Matthews' lecture: the "legitimate" diamond trade versus the "illicit" one. As he narrates, in the legitimate trade, Africans, who he characterizes as en masse unable to control their desire for alcohol, are incarcerated and invasively and strictly controlled on a bodily level, not only for their own good, but to maintain the legitimate trade. Controlling Africans' bodies, then, he argues, was essential to the legitimate trade and maintaining the value of diamonds for the consumer.

Certainly, the specter of the illicit trade was a part of diamond mining exhibits since 1873 and tales of IDB were a part of mainstream Victorian print culture. Descriptions of workers hiding gems in their eyes, open wounds, and other orifices were a staple of discourse about diamond production since at least the 17th century with Jean Baptiste Tavernier's travelogue of his voyage to India.¹⁴¹

As I discussed in the first chapter, travelogues were the main way that metropolitan audiences learned about diamond production prior to the rise of international exhibition circuit (beginning more-or-less with the Great Exhibition of 1851). In these earlier treatments pertaining to India or Brazil, as related by Sala in 1867 or *The Daily News* in 1862, there was always an

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Les Six Voyages De Monsieur Jean-Baptiste Tavernier ... En Turquie, En Perse, Et Aux Indes, Pendant L'espace De Quarante Ans & Par Toutes Les Routes Que L'on Peut Tenir : Accompagnez D'observations Particulieres Sur La Qualite, La Religion, Le Gouvernement, Les Coutumes & Le Commerce De Chaque Pais*, Nouvelle ed. ed. (Rouen: Eustache Herault, 1713).

element of sympathy with the worker – described as a slave -- particularly when it came to another trope of diamond work print culture before the 1870s: the slave who finds a large diamond and turns it in in exchange for his freedom, or some exorbitant reward. This was the plot of a popular play in London in the 1850s, "Harliquin [*sic*] and the Koh-i-Noor", for example. In this trope, the diamond functions as the proverbial ghost in the machine of slavery and a vehicle for the slave-protagonist's redemption: he has to decide whether to report his finding to his overseer or try to smuggle it out another way. By reporting the gem, the slave reveals his nobility.¹⁴² The value of the diamond, in this vein, rests with its inherent virtue and its ability to elevate the people whom it can reveal to be virtuous. These popular tropes about diamond mining, staples of Victorian print culture in fiction and non-fiction genres alike, disappeared with the advent of large scale diamond mining in South Africa in the 1880s – they are certainly gone from Matthews' descriptions of the mines and laborers. There is no hope of redemption for African laborers in Matthews' eyes, they being slaves of kind to substance addiction. The diamonds themselves hold no noteworthy intrinsic value. Instead, their value rests on the Company's - as well as the colonial government's and by extension Britain's - ability to control and secure the "legitimate" trade, indeed to define what came under that heading and ultimately (over)determine who could and could not own diamonds. After all, as De Beers attempted to monopolize production and distribution, the measure of "licit" versus "illicit" diamond movements became about what De Beers controlled and what it did not. What the "Diamonds in the Dirt" display along with its supporting lectures sold to fairgoers, then, was a message about diamonds and control, how surveillance and control of African bodies was crucial to the value of the gemstone.

¹⁴² "Harliquin (*sic*) and the Koh-i-Noor or the Princess and the Pearl," Lord Chamberlain's Plays, Vol CLXXIV A, British Library, Manuscripts, 43038A, ff. 347-387.

Accounts of what late Victorians would understand to be IDB in Brazil and India mixed with an ever-growing supply of IDB information in Victorian print culture. In the early 1880s, when the concentration of production by mining companies began, so too did an intense interest in the unreported diamond trade, what Africanist Robert Turrell has called a "speculative magnification" of the amount of "illicit trade." In 1881, mine owners asserted that perhaps 60% of the diamonds handled by merchant shippers were "illegitimate," though this number could not be confirmed by the financial institutions such as the Standard Bank that conducted most transactions. The structure of illicit trading was common knowledge in Kimberley: a worker in the mines would smuggle gems out and sell them at very low prices to a local buyer; the buyer worked for a receiver of stolen goods who was funded by an outwardly "legitimate" businessman. As Turrell argues, "the links in the chain were most visible in the first stage but faded to invisibility at the end."¹⁴³ The Diamond Trade Act, passed by Parliament in 1882, upheld the practice of trial without jury for Illicit Diamond Buying (IDB) and defendants could be sentenced for up to 15 years imprisonment. Instead of a presumption of innocence in IDB cases, the onus was placed on the defendant to supply legal documentation as to their ownership of a given diamond and officers of the law were given unprecedented powers of search and entry in public and private spaces. The recourse to written documentation effectively precluded Africans finding new diamond mines, bringing proof of the finds to the colony, and making claims on the mines themselves.

Throughout the 1880s, a new IDB police force instituted a policy of inducing illegal trade scenarios to entrap people the police targeted. These policies were not without opposition in Kimberley because they threatened the liberties of a huge swath of the "men with money", not

¹⁴³ Robert Vicat Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871-1890*, African Studies Series ; 54 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 175.

simply diamond workers.¹⁴⁴ In the mines, workers were subjected to ever-invasive searches, the details of which bubbled up in Victorian print culture throughout the 1880s and 90s. A correspondent of *Jeweller and Metalworker*, a trade publication that contained information of interest to jewelers *and their customers*, wrote both in horror and fascination:

[the native digger] is submitted to a personal examination more minute and complete than is undergone by the most desperate criminal in the prisons of any civilized country. Indeed, so revolting is this searching system, in some of its details, that it has been found impossible to obtain a sufficient number of trustworthy Europeans willing to undertake the duties of the searcher, despite the high salary attached to the position; and the actual searching is therefore performed (under European supervision) by natives, who are presumably less affected by the degrading nature of the work.¹⁴⁵

This speaks to the high level of control diamond mine owners were asserting over their workers and the trade in general. Lurid descriptions of this sort filtered through Western print culture; it was discourse made familiar by writings about Brazilian mining, albeit under conditions of slave labor. Figure 5.7 is from the *Cape Illustrated Magazine* in 1892 and depicts, "A native swallowing a diamond."¹⁴⁶ It is striking how closely the illustration suits the description of Brazilian diamond mining related by the *Daily News* in 1862: "The first suspicious glance [the master] seizes the slave by his throat, and makes him disgorge his spoil."¹⁴⁷ Of course, in the South African case, the worker was not enslaved – he was incarcerated in a compound for his own good. Surely discourse of this nature conditioned fairgoers to suspect African workers at the Chicago Fair, if the immediate spectacle did not sufficiently do so; the descriptions of IDB and the measures adopted to contain it, graphic as well as pornographic, were simultaneously tantalizing and horrifying for Victorian audiences. In the context of the exhibition and beyond,

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 181-2. See also PRO 879/110/4, "Offenses in Connection with the Diamond Industry in South Africa," 1912, National Archives, Public Records Office, London.

¹⁴⁵ "The Diamond Searchers," *Jeweller and Metalworker*, April 1 1888, 107.

¹⁴⁶ *Cape Illustrated Magazine*, 2:8 (April 1892), 257.

¹⁴⁷ "Gems and Jewels of the International Exhibition," *The Daily News*, September 9 1862, 3.

these descriptions were used to *sell* diamonds; they depicted a very corporeal set of power relations between diamond producer and, implicitly, diamond consumer, African subject and metropolitan citizen-buyer.

The late-Victorian and Edwardian periods offer a particular genre of writing, much of it pulp fiction, that dramatizes diamond mining and IDB for the English-reading masses.¹⁴⁸ IDB novels, especially, would fit in with analyses of contemporaneous "Wild West", frontier, or gold rush literature from Canada, the US, and Australia; as such, it commanded a popular readership. It delivered the familiar tales of thrilling train robberies (for the Diamond Mail), local corruption, high stakes gambling, saloon culture, notorious gangs of outlaws, and the rags-to-riches transformation of lucky prospectors. However, what separated IDB literature from other stories set in the frontier mining town is its emphasis on the social dangers of illicit trading. IDB novels essentially functioned as cautionary tales about the perils of IDB, not simply for those who were involved in it in South Africa, but ultimately for Western society in general. Pulp fiction writer George Chatwynd Griffith made certain readers understood the dramatically high stakes of IDB in his 1899 collection of previously-published and new short stories *Knives of Diamonds: Being Tales of Mine and Veld* that began,

Never since men first began to risk health and life and honour for the sake of swift-won wealth have three characters of any alphabet been brought together which, in their combination, connoted as the logicians say, so much as the three capitals "I.D.B." do, for in their internal meaning they include all the extremes and means of human fortune which may be imagined to lie between a life of luxury, and often of distinction...and fifteen years' penal servitude...with its semi-starvation and heart-breaking monotonous toil under the pitiless sub-tropical sun.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ For a discussion of "mining novels" see Isabel Hofmeyr, "The Mining Novel in South African Literature, 1870-1920," *English in Africa* 5, no. 2 (1978).

¹⁴⁹ George Chetwynd Griffith afterwards Griffith Jones, *Knives of Diamonds, Being Tales of Mine and Veld, Etc* (London: C. A. Pearson, 1899), ix-x.

Any *nouveau riche*, Griffith argues, who were successful in South Africa were involved in nefarious business and the only difference between a successful businessman and a convicted criminal was the fact of getting caught for IDB:

There are, indeed, not a few who have found fortune in South Africa, and certain honours there and elsewhere, who can look back to anxious moments, big with fate, which made all the difference to them between the broadcloth of the millionaire magnate and the arrow-marked canvas of the convict I.D.B. Nay, more, as some of the stories which follow hereafter will truthfully tell, the doings of one fatal moment have more than once decided which of two men was to wear the broadcloth and which the canvas.¹⁵⁰

Knaves provides an excellent exploration of all the many facets of IDB, both real and imagined, on the Diamond Fields and how the specter of the illicit trade not only affected the workings of South Africa but European society in multiple ways. The book is a series of interconnected stories about swindles and swindlers, many all of whom get away with their schemes and infiltrate law-abiding society. As Griffith explains in the preface, "Between [the buyer] and the actual thief, the raw kaffir working in the mines, there may be as many as three or even four intermediaries, each of whom is guilty of the whole crime."¹⁵¹ Through each of narrative, we gain insight into the workings of both the licit and illicit commodity chains alongside Griffith's rundown of who comprise villains and heroes in this context of corruption.

"The Diamond Dog," relates the tale of nothing less than a Chinese Crested Hairless canine, property of a trader from Singapore, that is disguised in a coat of normal dog hair and smuggled into the De Beers compound. An African mineworker-accomplice fills the dog's "coat" with stolen diamonds; the dog, unnoticed, escapes the compound and delivers thousands of pounds of illicit diamonds or "gonivahs" to its owner. In the course of the tale, the trader, Loo Chai, is double-crossed by his Jewish business partner, Augustus Löwenfeldt, but double-crosses

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., xii.

¹⁵¹ George C. Griffith, *Knaves of Diamonds*, (London: CA Pearson, 1899), xi.

Augustus back, and manages to escape back to Singapore a rich man, much to the chagrin of Löwenfeldt and the local authorities.¹⁵² It is the first story in *Knives* and immediately orients the reader to the cosmopolitan character of the Diamond Fields:

You might go far afield before you found two more queerly associated knights of industry than the Jew of Whitechapel and the Celestial of Singapore, who were sitting together...in Old De Beers Road, Kimberley, late one night in the early eighties. Yet it was no very uncommon thing here, in this vortex of cosmopolitan villainy into which the magical glitter of the diamond, more fatal in its fascination even than the glint of gold, had gathered together men of all colours and creeds from the remotest ends of the earth.¹⁵³

Indeed the international flavor of the trade only serves to underscore what soon becomes the major thrust of Griffith's tales: to show how IDB is perpetrated by "foreigners" and as such does violence to British authority in South Africa and "at home." Set in the early 1880s before De Beers was able to monopolize the Fields, the villains of the story immediately show themselves to be working against the licit trade. To amuse his readers, Griffith showcases their foreignness through reproducing their dialogue phonetically:

"Itsh no good, Loo," half-whispered the Jew..., "the old plants will all be played out now that this infernal new law ish passed. The gonivahs will be harder to get than ever, and look at the rishk – fifteen years on that blathted breakwater just for being found with a few little klips on you! The game ain't going to be worth the candle any more, if we don't find some new way of getting them out..."¹⁵⁴

But the "Celestial" replies, unruffled: "All light, Missa Lonefelt, no need muchee scratch-head over dat. Kaffir boy plenty clever yet, allee same muchee searchee, no good."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Gonivah is a Yiddish word that originally applied to any stolen item but in the 1890s came to be associated almost exclusively with stolen diamonds. See James Platt, "Gonoph and Gonivah," in *Notes and Queries*, 9th series, 3rd volume, (London: John C. Francis, Jan-July 1899), 426.

¹⁵³ Griffith, 1-2.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 3-4.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 4.

As the story goes on, the reader learns more about Löwenstein in particular: he does not show up in later stories because he dies of shock at the end of "Diamond Dog," but the Yiddish-speaking Jewish IDB functioned as a stock-villain for Griffith:

There he was Augustus Löwenfeldt, licensed diamond broker, stock and share dealer, and all the rest of it, a man with a reputation to lose, as reputations went then in Kimberley, and with a future before him; but here in Loo Chai's back sitting-room he was just what the heather was, neither better nor worse, an I.D.B., a "fence," as they would have called him in his native Whitechapel, and, like him, a potential felon...¹⁵⁶

The stereotypical character who is also caught up in this illicit trade is revealed to be the "Pondo kaffir," Bymebye, described as a "fine, athletic, lively-looking boy", "easy of morals and longingly greatly for the possession of wives and cattle in his own land." After his services, Bymebye, "proceeded, after the manner of his kind, to blind himself to the light of heaven and the lamps of divers bar-rooms for three days and nights, after which he went back with a light pouch and a heavy head to do another two months' spell in the mine."¹⁵⁷

The next story, "A Run to Freetown" depicts the cat-and-mouse game between known-but-never-convicted IDBer Seth Salter, "a Yankee adventurer," and Chief Detective-Inspector Lipinski, a man who spoke English with no accent and was determined to stamp out IDB.¹⁵⁸

The plight of De Beers is made obvious to the reader: the Company, says Lipinski, loses £15,000 each month to IDB.¹⁵⁹

Another tale, "The King Rose Diamond," first published in *Pearson's Magazine* in 1896, presented a *nouveau riche* cautionary tale, ridiculing the central Jewish character, Michael Mosenstein (a send-up of another De Beers-colonial government magnate, Harry Mosenthal), for his suspiciously fast rise in London society and, importantly, Mrs. Mosenstein's propensity to

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 6. Griffith specifies Lowenfeldt's Yiddish language proficiency on page 18.

¹⁵⁷ Quotes from Griffith, 14, 16, 15, respectively.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 23-54.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 33.

wear “too many diamonds” in public. Griffith intoned that Mrs. Mosenstein was trying too hard “to make up for the weakness of her race” by over-wearing diamond jewelry, laying open the question of not only who could “safely” trade in diamonds but who could “properly” display them. Griffith's intonations that Mrs. Mosenstein was *not* British recall the jewelry discourse discussed earlier in this chapter about certain kinds of diamond-wearing as indicative of national belonging and "improper" diamond-wearing as liable to throw a person racial fitness under suspicion.¹⁶⁰

Depictions of Eastern Europe, Yiddish-speaking Jews who, through IDB, managed to infiltrate London high society undetected were staples of IDB writing and reflect the growing level of anxiety over Jewish populations in Europe and South Africa that occurred in the 1880s and '90s. Another example of the anxiety that Jews were somehow overwhelming or contaminating "national" character through the diamond trade is found in *IDB or the Adventures of Solomon Davis* by TW Eady, which was published in London in 1887.¹⁶¹ It loosely parallels the life of Barney Barnato, an East London Jew who became a diamond mining magnate in South Africa and moved back to London an extremely rich man after selling his holdings to the De Beers Company. In Eady's story, the central character, Solomon Davis, is born in Whitechapel in 1853, speaks Yiddish as his first language, and lives his early life as a thief and a con-artist. The young Davis is as conniving as he is talented: he learns English and is able to mimic posh and working-class accents; he gets into a fight with the purpose of getting his nose broken so as to disguise his Jewishness; he learns to “pass” in London society as a gentile of high birth. With the discovery of diamonds in South Africa, Davis relocates to Kimberley, and begins in the lowest station possible for someone still categorically “white” – serving food to African

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 72.

¹⁶¹ W. T. Eady, *I. D. B. (Illicit Diamond Buying), or the Adventures of Solomon Dairs on the Diamond Fields and Elsewhere* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1887).

workers. But through the eating houses, he finds that he can deal almost exclusively in the illicit trade; he makes a fortune. Along the way he engages in murder, even of one of his own family members, and though he is arrested for it, is able to bribe his way out of the situation. Incredibly rich, corrupt, and lonely, he changes his name to Montague Vaughan, moves back to London, becomes an Anglican, and marries into a titled family, to live happily ever after. The novel is meant to be tragic: Britain is contaminated by an imposter to the detriment of all.

Novels, of course, were not the only sources of IDB dramatizations for the Victorian reading public – indeed, print culture of the 1880s and '90s is peppered with information about IDB, from police exposés such as Arthur Griffiths' *Mysteries of Police and Crime* (1899), to monthly magazines like *The Cosmopolitan* based out of New York, to almost any newspaper in Britain. For example, IDB articles and even coverage of IDB trials in South Africa ran in *The Birmingham Daily Post*, *The Illustrated Police News*, *The Graphic*, *The Glasgow Herald*, *The Belfast Newsletter*, *The Pall Mall Gazette*, *The Freeman's Journal* (Dublin), *The Liverpool Mercury*, *Reynold's Newspaper*, *The Daily News*, and *The Newcastle Weekly Courant*.¹⁶² Thus, knowledge about IDB and the "dangers" of the illicit commodity chain were readily available for the reading public.

In visions of the “legitimate” trade, presented to fairgoers in Chicago in 1893 and hinted at in exhibitions before then and staged *against* this information about IDB, the groups that shepherded the diamonds through each step were contained within their specific gradation: "raw

¹⁶² "Illicit Diamond Buying," *The Graphic*, October 13 1883, 362; "Life at the Diamond Fields," *The Glasgow Herald*, March 14 1885, 3; "Passing Notes," *The Illustrated Police News*, May 2 1885, 3; "The Alleged Murder of a Kaffir at Kimberley," *Glasgow Herald*, July 14 1885, 3; "The Great Diamond Trial," *Glasgow Herald*, November 12 1886, 4; "The Diamond Fields of Kimberley," *The Belfast News-letter*, February 27 1890, 3; "The Diamond Trade," *Birmingham Daily Post*, August 15 1893, 3; "Colonial Convict Life," *Glasgow Herald*, January 9 1897; "The Botany Bay of the Cape," *Pall Mall Gazette*, June 9 1897; "A Diamond King," *Freeman's Journal* (Dublin), October 9 1899, 6; "Alleged Illicit Diamond Buying," *The Daily News*, March 28 1900, 7; "Charge Against a Boer," *Liverpool Mercury*, March 28 1900, 9 and "Illicit Diamond Buying," April 18 1900, 10; "Alleged Illicit Diamond Buying," *Reynold's Newspaper*, April 1 1900, 2; "A Boer's Deal in Diamonds," *The Newcastle Weekly Courant*, April 21 1900, 3; "The Evil Genius of the Diamond Fields," *The Aberdeen Weekly*, June 6 1900, 2.

kaffirs," as Griffith characterized them, would find the stones and, through working in the diamond mining compounds, achieve a certain level of progress by performing sustained labor and being taught "proper" consumptive practices, namely limited alcohol consumption; the gems would be sold to "trustworthy" merchants in South Africa and Britain, Jewish or gentile, who would ensure that the gemstone's price would be kept stable; the diamond would then be cut and polished in Amsterdam by specialist firms known for their control of Dutch Jewish cheap labor or homegrown versions of the Amsterdam model; and then sold to reputable British jewelers who would set the stones in tasteful arrangements, educate the public about taste, and sell to respectable male customers to give to their significant females at respectable prices. Legitimacy promised that each group would benefit from the process but maintain its position in the chain's hierarchy, whether as producer, intermediary, or consumer: stability was the goal. Griffith's derogatory characterization of the African diamond laborer as a "raw kaffir" is instructive because "raw" was also used to describe the diamonds as they were unearthed. The stone would graduate from its raw state into a state of refinement, shifting from colonial space to metropolitan space through being cut, polished, set, and, displayed "properly," ending up in most cases on the bodies of middling to upper class white, married women. The diamond transcended its low origins to take its place as a status symbol in British culture, proclaiming the racial, social, and economic enfranchisement of its wearer. The "raw" connection also objectified the African worker, making him a *thing* to be refined but not individuated.

Illicit Diamond Buying was presented as something that could disrupt all of the stability the "legitimate" trade promised: it enabled Africans to financially support their familial and social groupings outside of colonial control, potentially diminishing the labor force available to mine owners and strengthening local chiefdoms. It allowed Chinese and Indian traders to have a

livelihood in South Africa and perhaps encourage further Asian immigration, something white settlers vehemently opposed. It allowed Yiddish-speaking Jewish immigrants, perceived to be on the lower cusp of whiteness in both South African and British contexts, to establish themselves and in the most dramatic renderings, adopt different names, even change their physiogamy, and, horror of horrors, relocate to London and move, unnoticed, into high society.

These *kaffireatniks*, a derogatory term used in South Africa to describe Eastern European Jews who served food to African workers as I discussed in Chapter 4, also, it was thought, used their “cosmopolitan,” or transnational connections to circumvent the usual diamond-cutting channels, weakening Amsterdam firms that would have to, in turn, raise their prices or lay off staff. Layoffs were the worst scenario, in IDB cautionary tales, because they would compel more Jews to move to Britain and the empire. Because of the extremely low prices the *kaffireatniks* sold their diamonds for, low-end jewelers in Europe would begin selling diamond jewelery with impressive stones that persons of low taste could buy, tainting the price of diamonds and the social and cultural value diamond jewelry commanded in the first place.¹⁶³ Metropolitan consumer society was always the last victim of this commodity chain gone wrong: some stories even suggested that an IDB diamond, purchased by a naïve suitor and given as an engagement ring to his would-be bride, would result in an unhappy, childless marriage that would eventually end with the pawning of the original IDB diamond, perhaps even to the Jewish pawnbroker who sold the tainted gem in the first place.¹⁶⁴ In short, illicit diamond buying was envisioned to threaten the stability of all aspects of imperial culture, public and private, from colonial governance to domesticity.

¹⁶³ Joseph Sherman, "Serving the Natives: Whiteness as the Price of Hospitality in South African Yiddish Literature," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no. 3 (2000).

¹⁶⁴ Griffith, 95.

Discourse about diamonds, whiteness, and the legitimacy of British imperialism in Africa converged explicitly in the context of archaeological discoveries in diamond mines in ways that recall how jewelry discourse graded civilizations on their diamond appreciation, placing Western culture at the apex of civilization. For example, in April, 1895 the South African newspaper *Digger's News* reported unusual findings in a newly-discovered mine in the Transvaal: recent diggings had unearthed a "large number of human skeletons", many reportedly measuring over seven feet in length. Given that the skeletons were found under a group of trees estimated to be thousands of years old, the prevailing theory, said the newspaper, was that the Monastery mine was nothing less than the burial ground of a lost white race. Furthermore, due to the proximity of the skeletons to the diamond deposits, it was likely that these ancients had developed sophisticated mining techniques and complex material culture values thousands of years before the present day. They were a lost white race of diamond appreciators and savvy exploiters of natural resources. *Jeweller and Metalworker* followed the story with interest, as well as several other minor "lost white race" sensations that accompanied the findings of dinosaur bones and other remains in the course of diamond mining. When the Monastery Mine skeletons had yet to be corroborated by "competent authorities," the writers of *Watchmaker and Silversmith*, another trade publication, "personally believe[d] [the theory was] not far from correct." They hoped that the resources of the newly-established Geological Society of Johannesburg would be used to substantiate the theory and that the antiquity of Western diamond appreciation would finally have scientific proof.¹⁶⁵ Of course, the lost white race of diamond miners in Africa was never proved to have existed, but the assumptions alive in the theory show how contemporaries saw present and past claims on African land and mineral rights in racialized

¹⁶⁵ "The Monastery Mine," May 1 1895, *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, 254; "Diamond Field Notes," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, April 1 1895, 225; "A History of Diamond Cutting," *Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Silversmith*, June 1 1893, 315.

terms, where whiteness and diamonds were linked to legitimate and prescribe colonial policy as well as metropolitan taste.

Parliamentary control of the diamond trade went beyond colonial Africa: throughout the 1880s and 90s, Parliament passed laws to crack down on the movement of stolen goods through pawn shops, laws that affected the majority of jewelers who pawned as part of their business. In effect, these laws threw suspicion on anyone who possessed jewelry who appeared to be in a socio-economic class that could not normally afford such an item, policing who ought and ought not to be buying and selling diamonds. Some jeweler/pawnbrokers were outraged by this: while on the one hand it was conceivable that servants could steal their employer's jewelry and sell it (as was a feared scenario that apparently prompted the lawmaking), on the other hand it was standard practice for ladies to pawn their jewelry through an agent, often a close servant.¹⁶⁶ The number of outlets for who and where people could dispose of their diamonds shrunk, conforming more and more to the structure controlled by the emerging production and selling syndicates operated by the De Beers Mining Company. Prior to this, ladies had relied on the pawning of their jewelry to maintain their personal finances, outside the purview of their husband's control. One of the classic strengths of the diamond as a valuable commodity – its mobility – became suspect as never before. In this way, the socio-economic structuring of South Africa impacted the structure and functioning of British economy and society.

During the 1880s and 90s, as never before, the conspicuous consumption of diamonds was linked to legitimacy and control in ways that were co-constitutive of colonialism in South Africa. To “have” a diamond by 1893 placed one in a category of control and security over, ultimately, African colonial workers for whom diamond ownership was so problematic. The security of the emerging diamond monopoly also meant the security, financially and in terms of

¹⁶⁶ Alfred Hardaker, *A Brief History of Pawnbroking* (London: Jackson Ruston and Keeson, 1892).

social and cultural status, of the diamond consumer, not to mention the structure of British colonialism in South Africa. Participating in the “legitimate” market demanded a new level of conspicuousness: the wedding proved to be a site where men and women could receive and wear a tremendous amount of wealth without drawing a damaging level of gendered criticism regarding the bride’s avarice. Diamond-studded wedding gifts became the fashion, given by guests to the new couple, and by the bride and groom to each other and members of the wedding party. The gifts made up for high society weddings were often displayed for months in advance of the event in shops of jewelers who had crafted the order. Lavish descriptions of the diamond jewelry received and worn filled the pages of fashion magazines. Diamond material culture was *the way* to celebrate a couple’s social and cultural enfranchisement.¹⁶⁷ In addition to this, articles in these magazines (in which jewelers advertised) highlighted the security of the diamond trade and the diamond as an especially economical choice for the struggling consumer: white diamonds of a modest setting could go with any dress whereas jewelry that was dominated by gold, silver, or coloured gems demanded certain colours to go with it. Diamonds were, in this discourse, beyond fashion, being perpetually in fashion, timeless and static. The conspicuous consumption of diamonds in this late Victorian period was infused with a kind of imperialism that hinged on the control of African bodies, was legitimated by the character of British empire in South Africa and in turn legitimated it in cultural and economic ways.

The place of international exhibitions in disciplining and advertising the jewelry and diamond trades, in the estimation of nineteenth century jewelers, could not be underestimated.¹⁶⁸

The Chicago World’s Fair alone resulted in the financial health of the Birmingham Jewelry

¹⁶⁷ See *Fashionable London*, April 27 1892, 5; “Fashionable Weddings,” May 4 1892, 68-70; May 11 1892, 83-4; June 4 1892, 148; June 11 1892, 162; July 15 1892, 248.

¹⁶⁸ “Style in Jewelry,” JW Tonks, *Jeweller and Metalworker*, June 1 1874, 147.

Quarter in 1893, one of the largest in Europe at that time.¹⁶⁹ The diamond jewelry trade looked to Paris, London, and New York first and foremost as barometers and originators of fashion trends, indeed each metropole imagined the other two as the real fashion leaders of the trade. The *Tribune*, commenting on London announced in May 1893, at the start of the Fair, “Diamonds Again Good Form.”¹⁷⁰ As the depression eased, diamonds would continue to be good form through the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee of 1897, itself a celebration of imperial triumph, security and control (however illusory).

Thus, to recall one commentary from the Paris exhibition of 1855, diamonds “sparkled with meaning” for fairgoers to international exhibitions after 1851. The indispensable jewelry and regalia displays at exhibition delivered much more than glare, encoding subtle information about the intersections between taste, national-imperial “character,” whiteness, civility, and progressiveness. In short, as international exhibitions in general continued to develop Western-centric messages of uplift, internationalism, and imperialism, jewelry displays and commentary on them was implicated in that project. Moreover, the *process* of diamond production was a constitutive part of the diamond’s meaning at exhibition: finished diamonds were a progressive symbol, synonymous with the civilizing mission of the exhibition itself. Not only did exhibitions deliver information about who could and could not own diamonds, but also how they could be worn without calling the wearer’s social position into question. Exhibitions compelled fairgoers to understand themselves and their acts of diamond jewelry consumption (either through consuming spectacle or purchasing the stones themselves) as an integral part of the diamond commodity chain. With the rise of the De Beers monopoly, consumers were charged with ensuring British imperial authority in South Africa and stabilizing the status quo “at home.” The

¹⁶⁹ *The Watchmaker* (London), January 2 1893, 127; “Birmingham Notes,” April 1 1893, 196.

¹⁷⁰ “No Kings at the Fair,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 21, 1893, 9.

rise of discourse about the illicit commodity chain based out of Africa compelled consumers to fear for the status quo, dramatizing how the imperial-colonial world could profoundly affect the metropolitan one. By the late Victorian period, to "buy a diamond" was to buy into British imperial authority in South Africa and, in so doing, stabilize social hierarchies in Britain.

Figures

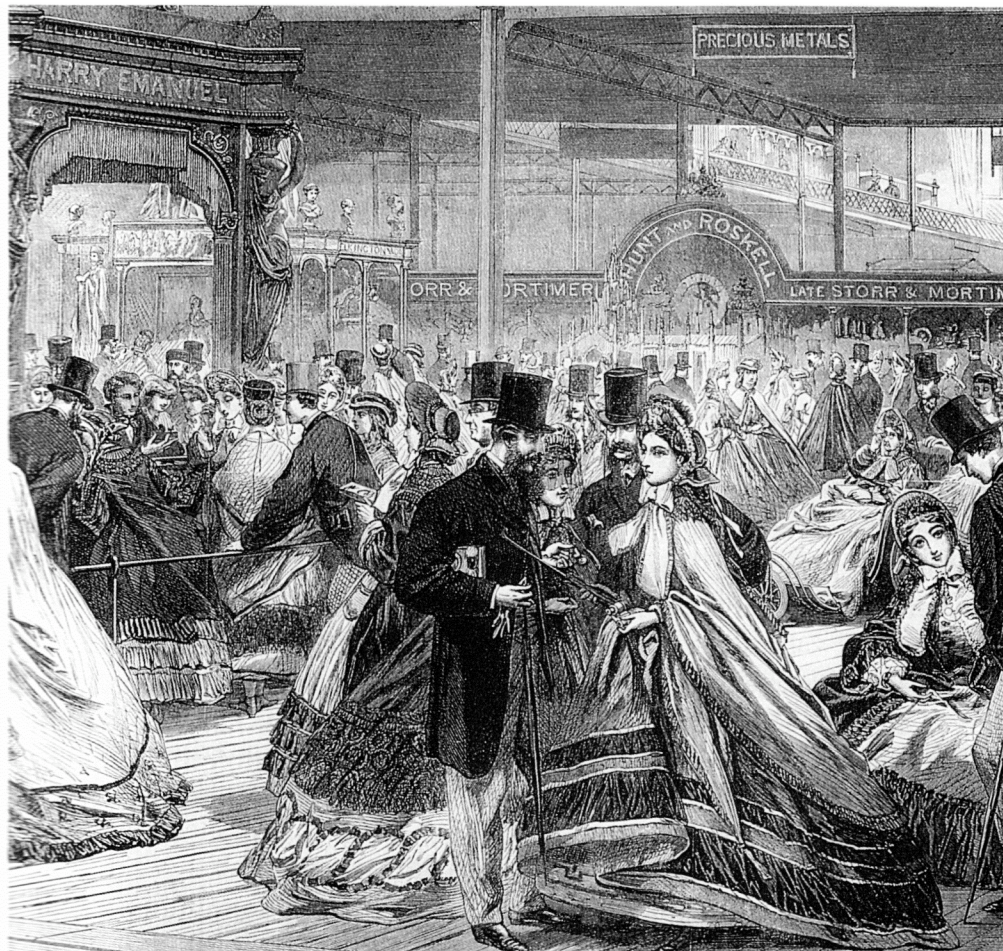
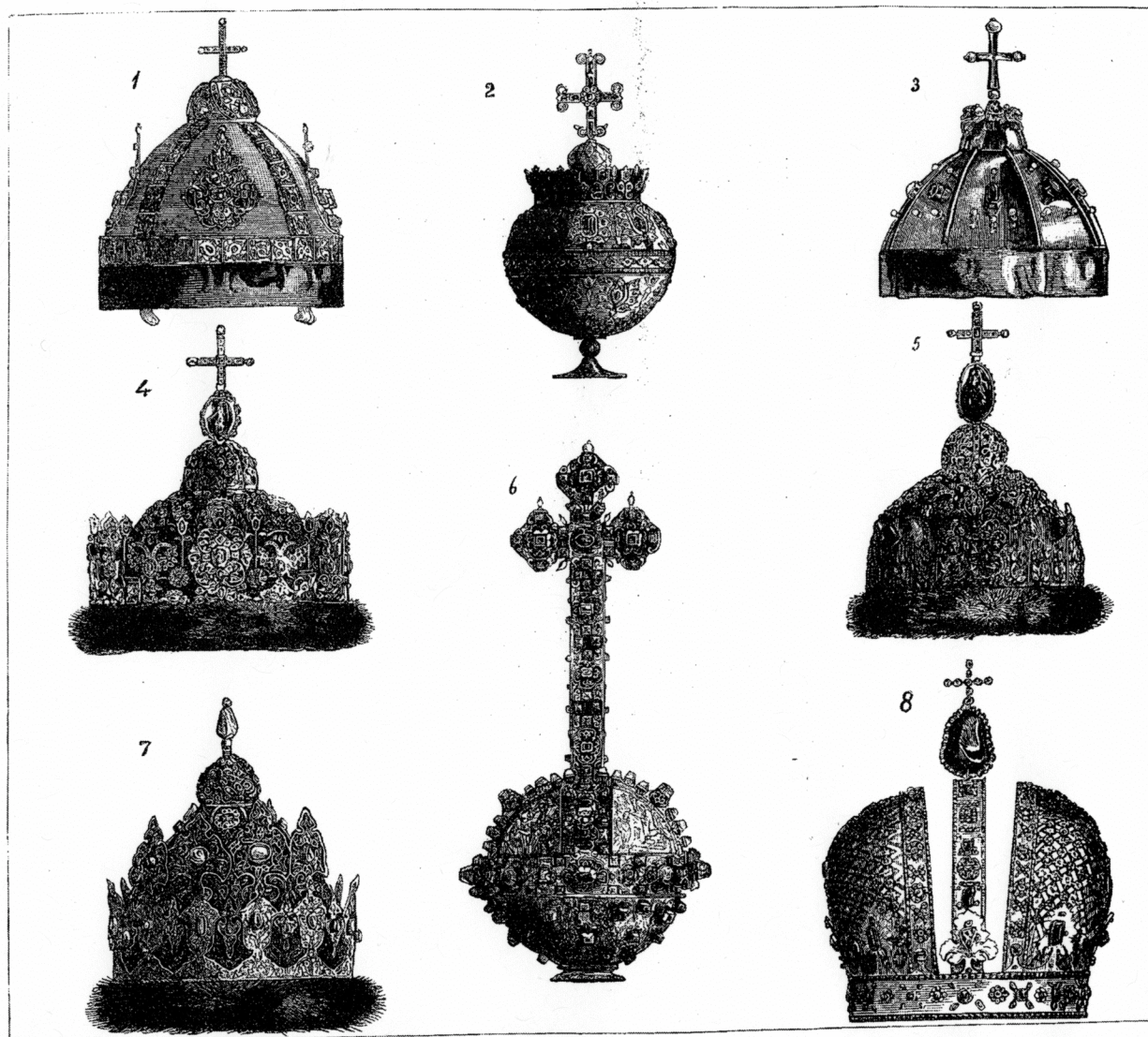


Figure 5.1: An *Illustrated London News* depiction of the British jewelry stalls at the 1862 International Exhibition – Emanuel's stand pictured ahead of Hunt & Roskell's.



1. Brocaded Cap, Known as "The Siberian," Dating from the Time of the Acquisition of Siberia in the Sixteenth Century.—2. The Orb of Alexis Mikhailovitch, Made at Constantinople by Order of the Czar Alexis.—3. Cap of Monomachus of the Second Order.—4. Diamond Cap of the Czar Ivan, Containing 900 Diamonds.—5. Diamond Cap of the Czar Peter, Containing 847 Diamonds.—6. The Orb of Monomachus.—7. The Crown of the Kingdom of Kazan, Said to Have Been Given by Ivan the Terrible to the Khan of Kazan, When That Defeated Chieftain Embraced Christianity.—8. The Imperial Crown of Anna Ivanovna, Containing About 2,500 Diamonds.

THE CORONATION OF THE CZAR—THE RUSSIAN CROWN JEWELS

Figure 5.2: *The Graphic's* detailed depiction of the Russian Crown Jewels in 1883.



Figure 5.3: Streeter's advertized shop insignia, aligning his shop with Britannia's global supremacy in terms of gems and pearls.

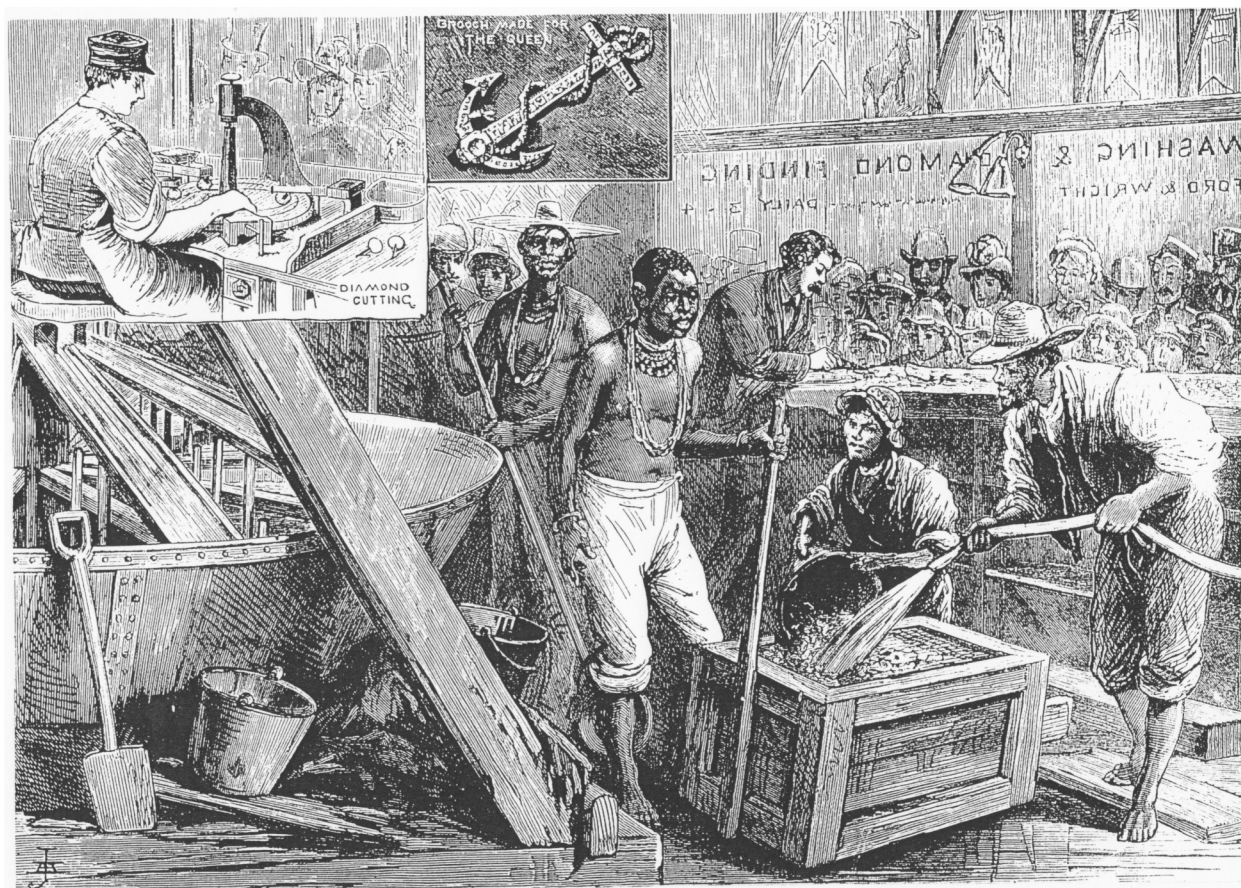
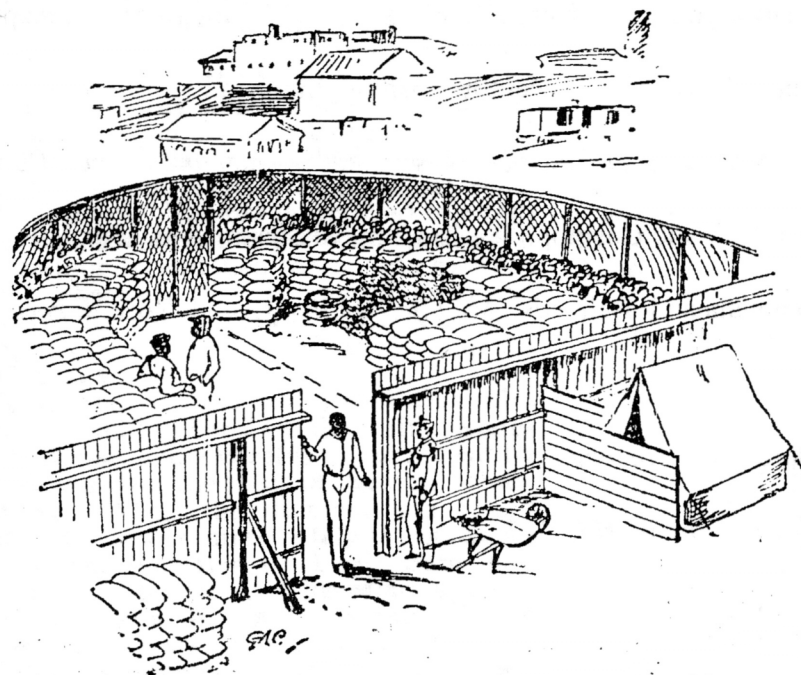


Figure 5.4: *The Illustrated London News*' coverage of the working diamond washings at the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition



DIAMONDIFEROUS EARTH FROM SOUTH AFRICA.

In the buildings of the Exposition are many

Figure 5.5: The *Chicago Tribune*'s depiction of the "diamond soil compound" in Chicago's Jackson Park in 1893

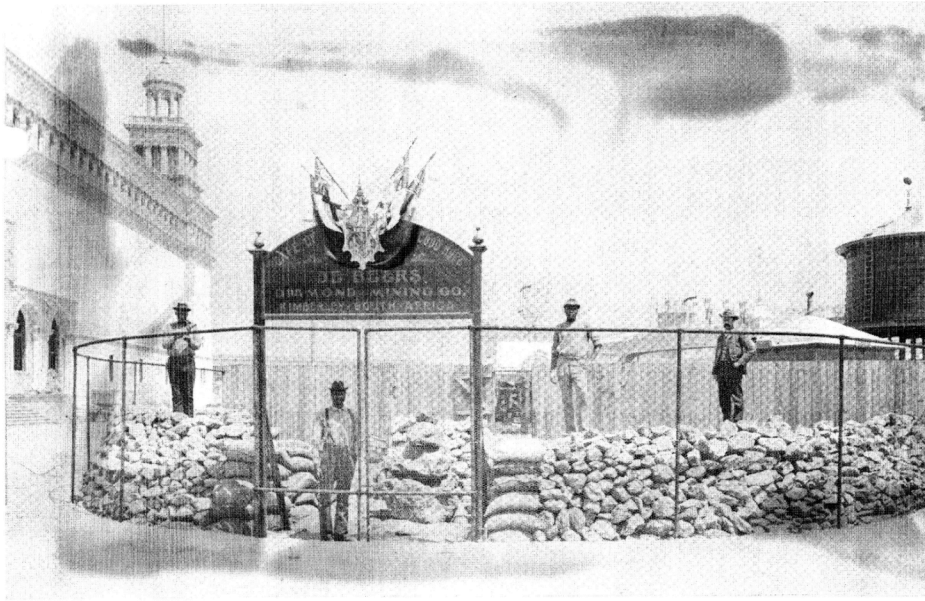
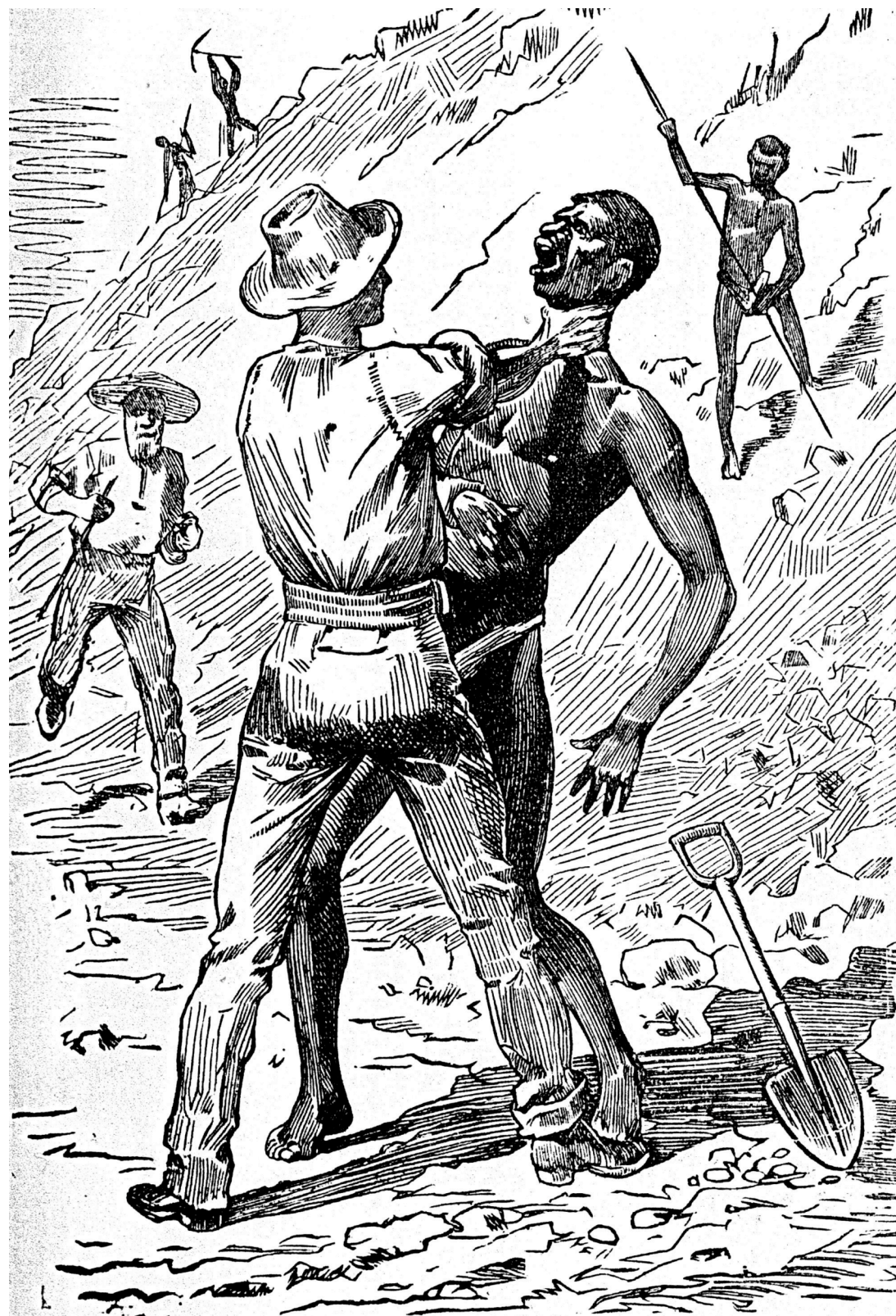


Figure 5.6: A photograph of the diamond compound in Jackson Park, Chicago, 1893.



"Kimberley," Cape Illustrated
Magazine (April 1892), 257

NATIVE SWALLOWING A DIAMOND.

Figure 5.7: "Native Swallowing a Diamond"

Conclusion: The Limits of Diamonds and the Limitations of Imperial History

Such people [the Rothschilds] have no conception of the management of the diamond market and their influence would be worthless. Rhodes has the idea to form a Syndicate on the model of the Copper Syndicate. Diamonds and copper are, however, very different articles: the first requires careful control, and we know from experience that one must make concessions to dispose of large amounts. -- Jules Porges of the London Diamond Syndicate, 1889¹

I fear, however, that the parliamentary influence and strength of the jeweller's trade would necessarily be much less than that of a staple trade like the cotton trade, with which a very large number of members are directly or indirectly connected...It is hardly likely that the government would take up as a Government measure a bill dealing only with the interest of a single trade. -- Joseph Chamberlain to J. Millward Banks of the Birmingham Jeweller's Association, 1889²

I quite agree with you it is very foolish to touch mines unless you are behind the scenes. -- EF Rhodes to his brother, Cecil Rhodes, 1886³

As Chamberlain hints above, the history of cotton, the staple product of British modernity *par excellence*, did not happen behind the scenes. The trade itself, is an indelible part of Whig *and* revisionist narratives of British history: American slavery, British industrialization, abolitionism, Chartism, the Raj, international rivalry, Gandhi – the story is familiar and it by and large played out in the ever-preserved and accessible realm of "high politics." But however fundamental cotton was to the political economy of Britain, it is only one story of British imperialism. As Timothy Burke has noted in regards to his study of hygiene products in Zimbabwe, "Each distinctive type of commodity demands a different accounting of history."⁴

This dissertation has sought to provide a distinctive narrative of nineteenth-century imperial British history from the perspective of the diamond trade; tracking another commodity

¹ As quoted in Colin Newbury, "The Origins and Function of the London Diamond Syndicate, 1889-1914," *Business History* 29, no. 1 (1987): 8.

² "Minutes of the Jeweller's Association," Joseph Chamberlain to J. Millward Banks, October 11 1889, MS 1646/1, 474-75, Birmingham City Archives, Birmingham.

³ Correspondence of Cecil John Rhodes (CJR), Mss Afr. s. 228, Ernest Frederick Rhodes to CJR, February 21 1886, 25, Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth & African Studies at Rhodes House (BLCAS).

⁴ Timothy Burke, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 215.

trade would have produced a different perspective on Britain. Diamonds, as Jules Porges explained it above, are not copper, and thus inhere a certain set of peculiarities (uselessness, portability, durability, reflexivity, auras of rareness and exoticism) that recommend them as luxury consumer products but not, as Chamberlain made clear to the Birmingham Jewelry Quarter, as staple commodities like cotton. The diamond trade was not a primary concern of the imperial government; even at the height of the South African Wars, it was arguably the gold trade that truly invigorated military action. The geographies that produced raw diamonds – places outside of Britain -- were not the geographies of the cotton trade. Perhaps most importantly in contrast to cotton, there is much about the diamond trade of the nineteenth century that happened "behind the scenes," for a multitude of reasons: the trade, though lucrative, was always regarded as peripheral; the traders and manufacturers, many of them Jewish, were regarded as peripheral to British industrialization and national character; chief diamond appreciators -- women, "Orientals," and aristocrats -- were derogated as anti-modern; and diamonds were easily smuggled – indeed, that was part of their allure. But what happened "onstage" about the diamond trade is just as important: Victorian customers were very aware of the conditions of diamond production and the fact of production and distribution monopolization. They ravenously devoured any and all information about diamonds and the trade, attempting to peek behind the scenes and in so doing consolidate their own identities of privilege at the same time as priming their anxiety that this privilege was crumbling. The richness of late Victorian diamond discourse provided both of these excitements in equal measure; contemporaries called it "romance." The domestication of diamonds in Britain – into British households, onto bodies, and as indelible pieces of "British" material culture and political economy – was a process that encoded claims about British superiority on a global scale.

What I have attempted to do here is study the overlaps between political economy, imperial Britain, and culture. The assumption of the dissertation is that diamonds are about Imperial Britain, or can somehow give us chief insight into imperial Britain (as opposed to other national-imperial histories, such as that of the US or France or Russia). After all, diamonds are not a domestic product of Britain, yet, since at least 1802, London has been at the center of the world's rough diamond trade. Moreover, the British government came to play a huge role – directly or indirectly -- in the major places of diamond production in the nineteenth century (India, Brazil, southern Africa). While diamond scientists in the first half of the nineteenth century attempted to bolster their position in British society by recommending diamonds to Britons as rational, progressive pieces of material culture (and themselves as diamond experts), their idea of diamonds competed with other meanings of the gemstone. In particular, the idea that India was the land of diamonds and diamond wealth and as such that diamonds were "oriental," was a powerful concomitant discourse.

The persistent connection metropolitan crowds made between India and diamond wealth in the mid-nineteenth century, despite the fact that Indian diamond production had dissipated, clearly imbued how the Koh-i-Noor was received when it was shown in 1851. Overtures to the diamond's symbolic status as British imperial authority were drowned out in the criticism of it as an emblem of plunder imperialism and irrational industry. Thus, the meaning of diamonds in British culture was unstable, at best, circa 1850.

This situation began to change in 1867 with the discovery of diamonds in South Africa. The period 1867 to about 1873 can be viewed as a "rush" period where diamonds rushed out of Africa and people and resources rushed to the Diamond Fields to cash in on the newfound deposits. In that brief window, diamonds were celebrated as democratizing pieces of material

culture, able to be concealed and moved by anyone. Likewise, the market was open and accessible to sellers and buyers as never before. The diamond "rush" facilitated the rise of cheap diamond ware – as well as the market for fake diamonds.

The commodity chain changed dramatically after 1873 and the world economy plunged into a depression that would last until the mid 1890s. On the Diamond Fields, independent diggers were forced to sell or abandon their claims, and conditions favored the growth of large conglomerates. In an effort to control the movement of labor, closed compound mining was introduced. The trend towards amalgamation was felt throughout the commodity chain. It affected the meaning of diamonds to the consumer, as well as the retail and post-retail trades in profound ways. To own a diamond became the measure of cultural enfranchisement. As one 1885 *Times* commentator quipped, "Every civilized lady, and a multitude of civilized men, expect to possess a few diamonds for their personal adornment"; "[diamonds] are no longer unattainable except for the very rich or the very extravagant." The same article characterized the "virtual monopoly" Kimberley enjoyed on the diamond market as a "wonderful windfall."⁵

Evidence of this new stability in the meaning of diamonds in British culture, brought about by the rise of the De Beers monopoly and the Diamond Syndicate, was seen in full measure at international exhibitions held after 1885. Metropolitan crowds were cast as literal and figurative overseers to African diamond workers and Jewish cutters, thus hemming each group into its segment of the commodity chain and disallowing access to full cultural enfranchisement. The degree to which metropolitan crowds reveled in the details of the diamond commodity chain reveal how knowledge about the conditions of production inhered in the meanings of consumption and how African colonialism worked at the heart of a British consumptive ethos.

⁵ *Times*, April 20 1885, 9.

In this way, I have exploited diamond history to craft a unique narrative about, or "map" of imperial Britain in the nineteenth century. But the degree to which following the diamond trade eclipses both imperial Britain and the depth of analysis we can achieve from focusing our stakes on a nation-based imperial framework is worth noting and grappling with. I am not characterizing imperial history as "small": British imperialism, in its broadest sense as well as in its most specific forms, was always about territorializing empire -- manifesting boundaries in material and discursive ways, archiving, charting terrain, marking milestones, claiming space, resources, authority, and entitlement. There were always competing "maps" of empire, created and deployed from a multitude of sites and for a multitude of reasons, to various effects. While this is by now fairly accepted thinking for practitioners of the "new imperial history," and I do not seek to undermine it, it does present scores of methodological challenges for those seeking to study *how* imperial Britain operated. What is the scope of British empire? From what territorial perspectives is it regularly viewed, how can we shift this and to what effect?

Tracking a global or transnational trade, as I have done, necessarily puts pressure on the scale of the "imperial." Ian Phimister's work on London and finance continues to make this point as he studies what has been termed "cooperative financial imperialism." He shows that in the case of investment, mining, and economy in South Africa and China, stockholders, investors, company engineers, and managers in what were classified as London-based companies came from a range of countries, backgrounds, and personal interests.⁶ To say that their interests served imperialism is to beg the question, "whose imperialism?" Peter Cain and Tony Hopkins have also noted that "investment groups in different countries [who] established connections that cut

⁶ I. R. Phimister, "Empire, Imperialism and the Partition of Africa," in *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism and Global History*, ed. Shigeru Akita (London: 2002), I. R. Phimister, "Foreign Devils, Finance and Informal Empire: Britain and China C.1900-1912," *Modern Asian Studies* 40 (2006): esp. 756-57, I. R. Phimister and Jeremy Mouat, "Mining, Engineers and Risk Management: British Overseas Investment, 1894-1914," *South African Historical Journal* 49 (2003).

across national interests...is a development that may not be captured by standard accounts of the history of modern imperialism that are based on the expansion of any one country.”⁷ When we spotlight networks of capital and commodity it is not possible to isolate what was a solely French imperial network (or actor), a British one, a Portuguese one, et cetera. My project has run into this conundrum over and over again, not only in terms of thinking through the multinational makeup of the De Beers Mining Company or the Diamond Syndicate, but in dealing with transnational Jewish diamond trade families, generic "white" immigration to Kimberley and Birmingham, the cosmopolitan quality of international exhibitions and fashion trends, and the question of studying "informal" imperialism. The global scale is precisely the one we have to work in if we are going to understand the “how” of British empire.

I have attempted to be alive to both informal and formal imperialisms; I have tried to activate Continental Europe and North America in my analysis; I have attempted to show how colonial priorities and developments have shaped the metropole; and I have attempted to track how transnational processes have permeated and constituted imperial Britain. My argument is that while the networks that facilitated material exploitation were created and maintained in a global as well as an imperial context, the cultural work they did was largely articulated in nationalist ways. Indeed, for contemporaries to articulate diamond discourse in nationalist ways was a choice, and that in and of itself reveals much about the headspace (and consumer-space) of the nineteenth century. In putting the priority on following transnational networks -- or the movement of goods, things, and people, in ways that happen above, around, and through national scales – we can begin writing histories of empire where the metropolitan nation is not by default

⁷ As in Phimister, "Foreign Devils, Finance and Informal Empire: Britain and China C.1900-1912," 757. For the full text see Peter Cain and Tony Hopkins, "The Peculiarities of British Capitalism: Imperialism and World Development," in *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism and Global History*, ed. Shigeru Akita (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

the center of cultural production and historical significance, and where the cooperation and connections between several imperial schemes can be analyzed. The place of consumer culture in this analysis is crucial, because it is in studying the consumer that we can study the intersection between culture and political economy. To be enfranchised in this framework is to purchase, not to vote. In that light, passages like the following from George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872) are all the more poignant:

"Yes! I will keep these -- this ring and bracelet," said Dorothea. Then, letting her hand fall on the table, she said in another tone, "Yet, what miserable men find such things, and work at them, and sell them!" She paused again, and Celia thought that her sister was going to renounce the ornaments, as in consistency she ought to do. "Yes, dear, I will keep these," said Dorothea decidedly.⁸

⁸ George Eliot, *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life* (Scarborough: Signet, 1981, c. 1872), 16.

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