

**Continuity and Change in the cultural
landscape of Table Mountain**

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of Science

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Abstract

Table Mountain is an inherently physical and natural landscape that also holds deep cultural meaning, symbolism and value for generations of Capetonians, past and present. The first detailed accounts and artistic representations of Table Mountain come from the early European discoverers, sailors and colonists who travelled to the Cape. These visitors, prejudiced by imperial rhetoric, were polarised in their perceptions of the Mountain between those who viewed it as a heavenly paradise and others who considered it a hellish purgatory. When science and logic eventually subdued the myths and mysteries associated with the 'Dark Continent' of Africa the polarised conception of Table Mountain's cultural landscape was transformed into one of savagery and opportunity. Indeed, from the sixteenth to eighteenth century, Table Mountain was effectively a microcosm for European attitudes, assumptions and evaluations of Africa. In the 1990's Table Mountain's cultural meaning is still divided between those who seek to conserve and preserve its natural and spiritual integrity and those who believe that utilising the Mountain's landscape as a material asset is the best means for ensuring and justifying its survival. A post-modern perspective highlights the broad range of economic, spiritual, ecological and community based values the Mountain holds for Capetonians and South Africans in general. Set against this viewpoint, Table Mountain, under the structured management of South Africa National Parks, is increasingly becoming a modernist cultural landscape governed by principles of universality, order and control. The ideological clashes that arise from these contrasting interpretations of the Mountain result in the defining characteristic of Table Mountain's cultural landscape in the 1990's being one of conflict and reproach. Ultimately by marrying the local and nationalised concepts within the South African landscape tradition to the broader frameworks of landscape study in wider geography, this thesis formulates an eclectic approach to studying a deeply meaningful and complex cultural landscape.

A note on terminology

Some of the references within this text contain language that may cause offence if taken out of its historical context. It is the aim of this study to detail and highlight cultural perspectives on Table Mountain and its environs. Neither the author, nor UCT, in any way support or condone the derogatory racist and culturalist viewpoints expressed in several historical accounts within this study. Such opinions are simply reproduced to reflect the cultural ideals and dogmas of the period in question.

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List of abbreviations

CMC:	Cape Metropolitan Council
CPMP:	Cape Peninsula Mountain Park
CPNP:	Cape Peninsula National Park
CPNPA:	Cape Peninsula Natural Protected Area
CPNPC:	Cape Peninsula National Parks Committee
CPNPE:	Cape Peninsula Natural Protected Environment
NPB:	National Parks Board
PMF:	Peninsula Mountain Forum
SANP:	South African National Parks
WESA: WC:	Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa: Western Cape branch
WWF:	World Wildlife Federation

Continuity and change in the cultural landscape of Table Mountain

Introduction

South Africa's Table Mountain is the most recognisable feature of the Cape of Good Hope, a location that has long been famous as the southernmost point of Africa, and the place where two oceans, the Indian and Atlantic, meet (a popular misconception¹). Defining just what physically constitutes Table Mountain is a subjective process. The obvious table, the flat topped massif (1081metres above sea level as measured at Maclear's Beacon²) seen most famously from Table Bay or Bloubergstrand and which looms over the city from the south, is far from being the whole mountain. Attached to this profile, but separated by 'neks' are the Lions Head (669metres) and rump to the north west, and Devils Peak (1002metres) to the north east³ (plate 1 highlights the separate nature of these peaks). In observing the Mountain from the front (northern city side) these three features effectively constitute a continuous profile and from the earliest voyages to the Cape, Lion's Head, Devil's Peak and the Table have been accepted as one Mountain⁴ (see plate 2). The table itself is larger than a cursory glance at its fabled profile would lead one to expect. The main table on the north is several hundred metres across whilst to the south, some 200 metres lower, is the back table which constitutes the bulk of the mountain top and slopes down towards the heights overlooking Hout Bay. Burman⁵ likens the layout of Table Mountain to a 'molar tooth', the upper (biting) surface of the tooth corresponding to the northern table whilst stretching down to the west side is a jagged root (the series of buttresses known as the 12 Apostles) faced by a shorter root on the east side (constituting the southern suburbs mountains ending at Constantia Nek). Finally, separating the two roots is the huge hole of Orangekloof which abuts the back table. This analogy, incorporating Lion's Head, Devil's Peak, the front and back tables, and extending to Constantia Nek as well as the 12 Apostles, sets the parameters this study will adopt in defining Table Mountain.

¹ The Cape of Good Hope's fame is based on a longstanding misconception and in reality the Cape Agulhas is the southernmost tip of Africa.

² Kench, J., 1988: *Know Table Mountain*. Chameleon Press, Diep River. p7.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Burman, J., 1991: *The Table Mountain book*. Human and Rousseau, Cape Town.

⁵ *Ibid.*p25.

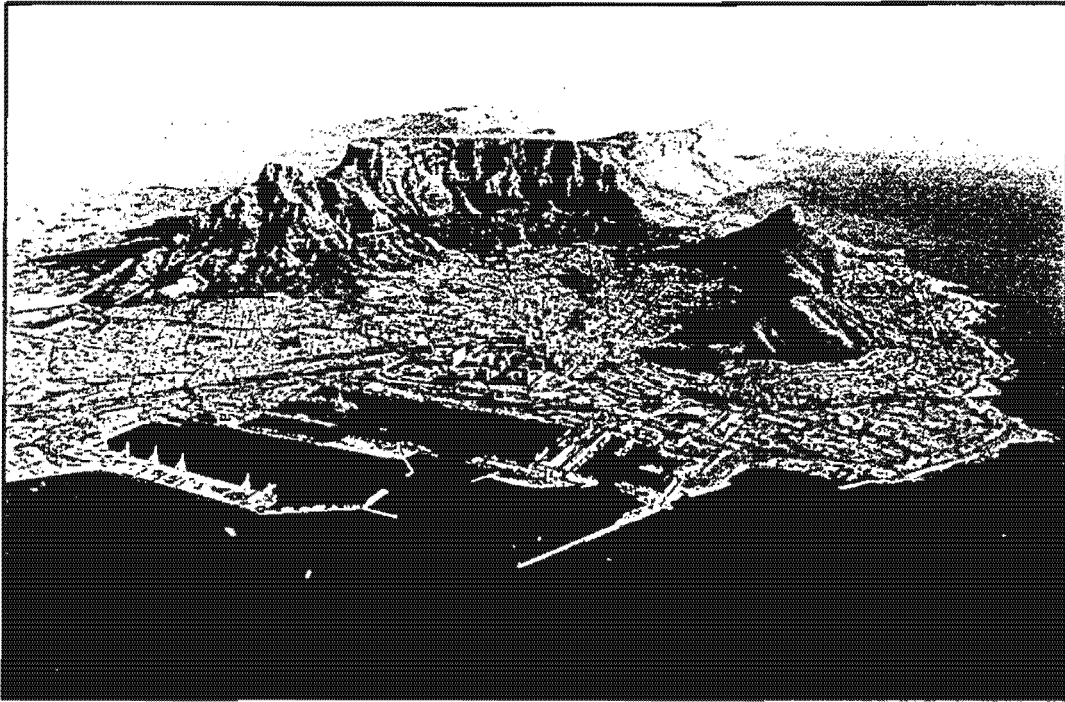


Plate 1: Devil's Peak, Table Mountain, Lion's Head and Signal Hill.
(Source: Postcard of Cape Town by Bateluer Publishing, Cape Town.)



Plate 2: The continuous profile which early sailors and discoverers would have associated with Table Mountain.
(Source: Postcard of Table Mountain by Bateleur Publishing, Cape Town.)

The mass of Table Mountain consists of hard, white and flat lying sandstone (known as Table Mountain sandstone⁶) supported by a base of granite and slates, the latter known as Malmesbury beds (see plate 3). A very basic geological history of the Table Mountain chain reveals that more than 600 million years ago the southern Cape was part of the Gondwana supercontinent and lay below the sea. Volcanic activity pushed lava up through the seabed of Malmesbury shale and raised it above sea level. The lava then solidified to form granite, the rounded boulders of which are now predominant along the coast. This Cape granite and the Malmesbury shales were then submerged under a shallow sea for some 200 million years, becoming buried under layers of sedimentary deposits from the rivers flowing from the north. These sedimentary deposits settled and solidified to form the quartzite sandstone that lies atop the Cape granites. The Table Mountain sandstone forms the distinctive craggy mountaintops and cliffs of much of the present mountain landscape.⁷ Meanwhile the unique flora supported by these sandstone soils, a Mediterranean type climate and a particular cultural and environmental history, ensure Table Mountain is an integral part of the globally renowned Cape Floral Kingdom, the smallest and most intensely biodiverse of the world's six floral kingdoms.⁸ In 1999 the combination of the Mountain's splendid profile, geological composition, biodiversity and importance as a national monument resulted in its proposal for World Heritage Site status. If awarded, this status will lead to increased global recognition and internationally supported protection of Table Mountain.

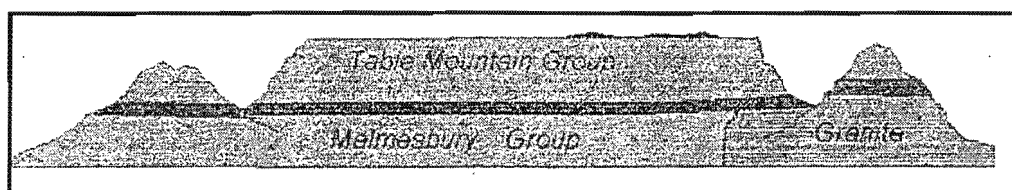


Plate 3: The Geology of Table Mountain.
(Source: UCT Department of Geological Sciences)

Table Mountain has always been the heart and soul of Cape Town: people live around it, gaze at its heights, feel its effect on the weather, walk, run, climb and even jump

⁶ CPNP 1999: Table Mountain profile: Geology. <http://www.cnp.co.za>.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Meadows, M. E., Baxter, A. J., 1999: Late Quaternary Palaeoenvironments of the Southwestern Cape, South Africa: a regional synthesis. *Quaternary International* 57/58. 1999.p193-206.

from its peaks in paragliders. Since the early days of explorers and over the centuries that have followed Cape Town's establishment in 1652, the Mountain has influenced and affected everyone who has witnessed its dramatic spectacle. It is in attempting to answer just why Table Mountain is so special to capetonians and the nation of South Africa that its importance as a point of geographic study becomes apparent.

Table Mountain is a classic cultural landscape, a medium that means so much, in so many contrasting ways to so many different people. The Mountain has long been considered the guardian of the Cape. The African legend of Umlindi Wemingizimu recounts how, when Quamata created the world, Nganyaba, a mighty dragon, tried to stop him creating dry land. To aid Quamata in his task, Djobela the earth Goddess created four giants, one each to guard the north, south, east and west. Ultimately the giants were defeated but before dying they asked Djobela to turn them into mountains so they might continue their work. According to the legend, Umlindi Wemingizimu, the watcher of the south, became Table Mountain.⁹ Meanwhile Camoes¹⁰, in 'The Lusiads', instead used the concept of the Mountain as a guardian to help establish and accentuate the pervasive perception of Africa as the 'Dark Continent' that framed the imperial approach to Table Mountain as witnessed in section two. Camoes helped instigate this prejudice by likening Table Mountain to a malevolent imprisoned Titan; Adamastor, who wreaked havoc upon any European voyager unfortunate enough to enter his hostile seas. A more contemporary vision of the Mountain as a protective force is evident in the Muslim community's belief that Table Mountain forms an integral part of the 'Circle of Islam', a series of sacred kramats (burial sites) that guards those within from natural disasters.¹¹

Table Mountain effectively acts as a source of security to all capetonians past and present. To the early settlers the Mountain was perceived as a God-given fortress against the wilds of Africa. For modern capetonians it is a constant, reassuring presence, a source of wind, rain, and cloud and above all, a natural, green-clad sanctuary in a bustling metropolis. On a personal note, as a European visitor, it is impossible not to be dazzled by the beautiful interaction between ocean, mountain,

⁹ Credo Mutwa (African Sage). Extract from the 1995 Original Living Diary – based on Credo Mutwa's myth. In Table Mountain Fund 1999: *The Table Mountain Fund: A Brief Introduction*. Cape Town, 16/9/99.

¹⁰ White, L., 1997: *Introduction to world classics: Camoes: The Lusiads*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

¹¹ Cape Mazaar Society, 1996: *Guide to the kramats of the Western Cape*. F. A. Print, Cape Town.

sky and even parts of the city, all juxtaposed under a clarifying light that is seemingly unique to the Cape sunshine. For those returning to the city, the Mountain is the first sight to be looked for, indeed, one citizen recalled that on returning after a lengthy absence abroad, the Mountain 'seemed three times bigger and still does'.¹² Over the years, from the seventeenth century birth of Cape Town to the thriving city that still lies in the Mountain's shadow today, Table Mountain's powerful influence, its aesthetic grandeur and the sense of belonging it engenders have remained constant. It is the perceived meaning and evaluation of these qualities that has progressively changed as the city's varied cultures evolved to produce an increasingly multi-faceted cultural landscape. In the early days of Cape Town perceptions of the Mountain were dictated by the Imperial discourse toward Africa, now the Table Mountain evokes a far more eclectic mix of approaches which are reflective of the city's cosmopolitan culture.

Table Mountain is the very essence of Cape Town. Without the Mountain, one of South Africa's foremost national icons, the city would undoubtedly not be the tourist Mecca, seat of parliament, and rapidly growing city it is today. More than this, the Mountain gives a shared sense of belonging, of common identity and of place to a cosmopolitan population that for years, under apartheid, had no such qualities. General Smuts¹³, speaking at the unveiling of the Mountain Club's war memorial at Maclear's Beacon in February 1923, likened Table Mountain to a 'national temple, our Holy of Holies' and proclaimed it one of the nation's 'most sacred possessions, part not only of the soil, but of the soul of South Africa'. Yet in this, the height of the twentieth century, Table Mountain is under threat.

The city of Cape Town is growing rapidly and social pressures necessitate that economic agendas increasingly take precedence over environmental concerns. The increasing threat of fires, invasive alien vegetation, encroaching settlement and escalating tourist pressures during the latter stages of this century has seen capetonians express growing concern for the natural and spiritual integrity of the Mountain. This concern manifested itself in a concerted campaign for the Mountain and its environs to be consolidated under one management body. In 1998 the full

¹² View expressed in 1999: Grass roots have your say. Models for the Mountain campaign.
<http://www.modelsforthemountain.co.za>.

¹³ Cited by Luckhoff, C. A., 1951: *Table Mountain: Our national heritage for 300 years*. A. A. Balkema, Cape Town.

extent of this drive was realised with the appointment of South African National Parks (SANP) to the role of managing the Cape Peninsula Natural Protected Environment. As a treasured possession, national icon, vital natural and conversely economic resource, Table Mountain has a vital role to play in building a brighter future for Cape Town and South Africa.

This study highlights the fact that Table Mountain is a cultural landscape characterised by a spectrum of perceptions, meanings and values. From early seafarers to modern planners and environmentalists, the Table Mountain landscape has produced an eclectic mix of interpretations, representations and evaluations and as such has much to add to the study of cultural landscapes, both historic and contemporary, within the geographic discipline.

Section one establishes an intellectual frame of reference for the study, proposing a definition for a cultural landscape and briefly outlining the evolution of the term within geography. This discussion outlines the methods and theories that dominate geographic thinking in North America and Europe and highlights the divergence from this global discourse that South African geography's often unique approach to landscape represents. Hence this study follows Jackson's¹⁴ request for a more progressive approach to landscape, one that appreciates the variety of cultures and their associated landscapes for their inherent diversity. The section subsequently lays the foundations for the eclectic approach to landscape, one able to draw on theories and concepts within both the South African and wider geographic tradition of landscape study, that an analysis of Table Mountain as a cultural landscape must utilise.

The perceptions of Table Mountain constructed by Europeans in the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries are analysed in section two. Europe held long established, utterly preconceived, ideals of Africa as the 'Dark Continent', which prejudiced the approach of sailors, explorers and settlers to the Cape long before they ever set foot on its shores or sighted Table Mountain. Subsequently, when the first European sailors, discoverers and pioneering colonists encountered Table Mountain they either viewed it as a mythical paradise or place of purgatory and damnation. As the Cape was

¹⁴Jackson, P., 1989: *Maps of meaning*. Unwin Hyman, London.

progressively settled, indigenous peoples subjugated and the Mountain climbed and explored, this polarisation increasingly transformed into a perception of Table Mountain and the Cape as a land of opportunity or savagery. For many European settlers and visitors at the Cape the alien landscape encompassed all that was bizarre and therefore evil and unpleasant in 'wild Africa'. To the more intrepid and enlightened, Table Mountain and the 'gateway to Africa' it represented, offered unrivalled potential for exploration, wealth, fame and glory. Finally section two highlights how throughout this period of European history, approaches to Africa and hence Table Mountain were invariably framed within an imperial discourse. This imperial doctrine ultimately believed Europe was vastly superior, be it in terms of landscape, religion, culture or civilisation, to the rest of the world, and, in particular, viewed Africa as a heathen infested, utterly inferior continent.

Section three focuses on the cultural landscape of Table Mountain in the 1990's and emphasises the growing conflict of interests, particularly between forces of consumption and conservation, which dominate the modern-day Mountain. In its simultaneous, contrasting conception as a community asset, a spiritual medium for a variety of religions and as an economic and environmental asset, Table Mountain is portrayed as a polyvocal and therefore inherently post-modern cultural landscape. Set against this variety of cultural interpretations, however it is proposed that Table Mountain is, at the turn of the millennium under its new SANP management, subject to the resurrection of an increasingly modernist metanarrative of structured control and order. The discussion explores the conflict of interests and opinions over issues such as financial policy, land use, access and management protocol, that has arisen between these two contrasting approaches to Table Mountain. The section also provides a medium for reintroducing, and to some extent evaluating, many of the theoretical approaches to cultural landscapes highlighted in section one. In particular the methodology of Sauer, in studying the diffusion and construction of human artefacts, is shown to have clear relevance to both contemporary and potential future studies of Table Mountain's cultural landscape. Meanwhile the iconography of Table Mountain as a local, national and international symbol is presented as an underlying discourse within all approaches to the Mountain, whether modern, post-modern or artefact based.

Finally the conclusion takes a step back from the two periods of study, the early centuries of discovery and colonisation, and the 1990's, and looks at the contrasts and similarities in the respective culture's perceptions and evaluations of Table Mountain. Themes of polarisation and disunity, as well as the Mountain's awe-inspiring, emotive and individualistic effect on those who behold it, are deemed constant factors in the meanings and values associated with Table Mountain's cultural landscape. Equally there have been clear changes in the manifestations of the Mountain's cultural landscape over the centuries, in particular, its perceived powers and mysteries have faded to the extent that it now needs humans to protect and justify its existence. The conclusion also assesses just what this study of Table Mountain as a cultural landscape contributes to the study of landscapes within the geographic discipline. In marrying the distinctly South African tradition of landscape study to that of geography more widely, and emphasising the human and experiential nature of what is an inherently natural landscape, it is proposed that this text offers a bridge for the divide between national and international, and human and physical, that exists within South African landscape studies.

SECTION ONE

Geography and the landscape

The meaning of landscape

'Landscape is an attractive, important and ambiguous term' (Meinig, 1979¹⁵)
It is attractive because it generates pleasant images of various scenes and vistas, important because it involves matters of professional interest and public concern, yet ambiguous because its meaning and usage is so varied.¹⁶ The history of the term landscape can be traced back to the sixteenth century work of poets and artists. In its 400 year history the idea of landscape has 'taken on many meanings but left few behind, so that while there is some continuity in its sense it has acquired a cumbersome baggage of artistic, popular, technical and academic associations'.¹⁷

Defining landscape is inherently difficult. A leading landscape geographer, J. B. Jackson¹⁸ who spent a good deal of his life bound to landscape study readily confesses that after 25 years he still finds the concept elusive. The origins of the term are traceable to the Renaissance and are closely related to landscape painting. According to Cosgrove¹⁹ the term landscape emerged in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, as 'a way of seeing' a visual term that arose out of Renaissance humanism and its particular constructs of time and space. It implied a particular sensibility, a means of expressing and experiencing feelings toward the external world; both natural and manmade, it was an articulation of the human relationship between man and the world he (sic) lived in.²⁰ 'Implicit in the landscape idea is a visual ideology'.²¹ With the sound grounding of linear perspective in geometry, landscape art offered Renaissance 'man' the ability to delimit, organise and hence control space. Cosgrove²² looked at how the chorographic landscapes which decorated the walls of

¹⁵ Meinig, D. W., 1979: *The Interpretation of ordinary landscapes*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.p1

¹⁶ Relph, E., 1976: *Place and Placelessness*. Pion, London.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p56

¹⁸ Jackson, J. B., 1984 *Discovering the vernacular landscape*. Yale University Press.

¹⁹ Cosgrove, D., 1985: Prospect, perspective and the evolution of the landscape idea. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers (TIBG)*. N.S.10, p45-62.

²⁰ Cosgrove, D., 1984: *Social formation and symbolic landscape*. University of Wisconsin Press.

²¹ *Ibid.* p54.

²² *Ibid.*

sixteenth century Italian halls and palaces illustrated how landscape was a way of seeing the world, with accurate depiction of the land by perspective geometry achieving aesthetically what maps, charts and surveys achieved practically.

Although the concept of landscape is complex, elusive and difficult to define, it is one of geography's most resilient terms because it refers to one of the discipline's most abiding interests; the relationship between the natural environment and human society.²³ Landscape developed as a concept within the discipline of geography in nineteenth century Germany as 'Landschaft', which literally means the shape of the land. The geographic aim of formulating systematic and scientific theories of society's interaction with their physical environs was deemed possible through studying this morphology of scenery. In particular this approach aimed to link the morphology of the environment to the social, economic and cultural activity in a given area over time. Fieldwork was crucial to such an endeavour 'the eye held the landscape together as a unit and the geographer then analysed the view, selecting the features requiring elucidation.'²⁴

Rappaport²⁵ believes that implicit in this Renaissance artistic usage of landscape is a distinction between manmade and natural landscape with only the latter being branded landscape. However separating man from nature and hence manmade from natural landscapes is far from easy. As early as 1956 the point was made by Thomas that there was not a place left on earth that, if not manmade, had not been affected by human action²⁶. Hence in 1926, Carl Sauer conceived the concept of the cultural landscape and it has formed the focal point for geographic studies ever since, representing as it does the patterns and forms produced by human interactions with the natural environment. Since culture includes human technologies, ideologies and traditions whilst the environment incorporates geomorphological, climatic, ecological and hydrological factors, this has allowed geography to adopt a 'grandly synthetic approach' to landscape.²⁷ This synthetic approach to culture and the landscape is invaluable when contemplating Table Mountain in the 1990's, a very physical and natural landscape in a highly urban and cultural environment.

²³ Rose, G., 1992: In Agnew, J. A., Livingstone, D. N., Rogers, A., 1996: *Human geography: An essential anthology*. Blackwells, Oxford.

²⁴ *Ibid*

²⁵ Rappaport, A., 1992: On cultural landscapes. *T.D.S.R.* volume 3, no.2, p33-47

²⁶ Thomas, W. L. T., 1956: *Man's role in changing the face of the earth*. Chicago University Press.

²⁷ Relph, E., 1981: *Rational landscapes and humanistic geography*. Croom Helm, London.

Landscape as opposed to Place

Any study of landscape must, as a preliminary step, first clarify the difference between the concepts of landscape and place within geography. At least superficially many of the trends and developments in the two geographic traditions bear strong similarities. Nevertheless, for reasons that will now be clarified, this study views Table Mountain as a landscape and not as a place.

Much of the early work in the humanist revival within geography centred on reconciling humanity with place. Relph's *Place and Placelessness* (1976²⁸) is a prime example of this emergent humanist current in geography. Relph²⁹ reconceptualised place as 'a profound and complex aspect of the world, that encompasses both functional and existential features'. The work of Yi Fu Tuan³⁰ in particular highlighted this humanistic objective and clearly mirrored much of the theory behind cultural landscape studies. In his discussion concerning the personality and sense of place he distinguished between 'public symbols', which are places that yield their meaning to the eye, and 'fields of care', which can only be known in essence from within. Clear parallels exist between landscape theory and these 'public symbols' with their reliance on symbolism and imagery. Equally 'fields of care', in emphasising the personal and experiential aspects of a place that are only available to the 'insider', clearly highlight the differences between the concepts of landscape and place. As Cosgrove³¹ points out, landscape implies a different relationship between people and space. For Cosgrove³² 'the fullest relationship we can have with a place is to live within it, to be a true insider'. However landscape, due to its 'visual ideology', ensures we are always interpreting it from the outside. Hence place is experiential in a way landscape is not. That said, the way we see landscape does to some degree depend upon experience and purpose and, therefore, must appreciate the fundamentals behind studying the 'sense of place'.

The most obvious distinction between place and landscape is simply that landscape involves a larger space. Place, on the other hand, commonly refers to a more exact

²⁸ Relph, E., 1976: *Op cit.*

²⁹ Cited by Lammas, R. C., 1995: *Portraits of place: images of Southern Africa in landscape painting*. Unpublished MA thesis. Witwatersrand University.

³⁰ Yi Fu Tuan, 1977: *Space and place – The perspective of experience*. University of Minnesota.

³¹ In Agnew, J. A., Livingstone, D. N., Rogers, A., 1996: *Op cit.*

³² *Ibid.* p104.

area, a fixed location, 'events take place' and we can 'be in place'.³³ As Meinig³⁴ points out landscape tends to be something more external and objective than the more personalised 'sense of place' and 'something less individual, less discrete, than the visual named place; it is a continuous surface rather than a point, focus, locality or defined area'.

Table Mountain is a highly visual and physical presence in the lives of all Cape Townians, past and present. Yet these people have overwhelmingly experienced the Mountain as 'outsiders', it has formed a constant backdrop for their lives. Hence Table Mountain is represented, in true landscape style, in artwork, maps, poetry and more recently legislation and policy, indeed in all the mediums that prove largely unsuitable for reflecting the mental abstractions that form and shape peoples sense of place. For early sailors and settlers, Table Mountain was not a specific, spatially contained place, instead it was seen as an imposing, powerful and mysterious backdrop that for years was not explored, defined or delimited and was therefore a landscape deemed representative of Africa as a continent. Table Mountain remains to this day a landscape lived in by none but loved by many, people can walk on its slopes and plateaux but at the end of the day they must return to their homes below. Hence, despite increasing interaction, the Mountain still fulfils the classic artistic role of a landscape by acting as a beautiful, yet imposing backdrop to the daily lives of capetonians. That said, the lack of any of the physical trappings of culture, such as buildings and infrastructure, does not make Table Mountain any less a cultural landscape. Instead Cape Town's spectrum of cultures, both past and present, have in effect, projected their cultural ideals onto the Mountain, principally in the form of mental conceptions, artworks and texts. To understand the nature of these cultural constructs of the Table Mountain landscape, a geographer must first appreciate something of the intricacies of culture.

A geographic approach to culture

Before studying the origins and developments of cultural landscape theory a working definition of the term culture is imperative. If there is ambiguity in the concept of landscape then defining culture and understanding its nature and processes has proven

³³ Meinig, D. W., 1979: *Op cit.*

³⁴ *Ibid.* p3.

even more challenging for academics. McDowell's definition goes some way to clarify the meaning of culture:

'Culture is a set of ideas, customs and beliefs that shape peoples actions and their production of material artefacts, including the landscape and the built environment. Culture is socially defined and socially determined. Cultural ideas are expressed in the lives of social groups who articulate, express and challenge these sets of ideas and values, which are themselves temporally and spatially specific.'

(McDowell, 1994³⁵)

From the perspective of landscape studies within geography the most significant aspect of culture is its ability to vary temporally and spatially, for it is this variability that leaves its imprint on the cultural landscape. Rappaport³⁶ points out that this cross-cultural variability is at its most noticeable in the contrast between 'traditional' and 'popular' landscapes. Traditional (vernacular) landscapes, which vary spatially but change only slowly, generate diversity through their group specificity. Meanwhile more contemporary, 'popular' landscapes, which are characterised by rapid transformation, are less varied spatially but more so temporally. In order to understand these cultural landscape formations one must appreciate the forces at work within these cultures.

Cultural landscapes, despite the apparently uncoordinated activities of the 'actors' within their specific culture group, add up to a 'recognisable whole' because their members share the same or very similar mental schemata.³⁷ Such schemata refer to an idealised landscape, which, Rappaport³⁸ believes, may be symbolic, cosmological or even mythical and imagined. These mental schemata are translated into landscape by human actions which in turn are governed, be it formally or informally, by the rules of that culture in a bid to recreate this idealised landscape. The application of these rules leads to systematic choices, a process that establishes styles of material culture, which in turn help generate recognisable, culturally specific, landscapes. This process of culturally controlled mental schemata creating a popular cultural landscape

³⁵ In Gregory, D., Martin, R., Smith, G., eds., 1994: *Human Geography: society, space and social science*. Minnesota University Press, Minnesota. p148.

³⁶ Rappaport, A., 1992: *Op cit*.

³⁷ *Ibid*.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

construction will be developed with reference to the religious interpretations of Table Mountain in the 1990's.

Cultural geography is a sub-discipline in itself yet the likes of Jackson³⁹ argue that it is in urgent need of a reappraisal, its concept of culture is badly outdated and its interest in the landscape is unnecessarily limited. Indeed, Jackson describes how cultural geography is currently undergoing a transformation as a result of its dialogue with social geography and cultural theory. Until recently its range has been very much limited to the interpretation of historical, rural and relict landscapes, and to static mapping of the distribution of cultural traits. Though much of this 'new' cultural geography remains wedded to the idea of landscape, Jackson urges geographers to take an approach which emphasises the plurality of cultures and the multiplicity of landscapes with which these cultures are associated. Studying Table Mountain offers an unparalleled opportunity to utilise Jackson's approach of marrying culture and landscape, as Table Mountain, in being subjected to a variety of cultural influences, both now and in the past, is the epitome of a multiplicitous cultural landscape.

Geography and the cultural landscape

Cultural geographers study the relations between human communities and the natural world and in particular the transformation of natural into cultural landscapes. With mankind's influence over the planet never greater, the study of the resultant cultural landscape has come to the fore in contemporary geography. Carl Sauer (1889-1975), one of the century's most eminent geographers, and his Berkeley School, were responsible for pioneering the concept of landscape studies. Sauer⁴⁰ believed geography could not be defined as an abstract relationship, it had to have a substantive content, the cultural landscape. While other practitioners claimed that human activity was environmentally determined, Sauer disagreed and urged academics to consider the importance of culture in shaping the Earth's surface. Sauer saw physical surfaces giving rise to varying cultural landscapes through the contrasting nature of the area's cultural influences. The cultural landscape could thus be identified and delimited by contrasting it with the physical landscape, the former

³⁹ Jackson, P., 1989: *Maps of meaning*. Unwin Hyman, London.

⁴⁰ In Agnew, J. A., Livingstone, D. N., Rogers, A., 1996: *Op cit*.

having been 'fashioned out of a natural landscape by a culture group'.⁴¹ Essentially Sauer⁴² believed 'culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium and the cultural landscape the result'.

Sauer's philosophy posed a direct challenge to the dominant ideology of environmental determinism and saw the emergence of cultural geography as a field of geographic study. For, as Kenzer⁴³ points out, Sauer's was an enterprise devoted to the study of natural landscape's evolution into cultural landscape within a temporal framework. Hence the 'Morphology of landscape' was at once a call to eradicate determinism from the discipline and provided a turning point in the geographic approach to landscape.⁴⁴ Indeed Jackson⁴⁵ claims that cultural geography to this day remains 'under his thrall'. However the Sauerian monopoly on cultural geography and cultural landscape in particular has come under severe criticism. The geographic obsession with positivist science in the 1950-60's saw the likes of Hartshorne⁴⁶ lead a stinging attack on the vagaries of cultural landscape studies. Indeed it was the positivists' sustained criticism of Sauer's traditional approach that encouraged and facilitated the emergence of 'New' schools of landscape thought that focused less on cultural and more on social causality within the landscape.

Sauer was primarily interested in landscape as a record of human activity rather than in the social systems through which human agency is actively expressed.⁴⁷ Hence, by attributing causality to 'culture' instead of individuals or social groups, Sauer implicitly diverted attention away from the social and towards the physical environment. Although Sauer acknowledged agency in terms of 'historically cumulative effects' he focussed on physical and biological processes set in motion by human intervention rather than social processes. McDowell sees Sauer's focus as threefold. Firstly its objective was a historical reconstruction of the environment and the human forces that shaped the landscape. Secondly he aimed to identify distinctive, homogeneous cultural regions defined both by material artefacts and non-material

⁴¹ In Agnew, J. A., Livingstone, D. N., Rogers, A., 1996: *Op cit.* p309.

⁴² *Ibid.* p309.

⁴³ Kenzer, M. S., 1985: Milieu and the intellectual heritage of Carl O. Sauer's undergraduate heritage. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers (A.A.A.G.)*. 75(2), p258-270.

⁴⁴ Kersten, S., 1992: Cited by: *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Jackson, P., 1989: *Op cit.* p17.

⁴⁶ Cited by: Olwig, K. R., 1996: Recovering the substantive nature of landscape. *A.A.A.G.* 86(4), p630-653.

⁴⁷ Jackson, P., 1989: *Op cit.*

attributes such as language. Finally Sauer⁴⁸ sought to study historical cultural ecology, focussing on how human perceptions and uses of the landscape are culturally conditioned.

The Berkeley School under Sauer's leadership adopted the anthropologist Kroeber's notion of a superorganic level of organisation. This sees culture as an entity, existing at a higher level than the individual, governed by a logic of its own and actively constraining human behaviour. People were important for transmitting culture but they were not necessary for its existence. Instead material symbols (house types, etc.) became the vehicles for culture's transmission. Hence culture has its own internal momentum and is an entity that humans merely participate in and 'flesh out'.⁴⁹ Sauer's adoption of the superorganic concept formed the basis of his critique on what he perceived as the narrowness and short-sightedness of the stranglehold that environmental determinism held over American geography. Sauer developed his ideas on the cultural landscape from the idea of a superorganic culture. The cultural landscape was the visible imprint of a culture group on the land.⁵⁰ He believed that culture was embodied in custom and tradition recognisable in patterns and marks imprinted on nature. Subsequently his interest lay in material forms of symbol, on historic artefacts, rather than the more abstract symbols of ideas and values. Sauer essentially saw culture as artefact and was not interested in anything that was not directly tied to the landscape. Sauer's overriding concern was in landscape as a record of human activity rather than the nature of the activity itself. He was engaged with the search for the origins of cultural traits rather than the process and dynamics of social change. What is beyond doubt is that by pioneering the association of culture and landscape, Sauer brought the study of culture, and more specifically, the cultural landscape into geography.

If Sauer's 1925 'Morphology of landscape' saw the birth of the study of cultural landscape in geography then the 'Quantitative Revolution' within the discipline was a very dramatic mid-life crisis. In the post war years geography was, according to Harvey, 'caught between a lack of academic identity and profundity ... and a weak popular base' and 'short on theory, long on facts'.⁵¹ Positivism with its hypothetico –

⁴⁸ In Gregory, D., Martin, R., Smith, G., eds., 1994: *Op cit.*

⁴⁹ Zelinsky, W., 1973: *The cultural geography of the United States*. Eaglewood Cliffs. New Jersey.

⁵⁰ Sauer, C. O., 1925: In Agnew, J. A., Livingstone, D. N., Rogers, A., 1996: *Op cit.*

⁵¹ Harvey, D., 1969: *Explanation in geography*. Arnold, London.

deductive methodology and scientific epistemology and ontology offered geography a scientific grounding, which subsequently enhanced its academic respectability and was duly embraced. The subjective and imprecise nature of the cultural landscape saw the likes of Hartshorne dismiss it as the central organising concept of geography and call for a geographical science of space in which regions are mental constructions.⁵² The static, descriptive, 'morphology of landscape' ill-suited the call of positivist geographers for dynamic functional regions to be defined and investigated by geographers contributing to economic and social planning. Hartshorne's fundamental problem with the landscape concept was that the term derived from the German word 'landschaft', which had a highly problematic double meaning. It had a specifically German definition as a restricted piece of land yet it was also used in English to refer to the 'appearance of a land as we perceive it'.⁵³ Confusion resulted, Hartshorne⁵⁴ argued, from the use of the same word 'to mean on the one hand a definitely restricted area and, on the other, a more or less definitely defined aspect of an unlimited extent of the earth surface'. Hartshorne's solution to this dilemma, and indeed that of the majority of geographers, was to abandon landscape and turn to geography as a science of region and space, yet this is an approach that holds little value for the interpretation of Table Mountain's highly subjective and emotive cultural landscape.

The ethos of geography as a positivist science was challenged during the 1970's by writers seeking a more 'humanistic' approach to understanding relations between humans and their world. Humanistic geography sought to recover the geographical imagination lost to the discipline during the quantitative revolution and to introduce moral discourse to geography.⁵⁵ During the 1980s, primarily in North America, geographers sought to reformulate landscape as a concept whose subjective and artistic resonance's were to be actively embraced. They allowed for the incorporation of individual, imaginative and creative human experiences into geographic studies.⁵⁶ Subsequently, landscape was adopted by humanist geographers for the very reasons that saw it ignored under positivism; the subjective, experiential holism that humanists proclaim. The humanist response to positivism brought with it renewed interest and importance in cultural landscape studies. The vigour of this interest saw

⁵² Hartshorne, C., 1939, 1958: Cited by Olwig, K. R., 1996: *Op cit.*

⁵³ *Ibid.* p152.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p154.

⁵⁵ Ley, D., Samuels, M. S., 1978: *Humanistic Geography: prospects and problems.* Croom Helm, London.

⁵⁶ Cosgrove, D., 1984: *Op cit.*

the traditional Sauerian approach to cultural landscape strongly criticised and several new schools of thought arose to interpret and represent landscape.

Sauer's critics focused initially on his superorganic approach to culture that, in virtually ignoring human agency, ran counter to the humanist induced emergence of contemporary social theory. The superorganic approach took for granted the production processes behind cultural artefacts and conflict over the production and consumption of material objects was ignored. All that was deemed important was the dispersion of these features throughout the landscape.⁵⁷ This obsession with material objects and artefacts has been branded 'a curious and thoroughly antiquarian object fetishism'⁵⁸. Gregory and Lee⁵⁹ go as far to suggest that this 'object fetishism' was little more than 'a celebration of the bizarre'. Human agency, in the sense of individuals or groups making choices, interacting, negotiating and imposing constraints on one another, was all but ignored by Sauer and his followers. Consequently a 'new cultural geography' and more specifically a new approach to cultural landscape, which declared the traditional methods static, empiricist and obsessed with relict landscape, emerged.

However, before presenting these emergent 'new' schools of landscape study some defence of Sauer and his 'morphology of landscape' is merited. Firstly Sauer memorably stated that people seemed to have spent more time reading his 'Morphology of landscape' than he took to write it. McDowell⁶⁰ believes it is important to put Sauer's work into context; knowledge is socially constructed and temporally specific. Sauer was very much a man of his times. His approach to cultural landscapes was undoubtedly effective and appropriate when dealing with traditional rural landscapes where friction of distance was a significant social barrier and religion and social beliefs create a tight 'social glue'. In these, now predominantly relict conditions, it is easy to see how landscape, shared beliefs, ideals and social meanings coincide. Applying Sauer's methodology and reasoning to modern landscape is largely inappropriate and somewhat unfair as he could never have visualised the eclectic mix of post-modern global cultures that have shaped the cultural landscape in the late 20th century. Typically the rise of the Metropolis in all its complexity and

⁵⁷ Duncan, J. S., Ley, D., 1993: *Place/culture/representation*. Routledge, London.

⁵⁸ In Price, M., Lewis, M., 1993: The reinvention of cultural geography. *A.A.A.G.* 83(1), p1-17.

⁵⁹ In *Ibid.* p116.

⁶⁰ In Gregory, D., Martin, R., Smith, G., eds., 1994: *Op cit.*

diversity, strangeness and sophistication permitted new forms of expression unheard of in more traditional landscapes. Geographers faced with these dynamic new cultural forces clearly had to redefine their approach to cultural landscapes. Indeed, Table Mountain's cultural landscape in the 1990's is a prime example of the growth in power and influence of such post-modern forces as urban development in particular, forces economic, political and community based agendas and evaluations upon the Mountain.

The most immediate and obvious divergence between Sauer's approach to cultural landscape and more contemporary 'New Schools' of landscape study is that whereas the former emphasised the material record of culture, the latter has looked toward more metaphorical concepts of landscape, as distributed among a variety of texts. These texts include novels and paintings and a feel for the symbolic and aesthetic dimensions of landscape as well as the material. Equally the same social processes that Sauer largely ignored: the forces of production and consumption that lay behind cultural landscapes, were brought to the fore of geographical study.

One new approach, following these principles, was Raymond Williams' concept of a cultural materialist approach to landscape. The common emphasis in this, and indeed all materialist analyses, is their refusal to treat the realm of ideas, attitudes, perceptions and values as independent of the forces and relations of production.⁶¹ Culture is a medium of social power, it is a contested reflection of the material conditions of existence.⁶² In tracing the history of the landscape idea, Cosgrove⁶³ reinserted landscape into contemporary political and ideological debates highlighting (as illustrated earlier) how Renaissance landscape art with its adoption of linear perspective allowed for the control and exercise of power over the land. Williams⁶⁴ used the cultural materialist approach to illustrate how sets of shared meanings and social identities are linked to place. It was argued that culture was the lived unity of experience that generated structures of feeling. Williams believed that cultural forms of all kinds were the result of specific processes of production, which were inextricably tied to social relations. Williams⁶⁵ declared 'a working country is hardly

⁶¹ Jackson, P., 1989: *Op cit.*

⁶² Daniels, S., In Gregory, D., Martin, R., Smith, G., eds., 1994: *Op cit.*

⁶³ Cosgrove, D., 1984: *Op cit.*

⁶⁴ Williams, R., 1961: *The long revolution*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

⁶⁵ Cited by Daniels, S., In Agnew, J. A., Livingstone, D. N., Rogers, A., 1996: *Op cit.*

ever a landscape' and 'the very idea of landscape implies a separation and observation'. Instead landscape is an 'elevated sensibility' fundamentally one of patrician control, which is reproduced in 'internal histories of landscape painting, landscape writing, landscape gardening and landscape architecture'.

Equally Berger,⁶⁶ an existentialist Marxist also saw landscape as deceptive; 'sometimes a landscape seems less a setting for the life of its inhabitants than a curtain behind which their struggles, achievements and accidents take place'. Such a view can clearly be linked to the cultural materialist doctrine of landscape as a visual ideology, reinforcing capitalist ideals and obscuring the plight of the masses behind this landscape 'curtain'. For Williams⁶⁷ landscape reifies the status quo, he illustrates this by showing how monuments and dramatic buildings, which act to dominate the landscape, create a 'sensory pull' drawing the observer to them and act as manifestations of power and the dominant ideology. This concept is developed with respect to seventeenth and eighteenth century European attempts to soften and familiarise the Mountain landscape as part of an imperialist objective to subdue the Mountain as an icon of African resistance. Furthermore, Williams lamented the fact that the study of landscape traditionally tended to overlook working class, production orientated, landscapes and set to rectify this failing. Williams looked at the disruption of English towns and villages during and after the two world wars. In doing so he highlighted the deep sense of belonging to the area, and, indeed, the landscape, that was created by a shared class background, resilience in the face of hardship and a geographically restricted set of social activities. These are all qualities exhibited by the early Cape colonists and reflected in their approach to Table Mountain.

The cultural materialistic approach to landscape has in turn been criticised by the likes of McDowell⁶⁸ for its over-emphasis of production forces and its relative neglect of cultural factors and in particular, of the contradictory, even positive, aspects of contemporary mass culture. McDowell⁶⁹ argues that the influence of consumption based social practices cannot be overlooked in the formation of contemporary cultural landscapes. Hall,⁷⁰ united consumers into what he termed 'oppositional cultures and

⁶⁶ Berger, 1972: Cited by McDowell, L., In Gregory, D., Martin, R., Smith, G., eds. 1994: *Op cit.* p335.

⁶⁷ Williams, R., 1961: *Op cit.*

⁶⁸ In Gregory, D., Martin, R., Smith, G., eds, 1994: *Op cit.*

⁶⁹ Cited by McDowell, L., In Gregory, D., Martin, R., Smith, G., eds. 1994: *Op cit.*

⁷⁰ Cited by McDowell, L., In Gregory, D., Martin, R., Smith, G., eds. 1994: *Op cit.*

communities'. Such groups are imagined, they are not spatially fixed but in effect 'floating' communities. The prime example of such a group is that of youth culture, within which cultural differences are based more on age than class. In this culture young persons have long subverted the accepted cultural norms and assert, not only their individuality and independence, but also their membership through trends such as fashion and music. Such a culture, and the way it manifests itself as a cultural landscape, provides a direct contrast to the previous materialist emphasis on the firm, workplace and region as the dominant forces in producing the cultural landscape.

However, far from abandoning the cultural materialist approach to landscape studies, geographers instead worked on reconciling these two strands of production and consumption, insisting that they do not exist independently of one another. McDowell⁷¹ points out that productive activities depend upon reproductive activities, a proportion of which are consumption based. Similarly the production, advertising and servicing of goods is also an integral part of their consumption. Gramsci⁷² further reconciled the strands of production and consumption, in a broadly cultural materialist framework, through the concept of hegemony. Hegemony refers to a situation of uncontested political supremacy. Gramsci's main interest was in ascertaining how sets of ideas and ideologies concerning cultural standards, meanings and accepted social divisions become established within a society without the use of force, even by those who become minoritised and disadvantaged. In this context it is by powers of persuasion and 'organisation of consent' that subordinated forms of consciousness are constructed without recourse to violence or coercion (Barret, 1991, cited by McDowell⁷³). Gramsci's work realised that, in capitalist societies and their subsequent cultural landscapes, hegemony is never fully achieved. Opposition to the dominant culture may not take the form of violence or even be openly noticeable but may instead be more latent and symbolic, a malevolent undercurrent within the cultural landscape. Gramsci's theory is explored in the context of Table Mountain with reference to its new SANP management and the criticism, growing mistrust and resentment their policies and objectives for the Mountain are causing within sections of the local community.

⁷¹ In Gregory, D., Martin, R., Smith, G., eds. 1994: *Op cit.*

⁷² Cited by Jackson, P. 1989: *Op cit.*

⁷³ Barrett 1971: Cited by McDowell, L., In Gregory, D., Martin, R., Smith, G., eds. 1994: *Op cit.*

The latest shift within geography in studying cultural landscapes has witnessed a shift from concentrating on the material production of the environment towards problematising the ways in which landscape has been reproduced, be it in written texts, art, maps or topographical surveys, and then interpreted. This approach has given central importance to the iconography of landscape. The iconographical approach to landscape is derived from the methodology of art history and interpretation, and is now widely utilised by both landscape historians and geographers to uncover the array of meanings and values held in representations of landscape as image and symbol. Such an approach is clear evidence of post-modern influences in geography where both the medium of representation and the process of interpretation are deconstructed and evaluated. This is necessary because as Cosgrove and Daniels⁷⁴ point out, every study of a landscape further transforms its meaning, depositing yet another layer of cultural representation. Post-modernism saw a crisis of representation arise within both geography and academic study in general. Gregory and Wallford⁷⁵ declared that the texts we construct are not mirrors reflecting the world's shapes and structures but rather creatures of our own making though not always of our own choosing. Hence questions arose concerning the quest to understand the relationship between signifier (language, text, etc.) and signified (reality).

Duncan's⁷⁶ work on re-reading the landscape clearly reflects these issues. Traditionally, he states, cultural landscapes were seen as reflections of the people (and more significantly the material cultures) that inhabited them. They were a palimpsest of the past, 'a medal struck in the likeness of people'⁷⁷, the faint traces of whom could be identified, in true Sauerian style, and used to delimit cultural zones. Duncan however urges the landscape geographer to uncover the layers of meaning which lie within those surface remains and relict features that the likes of Sauer and then later Hoskins used for their historic landscape reconstructions. Duncan⁷⁸ proclaims the 'need to fill in much that is invisible' and that one must 'read the subtexts that lie beyond the visible text'. He argues that these landscape codes cannot be deciphered into a textual representation, instead landscapes must be treated as an anonymous text

⁷⁴ Cited by Butlin, R. A., 1993: *Historical geography*. Hodder Stoughton, London.

⁷⁵ Gregory, D., Wallford, R., 1989: *Horizons in Human Geography*. Barnes and Noble, New Jersey.

⁷⁶ In Gregory, D., 1994: *Geographical imaginations*. Blackwells, Oxford.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p144.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

in which the geographer must seek to 'identify the various textual communities that form around (and jostle around) its (intertextual) interpretation'.⁷⁹

These encoded landscape texts are essentially endless in their interpretative dimensions. There is no right or wrong, no objective truth in landscape analysis. Landscape is a subjective phenomenon. When looking at the iconography of landscape the geographer must deconstruct first the artist or writer's way of seeing, as well as his own perceptual lens in interpreting the author's endeavours. If this sense of post-modern fired deconstruction is followed then cultural landscape studies could be branded a 'way of seeing, a way of seeing'. Indeed, Mitchell⁸⁰ argues that landscape art in particular is best understood not as the 'uniquely central medium that gives us access to ways of seeing landscape, but as a representation of something that is already a representation in its own right'.

Cosgrove and Daniels in their text 'The iconography of landscape'⁸¹ reaffirm the need for an interpretative cultural geography because 'every culture weaves its world out of image and symbol'. Although from a post-modern perspective the meanings of these images and symbols appear unstable and contestable, that should not exclude them from intellectual study. Indeed they potentially still afford the best means to create a unified vision of landscape. Written words about landscape do not mirror the world in any real sense, revealing nothing truthful but the rhetoric of landscape representation. Rundstrom⁸² states that as landscape texts accumulate and gain authority they become discourses anchored in culturally defined, unquestioned norms of race, gender, ethnicity and class. It must be pointed out that this does not devalue them as sources, provided geographers recognise these traits in their analysis of the iconography of cultural landscapes.

This latest approach to landscape studies, in deconstructing historical attempts to create a unified vision, has encouraged both feminist landscape discourses and links to anthropological views of landscape which place particular emphasis on those it makes powerless. Rose⁸³ sees the gaze on landscape as having roots not only in the

⁷⁹ In Gregory, D., 1994: *Geographical imaginations*. Blackwells, Oxford.. p145.

⁸⁰ Mitchell, W. J. T., 1994: *Landscape and Power*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. p14.

⁸¹ Cosgrove, D., Daniels, S., 1988: *The Iconography of Landscape*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

⁸² Rundstrom, R. A., 1993: Book Reviews. *Geographical Review*. 83, p205-207.

⁸³ In Agnew, J. A., Livingstone, D. N., Rogers, A., 1996: *Op cit*.

landowner's possession of landscape, but also in the masculine desire for, and fear of, a feminine nature. Rose believes the active process of looking at the landscape is masculine whilst the passivity of being looked at is the feminine position. Such a division has its roots in the 17th century when women were seen as the repositories of natural laws and, like nature, tamed by rational man. Furthermore it was believed that women were examinable and made intelligible by male science. Rose concludes that the feminine unknown is represented in cultural geography by visual pleasure and that the geographer's gaze on landscape is structured by a distinction between nature; the feminine scene to be interpreted, and science; the masculine look of the interpreter. Rose argues that such masculine tendencies still pervade the new cultural geography in its repressive refusal to explore its own pleasures, which simply continues to deny and simultaneously display its masculinity. Gender discourses are very relevant to this study, particularly as regards the European approach to Table Mountain which was invariably framed within the 'macho'⁸⁴ masculine ethos of imperialism whereby the Mountain was deemed a trophy to be conquered and tamed, and its beauty was seen in predominantly feminine terms.

Hirsch and O'Hanlon,⁸⁵ in looking at the anthropology of landscape, criticise the geographic approach to landscape, typified by Cosgrove and Daniels, as 'a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing and symbolising surroundings'. Hirsch cites Ingold in claiming such an approach is essentially static and denies any concept of process. According to Hirsch⁸⁶ the problem with this approach is that it takes 'one pole of experience intrinsic to landscape (the representational) and generalises this experience into landscape *tout court*'. Hence Hirsch argues that the geographic approach to landscape is restrictive in that it privileges the 'outsiders' point of view as distinct from those who directly relate to it as 'insiders'. Instead, it is proposed that landscape must be 'opened up and unpacked' as a concept and studied cross-culturally, breaking down this distinction between insiders and outsiders.⁸⁷ This anthropological approach predominantly seeks to look at the plight of the powerless, trapped inside the inappropriate landscapes generated by outsiders and their

⁸⁴ Bell, M., Butlin, R., Heffernan, M., eds., 1995: *Geography and imperialism*. Manchester University Press, Manchester.

⁸⁵ Hirsch, E., O'Hanlon, M., 1995: *The anthropology of landscape*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

p5.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p5.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

ideologies. Gow⁸⁸ to this effect, showed how, to the native Amazonian people of the Bajo Urumbamba, the environment is a lived space, known by means of movement through it and seeing the traces of other peoples movements, myths, narratives and agency within it. To the alien eye of outsiders the landscape appears a sea of impenetrable green and problems subsequently arose when external authorities established land rights for the region. According to Gow, these pieces of paper, embodying abstract concepts of ownership and control, function solely because of their abstract nature. The native Amazonians hence found themselves powerless within their long established landscape that was now delimited, defined and propertised by paperwork and not their historic ties to the land. This concept of landscape as a lived in reality, an ongoing process in which insiders and outsiders, image and representation, are all dependent upon cultural and historical contexts is clearly a useful one for the geographer to grasp. Equally landscape must be viewed as an additive concept involving sequence and successive viewing: a temporal dimension which makes it a four, rather than three-dimensional, reality.⁸⁹

The question remains where does this often contradictory, constantly evolving, eclectic mix of landscape approaches within geography leave us as regards Table Mountain? Just as there is no absolute landscape, no generic norm, equally there is no right or wrong approach to landscape study and interpretation. To unravel what Table Mountain has meant to various peoples past and present will necessitate the study of the imagery and symbolism employed to represent these meanings. Interpreting and deconstructing the iconography of the Mountain will be a key endeavour in studying its cultural landscape. As criticisms of such a methodology have shown this is very much a subjective approach, artwork is never free from rhetoric, it is undeniably a product of the ideology and cultural forces of its time. This is palpably the case in the early colonial perceptions and accounts of Table Mountain, which were both highly eurocentric and very much-imperialised constructs. However, it is this imperial ideology and its subsequent social forces, and how they moulded and tainted people's perceptions and feelings towards Table Mountain, that section two of this text seeks to uncover. As to how one can objectively translate, interpret and recreate these texts into yet another text (this thesis), it is in all probability an impossible task. This will

⁸⁸ In Hirsch, E., O'Hanlon, M., 1995: *The anthropology of landscape*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

⁸⁹ Rappaport, A., 1992: *Op cit*.

undoubtedly be a very text dependent study; the weaknesses inherent in such an approach have been highlighted, but to some degree must be accepted. There is no correct framework for interpreting a cultural landscape such as Table Mountain. Instead this approach in utilising a variety of approaches from cultural materialist, iconographical and feminist to discourses on power and powerlessness manifestations within cultural landscapes, will endeavour to highlight which, if any, is most valid in studying landscapes such as Table Mountain. However, before embarking upon a study of Table Mountain, a quintessentially South African landscape, an appreciation of South Africa's own landscape tradition; a discourse that exhibits both clear parallels and divergences from the wider discipline of landscape study in geography, is important.

The South African landscape tradition

In discussing the landscape tradition within geography the discourse is very much orientated toward western, developed world landscapes and their historic representations and interpretations. More specifically studies have traditionally focused overwhelmingly on British and American cultural landscapes. The likes of J. B. Jackson⁹⁰ have written large amounts on distinctly American cultural landscapes such as the trailer park and suburban home. England meanwhile, interprets, represents and indeed mystifies its landscape as a natural outcome of historically deep organic ties between a native people and their land.⁹¹ Landscape representations of the countryside, be they pictorial, cartographic or textual have all constructed a sense of Englishness and national identity manifested in the nation's landscape. Accompanying such a celebration of the countryside as 'the seat of national virtue'⁹² has been the latent fear of it being destroyed by processes of change, technological or cultural. Such fears have led the likes of Hoskins to claim that 'since the year 1914, every change in the English landscape has either uglified it or destroyed its meaning, or both'.⁹³ Clearly landscape studies as much as the landscapes themselves, must be contextualised, in the sense that they are very much nationally determined and a part

⁹⁰ Jackson, J. B., 1984: *Op cit.*

⁹¹ Cogrove, D., Roscoe, R., Rycroft, S., 1996: Landscape and identity at Ladybower Reservoir and Rutland Water. *T.I.B.G.* N.S. 21, p534-551.

⁹² *Ibid.* p536.

⁹³ Hoskins, W.G., 1955: *The making of the English landscape.* Hodder and Staughton, London. p298.

of national identity. Therefore it is important to grasp some conception of the history of the landscape tradition in South Africa.

Lammas⁹⁴ states that the landscape is fundamental to the South African identity: 'scripted in the national anthem is a love for and communion with the land rather than a monarchy or religious figure'. However much of the South Africa landscape tradition is a product of Empire, of settler Europeans, and subsequently South Africa has historically been portrayed as a land of wild animals, uncouth and bizarre natives, dazzling topography and brilliant sunshine. Indeed beyond these imperialised visions, particularly when compared to western landscape traditions, South African geographers have provided scant insights into the nation as experiential place or landscape. Only recently through the work of the likes of Hart, Lammas and Coetzee, is the wealth of original, meaning laden cultural landscapes within South Africa becoming apparent.⁹⁵

Landscape studies, and indeed the very discipline of geography, in South Africa historically emerged principally as imperial tools, a means based on knowledge and understanding for founding a Southern African Empire. Hudson⁹⁶ claims a new geography arose 'to serve the interests of imperialism in its various aspects including territorial acquisition, economic exploitation, militarism and the practice of class and race domination'. Said⁹⁷ insists that texts cannot be isolated from the circumstances which lead to their creation, and which made them possible and intelligible. Much of the early artwork and poetry portraying South African landscapes was politically linked to imperial objectives. These objectives were achieved through methods such as juxtaposing or 'propping' South African landscape with European features and ideals to alleviate homesickness, or dramatising and demonising the landscape to stress its alien nature and need for imperial taming. Hence early representations of South African landscape are often 'white lies' about a place that 'inspired dread, enthusiasm, arrogance, hatred, sorrow, awe and homesickness among people who remained outsiders to it even once they had settled in the country'.⁹⁸ This theme of

⁹⁴ Lammas, R. C., 1995: *Op cit.* p1.

⁹⁵ Hart, D. M., 1984: *South African literature and Johannesburg's black urban townships*. Unpublished MA dissertation, Witwatersrand University; Coetzee, J. M., 1988: *Op cit*; Lammas, R. C., 1995: *Op cit.*

⁹⁶ Cited by Driver, F., In Daniels, S., Lee, R., 1996: *Exploring Human Geography. A Reader*. Arnold, London. p344.

⁹⁷ Said, E. F., 1985: *Orientalism*. Penguin. London.

⁹⁸ Lammas, R. C., 1995: *Op cit.* p67.

landscape as a tool of empire, used to naturalise the imperial presence and the methods employed to achieve such aims will be analysed later in the thesis when viewing historic representations of Table Mountain.

'It is no over-simplification to say that South African landscape art and landscape writing on South Africa from the beginning of the C19 to the middle of the C20 revolve around the question of finding a language to fit Africa, a language that will be authentically African.' (Coetzee, 1988⁹⁹)

The South African landscape tradition has, indeed, been plagued by issues concerning the interpretation, perception and portrayal of the country's varied topography. Much of the early literature and art portraying South Africa's landscapes was conducted by Europeans and hence tainted by a pervading eurocentric bias. The likes of William Burchell (*Travels in the interior of Southern Africa*, 1822¹⁰⁰) complained of the paucity and bleached nature of colour in the South Africa interior when compared to the verdant dales and pastures of Europe. According to Burchell¹⁰¹, even the African dawn is deficient in "those rosy and golden tints...which decorate the morning skies of European countries". Early British writers such as Burchell and poets like Pringle and Dugmore all too frequently employed the self-defeating process of naming Africa by defining it as non-Europe – self-defeating because in each particular in which Africa is identified to be non-European it remains Europe and not Africa that is named.¹⁰² These early, eurocentric, interpretations of the South African landscape raise the question of whether the land does speak a universal language and if this landscape can ever be articulated or translated into a European language or, indeed, whether the European can ever be comfortable in Africa.

Early landscape writers branded the South African interior a wilderness, ruled by nature. According to Coetzee¹⁰³ there are two senses of this wilderness landscape. The first is one of pre-Israelite demonology, where the wilderness was a realm where God had no influence.¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile the second is a Judaeo-Christian outlook, which sees the wilderness as a place of safe retreat into contemplation and purification. Both have played a part in the interpretation of South Africa's landscape, though the former,

⁹⁹ Coetzee, J. M. 1988: *Op cit.* p128.

¹⁰⁰ Cited by *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

associated with the British colonists and their desire to separate a region of order and culture – the colony – from the barbarian wilderness, is perhaps the more dominant. This wilderness has rarely been termed in the sense of the sublime but instead as a land of emptiness and hardship.

Away from Empire, in more recent South African landscape work, this concept of a landscape beset with struggle is evident in Afrikaans literature. In the early C20, Afrikaans poetry endeavoured to find a patriotic link between volk and land naturalising their relationship¹⁰⁵. The vast open spaces of the interior were seen to offer both the individual and nation as a whole, not only freedom of movement, but also of destiny. According to Coetzee,¹⁰⁶ Afrikaans novels in the 1920-40's, focused almost exclusively on the farm and platteland society. Again the dominant portrayal of landscape in these texts was as a vast, barren emptiness. The farm was seen to be at war with nature, a microcosm of colonial South Africa: a tiny community set down in the midst of the vastness of nature, living a closed-minded and self-satisficing existence.

The work of van Onselen¹⁰⁷, in recording the life of Kas Maine, a black sharecropper, continues this theme of struggle and conflict in the landscape. The landscape in which Kas exists is described as a 'broken' countryside, brown and barren, where he must struggle, not only against the harsh vagaries of nature; crippling droughts and blankets of locusts, but also against the status quo that sees Boer farmers as all powerful, effectively owning the landscape.

Ownership, dividing and establishing borders and boundaries over landscapes that have remained largely unchanged for hundreds of years is another contentious landscape issue that the likes of Hofmyer¹⁰⁸ attempt to address. The canon of chiefly history is plotted on the earth and stored in the landscape. Hofmyer¹⁰⁹ details how in chiefly memory, an area is imagined as being criss-crossed with the paths of secession, migration and battles that make up the history of the polity. Hence the

¹⁰⁵ Coetzee, J. M., 1988: *Op cit*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p128.

¹⁰⁷ Van Onselen, C., 1996: *The seed is mine: the life of Kas Maine, a South African sharecropper, 1894-1985*. David Phillip, Cape Town.

¹⁰⁸ Hofmyer, I., 1993: *We spend our years as a tale that is told*. Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

landscape is a true palimpsest with features imbued with historic and mythological meanings that define these indigenous cultures. The task befalling the South African landscape analyst is to attempt to decipher this palimpsest, which again raises the problematic issues concerning seeing and translating Africa in an appropriate language.

Arguably South African geography, for the most part, has been too concerned with positivism, with viewing space in both the apartheid and post apartheid eras as a scientific concern. Subsequently humanist work looking at the experiential qualities of place and landscape is relatively scarce, a gap in the South African landscape tradition that cry's out to be filled. Hart¹¹⁰ recognised this need in looking at 'South African literature and Johannesburg's urban townships,' and used black conscious and white protest writing to contrast the warmth and spirit of places such as Sophiatown, with the violent and alienating place that is Soweto, where 'everyday living is warped and human needs denied'. South African landscapes and places offer the humanist geographer a potentially vast and rich source of cultural meanings, values and ideologies.

From the point of view of studying Table Mountain as a cultural landscape, it is important that these and other trends in South African landscape writings are appreciated. Much of the early writings on the mountain invariably come from European settlers, and it should become very apparent whether they struggled to find an appropriate language for understanding and appreciating it, and whether these descriptions were couched in terms of the sublime or as a harsh wilderness. Equally the mountain undoubtedly held deep mythological and religious meanings for both the colonists and indigenous Khoi, whilst today debate rages between the city council and environmentalists over control, access and borders on the mountain. Table Mountain, as arguably South Africa's most distinctive natural icon and one on which almost every visitor to the Cape expresses an opinion, will clearly not be pigeon holed into a specific landscape school, be it South African or wider ranging.

In reality, Table Mountain as a natural, largely uncorrupted, but nonetheless very cultural, landscape, is ironically somewhat unique and uncharted territory within the

¹¹⁰ Hart, D. M., 1984: *Op cit.*p108.

South African landscape tradition. As South African geographers come to terms with the human, experiential aspects of their national landscapes, issues of race, gender, class, and general politics and power, are becoming increasingly important in their cultural landscape discourses. Yet, to a large extent, Table Mountain as a universal icon, largely free from the physical trappings of culture, effectively transcends these forces. Certainly, the Mountain exhibits qualities based on local and, indeed, national meaning and identity, which the South African approach to landscape is adept at highlighting. Equally, concepts such as the Mountain's historic imperialised interpretation, as well as its present role as a global, multicultural icon, ensure that broader, international approaches to cultural landscapes are also very much applicable to this discussion of Table Mountain as a cultural landscape.

Table Mountain is a unique cultural landscape, effectively a human palimpsest, where records and symbols are recorded by man and not nature (the mountain, at least in this period of study, is a physical constant). As such it should provide a fascinating array of contrasting, simultaneous and evolving cultural landscapes as individuals seek to adopt an appropriate medium for its viewing, interpretation and portrayal. A view confirmed by the European approach to Table Mountain in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that saw the Mountain simultaneously interpreted and portrayed as a landscape of heavenly paradise or as purgatory, the physical embodiment of all the evils of the 'Dark Continent'.

SECTION TWO

Table Mountain: Paradise or Purgatory?

Introduction

To peoples of the Cape past and present, Table Mountain is a landscape of latent meaning and symbolism. This section concentrates on the values attached to the Mountain by early sailors and settlers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During this period approaches to Table Mountain as a cultural landscape were characterised by three distinct outlooks. Firstly, European myths of the time, based primarily on fear and uncertainty, had long portrayed Africa as the 'Dark Continent', a realm of mythical beasts, fabulous wealth and sub-human savages. Subsequently there was a preconceived framework for interpreting and perceiving all that was African, long before the Cape was first discovered. Secondly, and very much as a result of these pervasive prejudices, when sailors and discoverers finally encountered Table Mountain, the dominant response saw the landscape viewed as either one of paradise or purgatory. This dichotomy on the one hand saw sailors desperate for shelter and a stopping point, along with discoverers eager to find fame, fables and fortune, perceive the Mountain as a signifier of Dante's long fabled southern paradise. Meanwhile, many sailors, settlers and discoverers simultaneously viewed the same Mountain as a harbinger of dread, more reminiscent of Dante's purgatory, a hellish, alien landscape in a land of beasts and harsh seas. Finally as the Cape is settled, Table Mountain explored, and indigenous peoples encountered and subjugated, this paradise/purgatory dichotomy is slowly transformed to one of savagery and opportunity.¹¹¹ As European civilisation established a foothold at the Cape, myth and speculation was progressively replaced by science and theory. To homesick colonists, the wilds of Africa remained savage and inhospitable, yet to a growing number of explorers and entrepreneurs the 'Gateway to Africa' that Table Mountain signified was a place of intrigue, knowledge and potential riches. However these three approaches to Table Mountain are far from absolute, they cannot be compartmentalised by temporal parameters, but to a large extent exist simultaneously being highly individualised and context dependent. Therefore this section is split into three chapters, the first of which details the pervading concept of Africa as the 'Dark

¹¹¹ Dale, P., translator. 1996: *Dante: The Divine Comedy*. Anvil, London.

Continent', which manifested itself in a paradise/purgatory polarisation in the approach of sailors to Table Mountain and the Cape of Good Hope, and Europeans attempting to settle and explore this new land. The second chapter highlights how, as Table Mountain becomes an everyday reality for settlers, the polarisation still exists but is based more on perceptions of the Mountain landscape as one of savagery or opportunity rather than prejudices engendered by 'Dark Continent' myths. The final chapter explores how throughout these various cultural landscape manifestations Table Mountain's meaning and symbolism was never free from Imperial rhetoric, and how it consequently has much to add to the study of Imperial discourses within landscape geography.

Chapter One: The European Approach to Africa and the Cape of Good Hope

Mythical Africa: The 'Dark Continent'

The European discovery and colonisation of Africa, and the Cape in particular, was guided by a materialist perspective that was implicitly imperialist in its ideology. This materialist framework, which provides the guiding principle for much of the source material in this section, utilises two schools of thought within its discourse. The first of which sees European civilisation and its imperial logic as vastly superior to the rest of the world. Europe's intellectual and cultural supremacy was deemed at its greatest when compared to the ungodly, naked peoples of Southern Africa and their harsh and inhospitable continent. Secondly this perspective was firmly enforced by the iconographical and representational approach of Europe to other lands. Hence, European texts were invariably geared to perpetuating the ideological doctrine of imperialism. Indeed the authorship, intentions, circulation and reception of texts on Table Mountain and the Cape clearly reflect imperial ideals. Representations of the Mountain and beyond hold selective dimensions that are deliberately stressed and others that are obscured or obliterated in a bid to project the might of Europe and subjugate lesser continents. This imperial materialist perspective demonstrably underlies European perceptions and representations of Table Mountain and the myths, mysteries, horrors and wonders associated with its alien landscape.

'History and geography record acts and facts, but myth and belief explain why men act and which facts they choose to explore.'

(Van Wyk Smith, 1988 ¹¹²)

The concepts of paradise and purgatory were regularly associated with African landscapes long before the discovery of Southern Africa and the Cape of Good Hope. Indeed, Europeans, guided on the one hand by the likes of Dante and Homer, and later by myths of rich Christian kingdoms, and on the other, by tales of horrendous coasts, savage beasts and cannibal tribes, had effectively established a set of preconceived ideals, aspirations and interpretations of the Cape of Good Hope, and hence Table Mountain, long before it was bested by Dias in 1488 and settled under Van Riebeck in 1652.

¹¹² Van Wyk Smith, M., ed., 1988: *Shades of Adamastor: An anthology of poetry compiled and introduced by M. van Wyk Smith*. Rhodes University Press. p1.

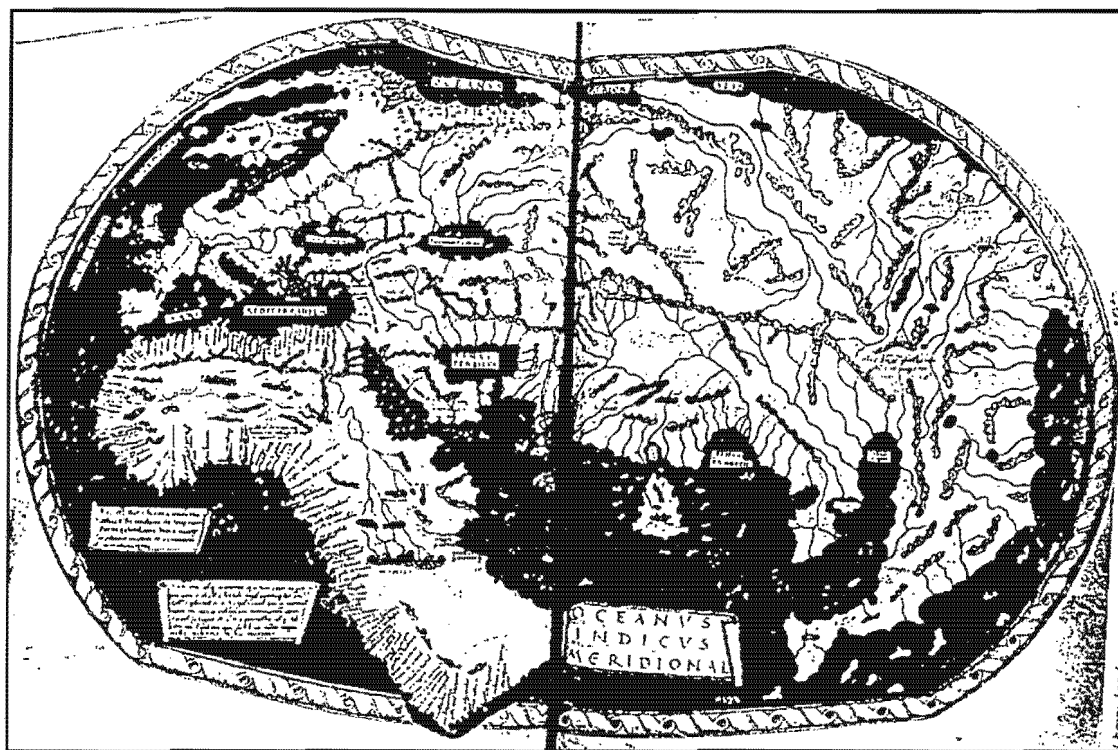


Plate 4: *Insularium Illustratum* by Henricus Martellus 1489.

(Source: Vergunst, N., 1999: *South Africa National Galleries Table Mountain Project*. Draft)

It is important to contextualise Table Mountain and the Cape of Good Hope within the discourse of Africa as the 'Dark Continent'. For centuries, Africa had captured the imaginations of Europeans, and by the time of the Renaissance, speculation concerning the source of the Nile and fabled Christian kingdoms had generated a burning desire within Europe to discover Africa's secrets. Africa's vast expanses offered Europeans seemingly endless potential for myth and mystery, discovery and understanding, and intrepid explorers progressively pushed back the realms of knowledge as more of Africa was revealed. This concept of pushing back the frontiers of knowledge was typified by the map of Henricus Martellus in 1489 (see plate 4), which was one of the first to incorporate information based on Diaz's rounding of the Cape. To portray the fabled southernmost tip of Africa, the map's decorative border was adjusted in order to accommodate the bewildering length of Africa's west coast.¹¹³ Discovering this Southern tip of Africa, and thereby establishing a longitudinal limit on the vast landmass, was a famous feat and a leap forward in charting, exploring and understanding the world. At the foot of the continent the Cape

¹¹³ Vergunst, N., 1999: *South Africa National Galleries Table Mountain Project*. Draft.

was truly the 'Gateway to Africa', which paradoxically aligned itself northwards to Europe. This alignment offered explorers the opportunity to drive up through Africa, taking Christian enlightenment and civilisation to its darkest confines, whilst unravelling the continent's mysteries, with the culmination of their crusade; a glorious return to Europe. The Cape and the awesome spectacle of Table Mountain, was the first real point of contact for Europeans with the unknowns of Southern Africa, a foothold established with a view to discovering the regions uncharted interior, and, as such, it was initially approached with all the incumbent prejudices associated with the concept of 'Dark Africa'.

Europeans used the word Africa, derived from the Greek 'Aphrike' (without cold) and the Latin 'Aprica' (sunny), in two key senses: geographical and racial.¹¹⁴ Firstly, continental divisions divided the north (Mediterranean, including Egypt) from the southern regions (sub-Saharan). The second division was based on the polarisation of racial stereotypes between the generally white Africans (such as Libyans) from black (sub-Saharan and western).¹¹⁵ Before the voyages of discovery, when men such as Diaz charted and gave shape to the coasts of Africa, European knowledge of Africa and the rest of the world was often grossly distorted. Early maps such as the twelfth century Mappie Mundie viewed the Mediterranean as the central point of the world (see plate 5). Even in these early texts Africa was frequently viewed as a 'dark' place. Beunting's¹¹⁶ 1481 conceptual postulation of the world (see plate 6) is typical of this early prejudice against the still largely unknown continent. The map puts Jerusalem, as the centre of the Christian universe, at the centre of the known world. The three parts of the medieval world, Europe, Africa and Asia were laid out around the biblical city. The continents, in accordance to Hebraic tradition, were identified with the three sons of Noah, Shem (Asia), Japeth (Europe) and Ham (Africa). Ham was cursed because he, unlike his brothers, was not ashamed to see his father naked. 'Dark' Africa mirrored this evil in that its people had no shame regarding their own nudity.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Vergunst, N., 1999: *South Africa National Galleries Table Mountain Project*. Draft.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *In Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

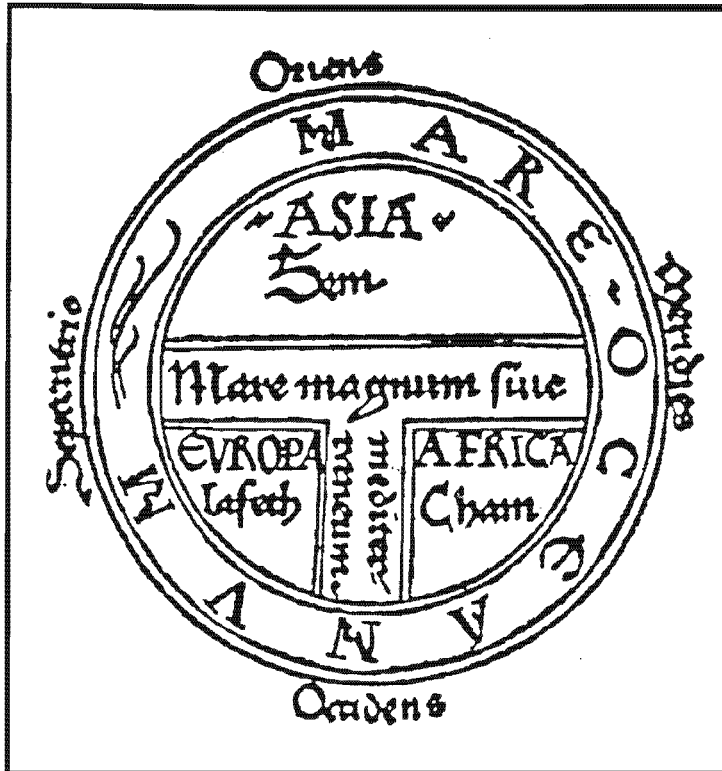


Plate 5: Title page Cartouche of the world, date unknown from Bowles 1790.
 (Source: Vergunst, N., 1999: *South Africa National Galleries Table Mountain Project. Draft*)

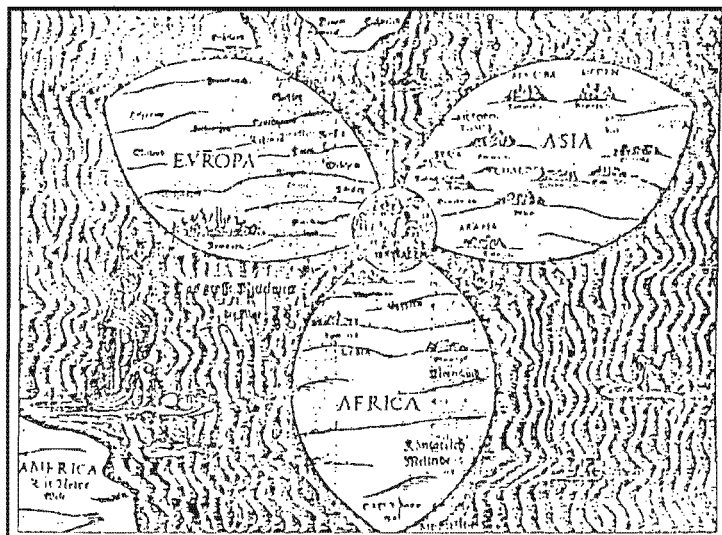


Plate 6: Beunting's conceptual postulation of the world in *Itinerarium Sacrae Scriptura* by H. Beunting 1481.
 (Source: Vergunst, N., 1999: *South Africa National Galleries Table Mountain Project. Draft*)

An integral part of the perception of Africa as the 'Dark Continent' was the fear of the unknown that the fabulous myths and mysteries of the continent generated. The origins of Africa as a fabulous and bizarre continent can be traced back to the famous astronomer and cartographer Ptolemy (c150CE) and his 'Geographica', which was the world's earliest known atlas.¹¹⁸ One of the most significant aspects of Ptolemy's atlas, and the tradition it spawned in medieval map making, was its tendency to fill the gaps within unexplored lands with fabulous, often confusing, and invariably fictional, facts. Nevertheless the Ptolemaic system dominated the Muslim world for 1500 years and its discovery and diffusion helped ignite the geographical renaissance in fifteenth century W. Europe.

'So geographers in afric maps
With savage pictures fill their gaps
And oer uninhabitable downs
Place elephants instead of towns.'
(Swift, seventeenth century¹¹⁹)

The Ptolemaic discourse, in guiding representations of Africa, prevailed into the eighteenth and even nineteenth centuries, long after interior expeditions had disproved most of its fanciful geographical imaginings. During the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, even after Dias had sailed the coasts and van Riebeck settled the Cape, it was not unusual to see European maps with accurate renditions of Africa's coastlines coupled with fantastic images of the civilisations, beasts and rivers that were believed to exist in the continent's interior. Plate 7 with its distorted animals and giant serpents is a prime example of filling in gaps in geographical knowledge with intriguing yet imagined features. It was an eagerness to discover these fantasies and enlighten the 'dark' of Africa that impelled discoverers, patronised by the intellectual and royal elite of Europe, into Africa and ultimately to the Cape.

The early voyages of discovery became a quest for knowledge and spiritual enlightenment guided by God himself. European voyagers were driven by the desire to find individual fame, new land and riches for king and country, and new peoples for Christian awakening. The idea of Africa as a 'Dark Continent' of beast-like men and savage animals, as well as a land containing untold riches, was derived from

¹¹⁸ Details in Vergunst, N., 1999: *Op cit.*

¹¹⁹ Cited in *Ibid.*

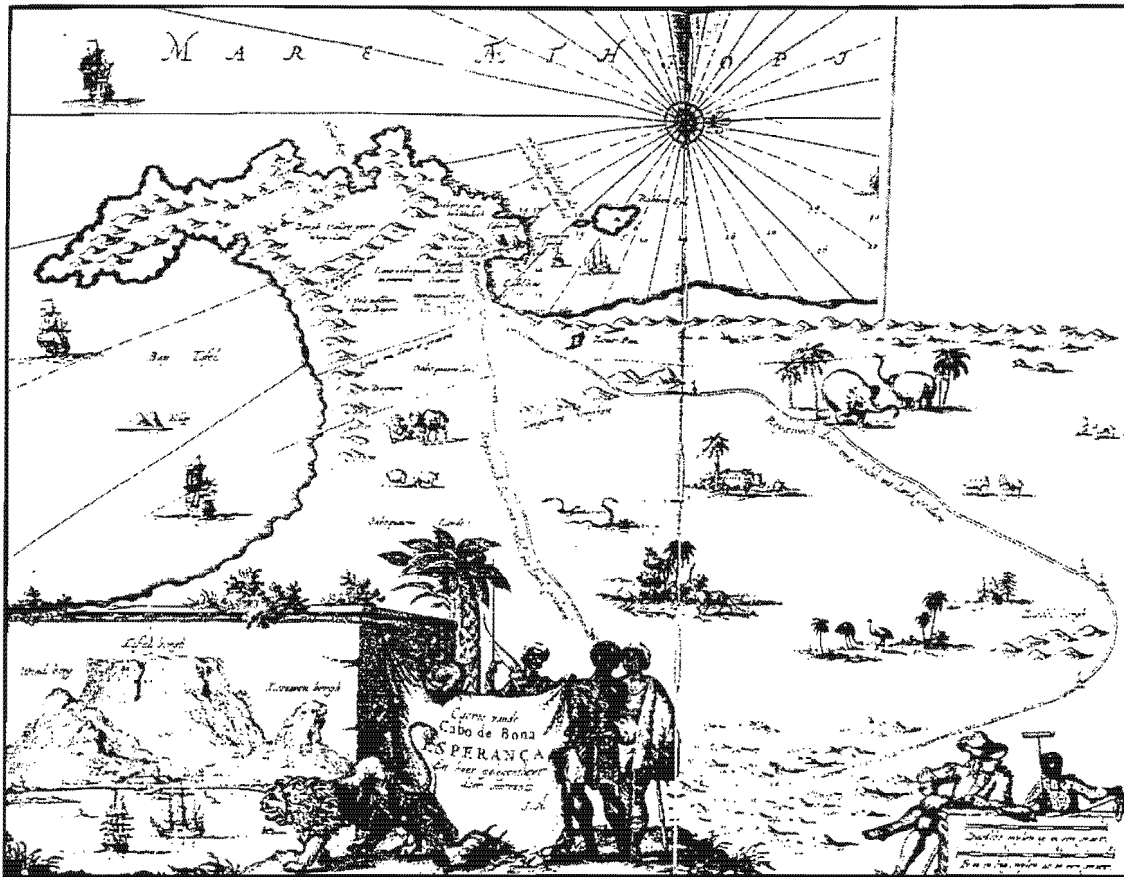


Plate 7: Map of the Cape of Good Hope by J. Nieuhoff, 1654.
 (Source: Reproduced in Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *The Cape of Good Hope 1652-1702. The first 50 years of Dutch colonisation. As seen by callers.* Volume 2. p152-3.)

ancient Mediterranean concepts of the southern lands that still dominated early Renaissance geography. Homer¹²⁰ in the *Odyssey* spoke of Poseidon visiting the Ethiopians worlds away:

‘Ethiopians off at the farthest limits of mankind,
 a people split in two, one part where the sun god sets
 and part where the sun god rises...’

Van Wyk Smith believes this neat division between east and west gave rise to one of the great ethno-graphic clichés of classical, medieval, and even early Renaissance concepts of Africa.¹²¹ Indeed, he illustrates how this partition was not entirely divorced from geo-historical realities, as the likes of Herodotus, Strabo, Pliny and Ptolemy, between the fifth century BC and the second AD, invoked Homer in establishing the fabulous, powerful and wealthy eastern Ethiopians as opposed to the ‘dog-faced creatures’ (Herodotus, cited by Van Wyk Smith¹²²) in the west. This

¹²⁰ Fayles, R., translator. 1996: *Homer: The Odyssey*. Penguin, New York. Book 1:25.

¹²¹ Van Wyk Smith, M. 1988: *Op cit.*

¹²² *Ibid.* p14.

division undoubtedly became one of the most pervading and influential European myths concerning Africa. The east of Africa was portrayed as the home of the legendary Prester John, Kingdom of Monomotapa and King Solomon's Ophir, all of which hinted at an undiscovered Christian civilisation. Set against this, the west was the 'white mans grave', inhabited by savage, cannibal, sub-human beasts and flanked by treacherous coasts.

Colour was very much the root of this subjugation. Judaeo-Christian associations of blackness with darkness sin, evil and death led to a derogatory perception of Africa and Africans as abstract entities. With western and sub-Saharan Africa not experienced, but imagined, such cultural prejudices went unchallenged. According to Vergunst the most astonishing manifestation of this pejorative attitude was the invention of the Aethiops, a 'marginal and degenerate inhabitant of a nebulous land.'¹²³ The Aethiops, a synonym for a body burnt black by the sun (Devisse, 1979¹²⁴), was a classic European construction, a sub-human species characterised by sin, degenerate appearance and behaviour, which perfectly embodied all the intrigue and horror with which Europe viewed the 'Dark Continent'. Plate 8 depicts a selection of Aethiops with a variety of deformities. Conventional boundaries between human and animal, male and female were blurred as the bizarre Aethiops were the imagined inhabitants of a strange land.¹²⁵



Plate 8: 'Aethiops' from *Cosmographia* by S. Munster, woodcut, 1544.
(Source: Vergunst, N., 1999: *South Africa National Galleries Table Mountain Project. Draft*)

¹²³ Vergunst, N., 1999: *Op cit.*

¹²⁴ Cited by *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*



Plate 9: The German wodevose (wildman).

(Source: Mary Evans Library, London. Reproduced in Vergunst, N., 1999: *South Africa National Galleries Table Mountain Project*. Draft)

These beast-like humans were the epitome of heathen evil a view plate 8 highlights in depicting how some Aethiopians had developed extra large feet beneath which, in a feat of abject slothfulness, they could laze in the sun. The construction of the Aethiops is clearly linked to the mythological figure of the European 'Wild Man' (see plate 9), a hairy, savage, half-human creature that was a figure of fear and revulsion in European pageantry, folk custom, literature and art throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance.¹²⁶ According to Vergunst,¹²⁷ the wild man, as a threatening monster that had to be tamed or vanquished, 'internalised all the 'dark' irrational fears of the animal aspect of human nature'. The voyages of discovery externalised and embodied the wild man and all the incumbent fears of the Europeans, in the physically 'dark' form of the African savage.

¹²⁶ Vergunst, N., 1999: *Op cit.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

Just as Homer's words encouraged a polarisation between east and west, Dante's 'Divine comedy' had, for years, fostered notions of a north-south divide in Africa. Van Wyk Smith has written of the widespread belief within European culture, originating from Aristotle's 'Meteorologica', that there existed another temperate and habitable region, opposite but complementary to the Mediterranean world, which lay beyond the uninhabitable Sahara and the Equator.¹²⁸ Intrinsic to this belief was the idea that a southern terrestrial paradise existed somewhere atop a mountain, beyond the African deserts. The foundations for the belief in an undiscovered southern paradise were laid by Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* (1207¹²⁹), which proclaimed that the legendary Holy Grail was to be found in a far-away land atop a mountain in the 'Garden of Earthly Delights', surrounded by water and protected by obstacles which only the chosen pilgrim-traveller could overcome. The Garden's immortal guardian was both priest and king, Ioanes, nephew of the Grail hero Perceval. It was Dante (c1320), who reinforced this tradition when he placed this paradise on the summit of his island of Purgatory in the far south. In accordance to von Eschnbach's vision, Dante's earthly realm of paradise was likewise situated on top of a mountain surrounded by a forest from which two streams, the Lethe and Eunoae, flow.¹³⁰ To reach this paradise it was said one must first descend into, and survive, the depths of hell. Here one would face humility before being raised to God. Only then would it be possible to climb the mountain, lit by rays of sunlight, and reach the paradise it upheld, where one could:

'Behold the Sun that shines upon your brow
 behold the tender grass, the shrubs and flowers
 The ground brings forth without hand or plough'
 (Dante ¹³¹)

Clearly, Southern Africa, and in particular the Cape of Good Hope, from a European perspective, was invented, portrayed, and imbued with meaning long before its discovery. When Portuguese sailors returned with tales of this dramatic southern-most promontory of Africa, European writers quickly connected the flat plateau of Table Mountain with the fabled seat of paradise. It was first described as such by Aluigi de Giovanni in 1543 and in 1588 Livio de Sanuto wrote:

¹²⁸ Van Wyk Smith, M., 1988: *Op cit.*

¹²⁹ In Mustard, H. M., Passage, C. H., translators, 1961: *Parzival*. Vintage Books, New York.

¹³⁰ Dale, P., translator, 1996: *Op cit.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.* Canto 27, 133-6.

'Upon the top of this promontory (i.e. the 'table of the cape', Table Mountain)
Nature... hath formed here a great plain, pleasant in situation, which the fragrant
herbs, variety of flowers and flourishing verdure of all things, seems a terrestrial
paradise'

(cited by Van Wyk Smith 1988¹³²)

As Penn¹³³ points out, there could be no paradise without purgatory, no Cape of Good Hope without a Cape of Storms. Robben Island, lying at the foot of the Table Mountain paradise, separated by a dangerous crossing of icy water and itself a sharp-rocked breaker of ships, was the perfect Isle of Purgatory. The Cape of Good Hope with its temperate climate, lush flora and dramatic scenery juxtaposed with high seas and treacherous coastlines neatly fitted Dante's constructs of southern paradise and purgatory. Similarly the ongoing myths surrounding the wealthy kingdoms of Prester John and Monomotapa, and tales of the savage natives who had slaughtered Francisco de Almeida (the Viceroy to Brazil) and 50 men in 1510, supported Homer's east-west, rich-beastly, dichotomy.

The first voyagers to the Cape wholly believed these mythical conceptions of Africa. Dias, perishing off the Cape in 1500, became a figure of haunting uncertainty for poets and writers alike, his failure a myth of paradise ungained. Dias foundered in sight of his goal and was compared in 1563 by Antonio Galvao¹³⁴ to Moses 'permitted to see but not to enter the promised land'. In 'The Lusiads'¹³⁵, Camoes, in creating his figure of Adamastor, the Titan imprisoned within Table Mountain and responsible for the regions ferocious storms, reflected all the scorn, fear and detestation he felt toward the African continent.¹³⁶ This vision saw the southernmost point of Africa as the Cape of Storms controlled by a malevolent giant, set against mankind, and laid the foundations for later associations of the Cape's landscapes with hell and misery. Gray¹³⁷ believed that Camoes knew his readers would readily see Table Mountain as a rocky forehead, and the caps of waves as moaning grey moustaches over hollow

¹³² Van Wyk Smith, M., 1988: *Op cit.* p9.

¹³³ Penn, N., Deacon, H., and Alexander, N., 1992: *Robben Island: The politics of rock and sand.* University of Cape Town, Cape Town.

¹³⁴ Cited by Van Wyk Smith, M., 1988: *Op cit.* p3.

¹³⁵ White, L., 1997: *Introduction to world classics: Camoes: The Lusiads.* Oxford University Press, Oxford.

¹³⁶ Gray, S., ed., 1979: *South African poetry: an introduction.* David Phillip, Cape Town.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

mouths. Whirlpools would appear as sunken eyes, and when the black maw of the sea pulled back over reefs, Camoes¹³⁸ readily expected his audience to envisage yellow, jagged teeth. It is these, awe-inspiring details, that anthropomorphise the tempestuous Cape into a giant. Table Mountain stands like a tombstone over the sailors it drowned, guarded by its ghost fleet of sunken ships. If man wanted to round the Cape and discover the mysteries and riches that lay within and beyond, he must first defeat the mighty Adamastor.

However, whilst Camoes told of the dangers of the Cape and the evil giant that defended the secrets of Africa, persistent myths of riches enticed voyagers ever onwards in the quest to conquer the continent. The idea that a white Christian king, with white followers, controlled a fabulous kingdom within Africa, was deep-rooted in early renaissance European culture. Herodetus told of a 'lost white kingdom' where 'through all his land with gem like sand a stream of jewels flowed'.¹³⁹ King John II of Portugal was among the first to patronise voyages to find this legendary king, and was encouraged when he heard of the existence of a powerful African Prince who held the Cross in great veneration. The ambassadors who told him of this came from the kingdom of Benin where it was traditional for new rulers to seek out this Prince in order to confirm their succession. This mysterious prince would always stay concealed behind silk curtains but would extend a foot for his visitors to kiss (Barros, 1496-1570¹⁴⁰). King John immediately deemed Organe and Prester John to be one and the same, and sought an alliance with the Christian king that would gain Portugal access to India and a valuable ally to aid the Europeans in their quest to subdue and enlighten darkest Africa's unchristian heathens.

Africa was also believed to hold the Empire of Monomotapa. Medieval maps (see plate 10) showed this inland region where a civilised people rich in gold, gems, cattle and crops, supposedly dwelt, as lying north of the Cape over the mountains of the moon. Many of these early portrayals of Africa underestimated the sheer size of the continent and hence, when the first sailors arrived at the Cape of Good Hope they believed that beyond what were to become the Hottentots Holland Mountains, lay the African interior and its fabled empire.

¹³⁸ Gray, S., 1979: *Op cit.*

¹³⁹ Lance Fallow 'Prester John', 1996: In Van Wyk Smith, M., 1988: *Op cit.* p94.

¹⁴⁰ In Colvin, I. D., 1912: *The Cape of Adventure*. Jack, London; De Kock, V., 1953: *By strength of Heart*. H.B. Timmins, Cape Town.

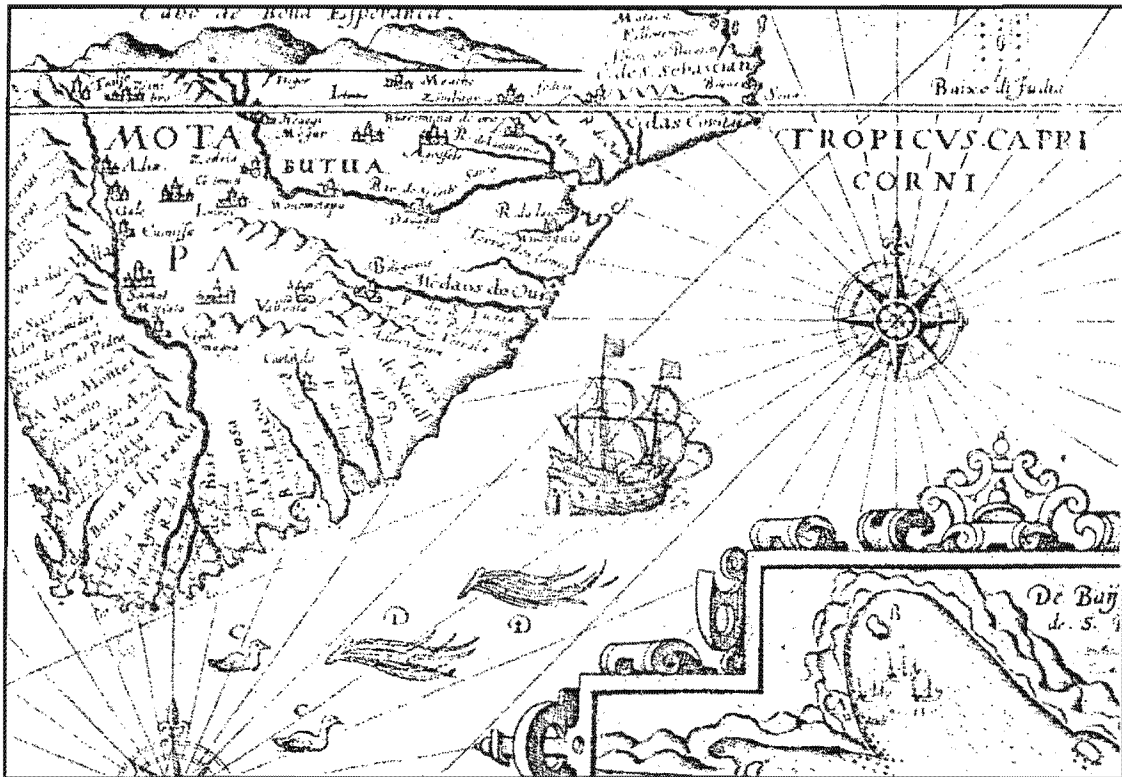


Plate 10: Map of Southern Africa 1595. From the account of Houtman's expedition. (Source: Reproduced in Raven Hart, R., 1967: *Before Van Riebeck: Callers at South Africa from 1488 – 1652*. Struik, Cape Town. p58)

There can be little doubt that before Table Mountain was ever sighted or the Cape of Good Hope doubled, and certainly long before the Cape was ever settled, the region, and indeed, the whole continent, was veiled with myth and mystery, dominated by forces of good and evil. Whereas for Homer, it lay in the east and for Dante the south, the theme was the same; the evil perils of Africa once bested would reveal a heavenly paradise. To reach this paradise, be it atop a mountain or in the form of a fabulous kingdom, great toil and hellish torments would first have to be endured. The perpetuation of these age-old conceptions of a heavenly paradise existing alongside and amidst terrifying evils is clearly evident when looking at the fears and hopes Table Mountain evoked in early settlers and visiting sailors.

Sailors, Table Mountain, and the Cape of Good Hope

‘The Cape of Good Hope is the most extreme point of Africa, and of the Old World to be southward, and is probably the most important promontory in the whole world’

(Thunberg, 1772 ¹⁴¹)

For those journeying from Europe to tap the wealth of the East Indies, Table Bay, which lay effectively halfway on this route, was a vital stopping point. The bay provided a sheltering harbour in a storm swept region, freshwater, and after the Dutch settled there in 1652, a convenient, fruitful, and later enjoyable, stopping point for tired and often scurvy-ridden sailors. Whether it was a stopping point, halfway stage or simply a sheltering bulwark, a sighting of the Cape of Good Hope, which usually revolved around seeing Table Mountain, which was visible 15 leagues away (Mentzel, 1785¹⁴²), never failed to be a cause of celebration. The first sailor to sight land was traditionally rewarded. According to Mentzel¹⁴³, on sighting land the sailor ‘sings out in a cheery voice “Land!”’ and receives 10 Gulden and a half a dozen bottles of wine from the Captain. The ship’s bell would be rung and the head steward would regale the crew with a glass of brandy for each man’. Blount (1820¹⁴⁴), stated just how important this first sighting of a speck of land was to those whose:

‘eyes had been accustomed to range at large over the blue expanse of waters without one object to diversify and break up the sameness of the view’ and how ‘the first sight of land is really dazzling, its outline, shape and colour, are more vivid and distinct, more intensely present to us than at any other time in our lives.’

De Mist in 1802¹⁴⁵ described how he and the crew waited on deck for the first sight of Table Mountain ‘with the impatience of prisoners who saw their release a day away’.

For the early voyagers to the Cape and beyond, with supplies running low, scurvy and illness frequently having decimated the crew, and facing the prospect of the Cape of

¹⁴¹ Forbes, V. S., 1986: *Carl Peter Thunberg travels at the Cape of Good Hope 1772-75. Second series no. 17. Reprint.* Van Riebeck Society, Cape Town. p24.

¹⁴² Mandelbrote, H. J., translator, 1921: *O.F. Mentzel: A geographical description of the Cape of Good Hope 1785.* Van Riebeck Society, Cape Town. p86.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* p87

¹⁴⁴ Blount, E., 1820: *Notes on the Cape of Good Hope made during an excursion in that colony in the year 1820.* John Murray, London. p23.

¹⁴⁵ De Mist, J. A. U., 1954 reprint: *Diary of a journey to the Cape of Good Hope and the interior of Africa in 1802 and 1803.* A.A. Balkema, Cape Town. p20.

Storms, the importance of the sight of land and relative safety of Table Bay cannot be overstated. Elias Hesse in 1681¹⁴⁶ described seeing Table Mountain

‘which fortunate sight caused a yet greater joy among the crew because all had given up hope and despaired for ever seeing the Cape, thinking that we had already passed it.’

Father Guy Tachard (1686¹⁴⁷) describes the first sighting where:

‘the joy of everyone was indescribable. Greedily each sought to breathe in the land air, and it seemed as though it already refreshed us’.

Indeed, such was the overwhelming joy many felt on seeing land that they effectively saw paradise when there was none. Sparrman (1772¹⁴⁸), confirms this over-emotional response to the first sight of the land, when he recalls being informed by Captain Cook that he [Cook] and his friend Sir Joseph Banks ‘prejudiced by the relations of others’ considered the Cape, the first time they saw it the most delightful and fertile place in the world. They even innocently mistook the barren heaths to the north of the town for rippling fields of corn. To these voyagers the Cape of Good Hope was an oasis, a haven in harsh seas. In later years when Cape Town became ‘the tavern of the oceans’ it was a festive port of merriment and drunken debauchery that sailors universally looked forward to visiting.¹⁴⁹ For the Dutch sailors in particular, after the town was established, arriving at this home from home was keenly anticipated. Their delight at sighting Table Mountain was all the more palpable

‘because although at a distance of 3000 miles from his fatherland, he was, as it were, about to find it here again: at least he was going to arrive in a country being governed by his own homeland, inhabited by people with Netherlands blood in their veins, speaking the same language and cherishing the same sentiments towards their motherland.’

(Nahuys von Burgst, 1806¹⁵⁰)

¹⁴⁶ In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *The Cape of Good Hope 1652-1702. The first 50 years of Dutch colonisation. As seen by callers.* Volume 2. p247.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p322.

¹⁴⁸ Forbes, V. S., ed., 1975: *Anders Sparrman, volume 1, second series no.6. A voyage to the Cape of Good Hope 1772-76.* Van Riebeck Society, Cape Town. p44.

¹⁴⁹ Green, L. G., 1949: *In the land of the afternoon.* H.B. Timmins, Cape Town.

For these Dutch sailors Cape Town, most visibly embodied in Table Mountain, was a distant home from home, a place for recuperation, relaxation and revelry after arduous and often perilous sea-voyage.

However, just as the sight of Table Mountain and the Cape was to some a source of joy, to those approaching it at the wrong time of year, or any other time when the weather was bad, it reverted to the Cape of Adamastor, a place of purgatory, storms and hellish torment. Hakluyt's 1598¹⁵¹ account reflects the great fear and trepidation held by sailors approaching the Cape of Storms:

'...always making our supplications to God for good weather and salvation of the ship, we came at length unto the point, so famous and feared of all men'.

Ships in Table Bay would rely on two anchors to hold them fast in storms, yet, when the Cape seas and winds were at their peak, early voyagers all too frequently found themselves at the mercy of the Cape elements. Cortemunde (1672¹⁵²) described how the winds would pick up suddenly and with immense force, sweeping down from the mountains to devastating effect. In one such gale his ship was rendered helpless and left to drift when its topmast was broken in four places. To the early voyagers there was essentially no sanctuary to be had during the frequent Cape storms, caught as they were between high seas and a rocky, unexplored coast. Their prospects of survival in such conditions were ominous:

'and there we stood as utterly cast away for under us were rocks of maine stone so sharpe and cutting, that no ancre could hold the ship, the shore so evill, that nothing could take land and the land itself so full of Tigers and people that are savage, and killers of all strangers, that we had no hope of life nor comfort, but onely in God and a good conscience.'

(Hakluyt, 1598¹⁵³).

Through the centuries the prospect of a stormy cape filled sailors with dread. As late as 1869, the memoirs of Captain Semmes describe the awesome spectacle of the Cape during a storm whereby 'the elements seemed to be literally at war, low scud rushing

¹⁵⁰ Bax-Botha, M. A., translator and ed., 1993: *Nahuy von Burgst: Adventures in the Cape of Good Hope in 1806*. South Africa Library (SAL), Cape Town. p13.

¹⁵¹ Hakluyt, R., 1907 reprint: *The principal navigations, voyages, traffiques and discoveries of the English Nation*. Volume 4. Dent, London. p237.

¹⁵² Heningson, H., Varley, D. V., translators and eds., 1962: *An adventure at the Cape of Good Hope, December 1652, by J. P. Cortemunde*. Cape Town Library, Cape Town. p26.

¹⁵³ Hakluyt, R., 1937: *Op cit.* p237.

to the shore, and climbing as if pursued by demons up and over the lions rump and Table Mountain'.¹⁵⁴ Hence, long after he had taken his revenge in drowning Dias, the malevolent spirit of Adamastor, protector of the Cape and tormentor of passing ships, still pervaded people's perceptions of the region. Ships would approach the Cape of Good Hope with a quiet reverence hoping that the Cape's spirit would be benevolent. The Cape, headed by Table Mountain, was accorded a definite personality akin to that of Adamastor, whose range of influence though short was locally all powerful. Cortemunde (1672¹⁵⁵) named this figure 'Aeolus' who had taken up residence in the Mountain in preference to all other places in the world:

'For here he can lay his table with clouds and let his horn-blower, Triton, strike up such a musical harmony, that men and animals take fright and tremble.'

Lady Anne Barnard¹⁵⁶ on arriving at the Cape in 1797 similarly described how,

'The Genius of the Cape is determined he will not let me sail into his bosom without shewing me what his seas are.'

One of the earliest examples of these mysterious and malicious perceptions of the Cape arose with the sighting of a comet in 1500. At the time Pedro Alvares Cabral was at the Cape with a fleet of 13 ships, one of which Dias commanded, and the spectacle filled his sailors with terror. Europe traditionally associated comets with impending disaster and their sightings were a cause of widespread fear and alarm.¹⁵⁷ The comet appeared over the mountains of the Cape for 8 days and shortly after its disappearance the fleet was struck by a tornado and 4 ships, including that of Dias, were lost, the rest scattered. From such origins the legend of the evil Cape of Storms grew rapidly.¹⁵⁸

Seemingly, as far as voyagers were concerned, the Cape of Good Hope embodied visually in Table Mountain, was both an eagerly anticipated and much welcomed stopping point, as well as the scene for sea-based terror at the hands of its ferocious storms. This transformation between heavenly shelter and hellish oblivion was near instantaneous. The winds blowing down from Table Mountain, could transform the Cape from paradise to purgatory in a flash. Moreover man was left powerless, his fate

¹⁵⁴ Semmes, R., 1869: *Memoirs of a service afloat*. Held at Simonstown Museum, Acc no. 81-48. p660.

¹⁵⁵ Henington, H., Varley, D. V., translators and eds., 1962: *Op cit.* p17.

¹⁵⁶ Lewis-Robinson, A. M., ed., 1993: *The Cape journals of Lady Anne Barnard 1797-8*. Second series no.24. Van Riebeck Society, Cape Town. p136.

¹⁵⁷ Burman, J., 1976: *The bay of storms*. Human and Rousseau, Cape Town. p3.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

lay in the hands of God, or to the more pessimistic, in the grasp of Camoes Adamastor.

The promise of New Land:

Having negotiated its tempestuous seas and landed safely at the Cape, the mysteries of the 'Dark Continent' awaited the sixteenth century discoverer and seventeenth century settler. The polarisation of people's reflections on this new land is not so distinct that it can be readily categorised under headings of paradise and purgatory. Certainly, some celebrated it as a land of plenty and others loathed it as a savage, inhospitable alien landscape. However, to the intrepid discoverer it was simply a land of mystery, an unknown landscape demanding mapping and exploration.

For the more adventurous, the Cape was no paradise, yet neither was it a hellish purgatory, it was a land of adventure and opportunity. Some visitors experienced feelings of great excitement on setting foot at the Cape, the gateway to Africa and 'the Antipodes of our fatherland' (F. A. Bolling, 1670¹⁵⁹). The Cape of Good Hope was believed by the Portuguese to be the legendary Prassum Promontorium of the ancient maps of Ptolemy and Merinus. It was the key to the secrets of Africa, a gateway into the depths of the mysterious continent. To those unprejudiced by the deep-rooted European myths of paradise and purgatory, the African continent was more bizarre than frightening, more a cause of excited curiosity, than heavenly fulfilment. Van Riebeck expected to find, somewhere in the southern interior of Africa, a tribe of mighty amazons, cannibals that had hair so long it reached the ground and a fierce race of men that tamed lions and used them in war.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, Lady Barnard¹⁶¹ excitedly wrote when she arrived in 1797 of what she hoped to find at the Cape:

'let us causer [talk] of kaffirs, Hottentots, men, women, unicorns, mountains, camel opards [sic giraffes], ostriches, flowers, both wild and tame and bays both false and true.'

However the Cape of Good Hope, with its flat topped mountain, temperate climate, unique floral kingdom and wide grasslands, was certainly deemed by many early

¹⁵⁹ In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *Op cit.* Volume 1. p144.

¹⁶⁰ Axelson, A., 1800: *South African yesterdays.* Unie Volkopers Boperk, Cape Town. p1.

¹⁶¹ Lewis-Robinson, A. M., ed., 1993: *Op cit.* p140.

visitors and settlers a worthy setting for Dante's paradise. Drake¹⁶² on his historic voyage around the world famously recorded 'This cape is the most stately thing in the whole circumference of the earth'. Meister (1677¹⁶³) claimed to have seen no other place 'where God and Nature have granted finer and better conditions'. Van Riebeck¹⁶⁴ leading his party of early settlers described finding on the downs beside the Mountain 'the most beautiful land for sewing and for grazing that one could desire'. In 1620 Augustin de Beaulieu¹⁶⁵ described:

'Forests of tall trees, as thick as apple-trees with no fruit on them and of a very hard wood, all along the mountains there was an infinity of game, and on the mountains are great numbers of monkeys, marmots, lions, lynxes, foxes, porcupines, ostriches, elephants and other beasts, unknown to me.'

Abundant game, quality timber and beautiful pastures greeted the early settlers, which when accompanied by the promise of mythical kingdoms, Christians and gold mines beyond Table Mountain, convinced many it was God's southern paradise.

Equally, for those who believed in and saw paradise, there was always a serpent, whilst for others, there was no Paradise at all, simply purgatory. Father Tachard (1688¹⁶⁶) described the lands of the Cape as 'the most sterile and horrible in the world'. In winter the land was racked by storms and squalls and battered yearlong by south-easterly gales. The same plains Van Riebeck¹⁶⁷ deemed so pleasant and fertile, during winter lay utterly underwater; an intractable swamp. Furthermore, for many years these plains, lying beyond the Mountain, were too far away for the undermanned settlement to protect and cultivate. Van Riebeck (1653¹⁶⁸) himself describes the torment of the winds, as crops and vegetables that were flourishing could be 'blown to bits' by winds overnight.

Far from being happy in this southern paradise, many seventeenth century settlers were gravely depressed, bemoaning the twist of fate that brought them to this far-flung, savage and inhospitable land. Van Riebeck recorded in 1652 the plight of a depressed thief, who had committed a series of crimes simply so that he would be

¹⁶² In Tredgold, A., 1985: *The Bay between the Mountains*. Human and Rousseau, Cape Town. p21.

¹⁶³ In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *Op cit*. Volume 1. p19.

¹⁶⁴ Thom, H. B., ed., 1970: *Journal of Jan Van Riebeck*. Volume 1: 1651-55. Balkema, Cape Town. p35.

¹⁶⁵ In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1967: *Op cit*. p99.

¹⁶⁶ In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *Op cit*. Volume 2. p276.

¹⁶⁷ Thunberg, C. P., 1986: *Op cit*. p49.

sentenced to death by the court. The man requested a bullet through the head and appeared to Van Riebeck¹⁶⁹ 'quite desperate'. The thief was apparently desperate to end his stay at the Cape even if by the gravest means possible. Similarly, in March 1660, 20 company servants, 18 burgers and 3 convicts managed to stow away on a fleet leaving the Cape, another 26 stowaways were captured and prevented from deserting. This exodus had followed a series of riots where sailors had asked the settlers 'why do you stay at this damned Cape' and 'What are you doing staying in this cursed country?' whilst promising any deserters a safe passage home (Leibbrandt, 1898-1906¹⁷⁰). The Cape landscapes, none more so than Table Mountain, were alien to these settlers full of strange plants and bizarre yet viscous animals, and even the stars were different and disconcerting. Van Riebeck¹⁷¹ himself, pioneer of the settlement of Cape Town, ultimately found it:

'a lonesome and melancholy place, where there was little to be done but to barter for sheep and cattle with the stupid, filthy, lazy Hottentots.'

By the end of his governorship of the Cape, Van Riebeck was sick of the place. The myths of Africa lay exposed, his hopes of finding the Christian kingdoms had been dashed. Van Riebeck¹⁷² recorded how numerous settlers who had deserted the colony in search of gold had returned, broken and disenchanted, to face their punishment. They, like Van Riebeck, ultimately no longer saw the Cape as a gateway to opportunity and a mythical land of plenty, but as a harsh and lonely land, a long way from home and civilisation.

The initial optimism and revelations of the first capetonians at the Cape's natural beauty soon gave way to gloom and unhappiness as the harsh realities of their new land became apparent. The strict regime of the early colony did not help matters. Sailors visiting the Cape at the end of the seventeenth century, much to their disgust, frequently found themselves pressed into work, as fevers and deaths amongst the settlers hampered the development of the early settlement. The workload for the early colonists was heavy and deserters were severely punished. This was no utopian paradise but a rigorously governed Colony.

¹⁶⁸ Thom, H. B., ed., 1970: *Op cit.* volume 1. p187..

¹⁶⁹ Thom, H. B., ed., 1970: *Op cit.* volume 1. p110.

¹⁷⁰ In Bickford-Smith, V., Worden, N., van Heyningen, E., 1998: *Cape Town: the making of a city.* David Phillip, Cape Town. p33.

¹⁷¹ Noble, J., ed., 1896: *The illustrated official Handbook of the Cape and South Africa.* J.C. Juta, London. p143.

¹⁷² Thom, H. B., ed., 1970: *Op cit.* volume 1. p67.

‘Miserable folk how lamentable your pitiful condition’

(Schouten, 1665¹⁷³)

A consistent theme in the outlooks of both optimists and pessimists was that the Hottentots,¹⁷⁴ the local indigenous people, were beast-like sub-humans. For those who viewed the Cape as a land of beauty, the Hottentots were undoubtedly paradise’s serpents. To the Europeans the juxtaposition of Hottentot ugliness and the natural beauty of the region was deeply ironic:

‘For all parts this affords a dwelling most neat and pleasant, and of all people they [the Hottentots] are the most bestial and sordid. They are the very reverse of humankind...so that if there’s any medium between a rational animal and a beast, the Hottentot lays the fairest claim to that species.’

(Ovington, 1653¹⁷⁵)

Many who encountered the Hottentots invoked God as a means of subjugating them. Their apparent sloth was castigated as sinful, and their lack of dress, and practice of smearing themselves with animal fat, was taken as further proof that they were divorced from mankind, ‘in the darkness of a heathen atheism’ (Meister, 1677¹⁷⁶). The Hottentots were commonly likened to animals, Wikor (1779¹⁷⁷) described them as half-breed baboons, unapproachable and impossible to converse with, who ‘as soon as they become aware of anything they go and sit high up on the rocks and in the mountains just like baboons’. Undoubtedly the roots of this contempt lay in fear. The Europeans who first visited the Cape were well-versed in tales of these ‘savages’ and their hostility to white men. They could not understand or communicate with them, were vastly outnumbered, and frequently amazed at the sheer numbers that would quickly materialise from the nearby mountains and plains. Van Riebeck¹⁷⁸ reported that one such group in 1655, became bold enough to ignore the boundaries imposed on them by the Europeans and their fort declaring ‘this is not our [the Europeans] land but theirs and that they would place their huts wherever they chose’. They threatened

¹⁷³ In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *Op cit.* Volume 1. p85.

¹⁷⁴ The term Hottentot is according to Hromnik, C. A. (1999: Interview) a name invented by the Dutch. In reality Hromnik believes most people who lived in Africa from the time of Christ to the 1700’s would have recognised by the name of ‘Quena’.

¹⁷⁵ In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *Op cit.* Volume 2. p394.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* Volume 1. p203.

¹⁷⁷ Mossop, E., ed., 1935: *The journals of Wikor (1779), Jansz (1760) and W. von Reenen (1791)*. Van Riebeck Society, Cape Town. p55.

¹⁷⁸ Thom, H. B., ed., 1970: *Op cit.* Volume 1. p293.

that if resisted they would come back with hordes of men from the interior and kill the settlers. From this statement one can sense that the early colonists knew that they were the minority, the foreigners, vulnerable in a strange land. This frightened them, in particular they feared being usurped from this, their tenuous foothold in Africa. Van Riebeck's pioneer settlement was grossly undermanned, he did not have the manpower to venture out and crush the Hottentots, or enlighten them with Christianity. Anyway, such objectives were not in his brief from the Dutch East India Company. Instead he was to establish a trade station and port along this vital route.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, they were all too aware of their dependence on the Hottentots for livestock. Hence contact was not only unavoidable, but inherently necessary. Little wonder many of these Europeans viewed this new land with fear and loathing. They were oceans away from civilisation, vulnerable to the seas, elements and beasts, and forced to coexist with the 'savage' peoples of the region. In short, it must have seemed initially that everything about this new land was set against the early settlers.

¹⁷⁹ Noble, J., 1896: *Op cit.*

Chapter Two: The imagined becomes reality

Living with the Table Mountain landscape

‘Mountains make the Cape and I think the wonder of them must influence all who live beneath their ramparts’.

(Green, 1949¹⁸⁰)

Nowhere is this truer than in Cape Town. Table Mountain is the natural amphitheatre in which capetonians, past and present, have acted out their lives. To the vast majority of seventeenth and eighteenth century visitors and residents at the Cape, the Mountain was their first, and most dramatic and enduring image of Africa. The splendid juxtaposition of ocean, sand, flora, forest, mountain and sky was for many too beautiful for words. Lady Anne Barnard¹⁸¹ on her arrival in the late eighteenth century cried on sighting Table Mountain ‘But what do I see now... is it the vision of a painters fancy...or a poets dream?’ Lady Barnard’s exclamation seems to support Coetzee’s¹⁸² claim that Europeans new to the Cape struggled to find the language with which to describe the overpowering, seemingly unbelievable sight of the Mountain. Table Mountain towered over Cape Town’s early dwellers and was viewed with awe. Be it bathed in early morning sunlight, casting shadows at sunset, or glowing in the moonlight, Table Mountain was revered, a colossus of majestic beauty capable of unleashing destructive winds and dire storms.

Maintaining the ongoing theme of a heavenly paradise in Africa, Table Mountain was seen by many as one of the dramatic beauties of God’s creation. As such, the flat-topped Mountain, covered in flowers, littered with waterfalls and rich forests was likened to an altar, its profile to a cathedral, exalting God. Wintergerst (1699¹⁸³) claimed Table Mountain ‘is yet another marvel of nature ordained by God’, whilst Lady Duff Gordon (1861¹⁸⁴) described its ‘celestial presence’ towering over Cape Town. To others it was a fortress with rock precipices, palisades and buttresses.¹⁸⁵ In this sense many of Cape Town’s early settlers, from Van Riebeck onwards, saw the

¹⁸⁰ Green, L. G., 1949: *Op cit.* p22.

¹⁸¹ Lewis-Robinson, A. M., ed., 1993: *Op cit.* p150.

¹⁸² Coetzee, J. M., 1988: *Op cit.*

¹⁸³ In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *Op cit.* Volume 2. p461.

¹⁸⁴ Fairbridge, D., ed., 1927: *Letters from the Cape by Lady Duff Gordon.* Oxford University Press, Oxford. p36.

¹⁸⁵ Semmes, R., 1869: *Op cit.* p636.

Mountain as their fortress, protecting them, God's people, vulnerable in an alien land. Table Mountain was their shield, their defence against the evils of Africa. As Thunberg (1772¹⁸⁶) stated 'the Town has neither walls nor gates, and yet enjoys a perfect security in a land of savages'.

For the early settlers and indeed, future generations, Table Mountain emanated an ageless power, a constant in lives that were otherwise fraught with the uncertainties of Africa. Lady Barnard¹⁸⁷ highlights this idea when she recalls a speech reflecting how Table Mountain:

'is as a Mountain what St Peters is as a church,... the king of Prussia as a General... or Pitt as a statesman, with the difference only, that it will stand the test of time better.'

Particularly for the Dutch, but also the English, the height, abrupt and sheer face of Table Mountain and its dramatic plateau, coupled with their luscious vegetation, were truly alien in comparison to their home landscapes. As such the Mountain served as a constant reminder, 'a remarkable feature in this remarkable land' (Schouten, 1655¹⁸⁸). Accounts of Table Mountain, Signal Hill and Devils Peak frequently exaggerated their size and height, portraying Table Mountain in particular as having an impossibly sheer profile. Such exaggeration was clearly an attempt to convey the grandeur and sheer impressiveness of the Mountain as well as its unique, if not, in European eyes at least, slightly bizarre, appearance. On arriving at the Cape, visitors describing the mountains would often grossly miscalculate their height. The figures generated, particularly for Table Mountain, varied considerably from 1350 feet (E. Hesse, 1681¹⁸⁹) to Sir Thomas Herbert's (1627¹⁹⁰) wild 11853 feet, a threefold increase on its actual height of 3549 feet. Tendencies to exaggerate and dramatise the Mountain were also very much in evidence in artistic renditions. The 'Vue de Cap Bonne Esperance' by C. H. du Mal (c1760, see plate 11) is undoubtedly the most striking and extraordinary artistic reproduction of the Table Mountain spread. Not only has the Mountain sequence been reversed, with Lions Head and Devils Peak on the wrong side of the Mountain, but its height, gradient and general appearance has also been grossly distorted.

¹⁸⁶ Thunberg, C. P., 1986: *Op cit.* p25.

¹⁸⁷ Lewis-Robinson, A. M., ed., 1993: *Op cit.* p218.

¹⁸⁸ In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *Op cit.* p85.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p228.

¹⁹⁰ In Gray, S., 1979: *Op cit.* p40.

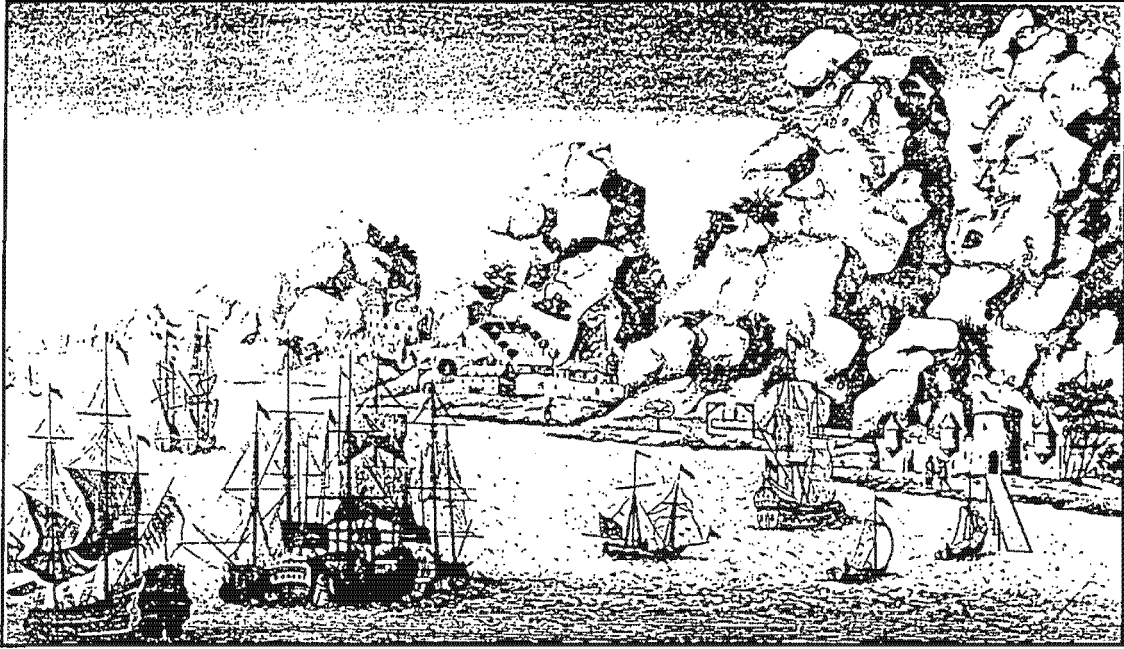


Plate 11: Vue de Cap Bonne Esperance by C. H. du Mal, c1760.

(Source: Vergunst, N., 1999: *South Africa National Galleries Table Mountain Project*. Draft)

However not all visitors to the Cape looked on the Mountain landscape favourably, again there was a polarisation of opinion between those who wondered at its grandeur and stunning profile and others who viewed the landscape with contempt. Sparrman (1772¹⁹¹) a keen botanist, arrived at the Cape, no doubt having heard of its natural beauty, eager to study and record the regions flora. However, he was evidently somewhat disappointed, describing the trees of Table Mountain 'if they may be so called' as stunted and 'dried up with pale blighted leaves, and upon the whole [they] have a miserable appearance'. Sparrman¹⁹² repeatedly states that the Cape is neither as green nor as beautiful as Europe and claims that the flowers cannot show their beauty because they are obscured by the 'pallid hues' of the regions grasses. Equally, he found Table Mountain and the plains below nowhere near as captivating as the European landscapes he had been raised on. This theme of comparing Table Mountain, the Cape of Good Hope, and Africa in general to Europe and the Imperial bias that taints such comparisons will be analysed later in the section.

A feature of Table Mountain that was free from such prejudices, largely because it was unique and offered no real scope for comparison, was its Tablecloth. The

¹⁹¹ Forbes, V. S., ed., 1975: *Op cit.* p46.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

Tablecloth was an integral part of the Mountain's beauty; a feature that never failed to amaze and intrigue those new to the Cape. Lady Anne Barnard¹⁹³ saw it as a thing of great beauty 'a fine damask' and likened it to 'a necklace of vapours that circles the Mountain's great throat'. As a bizarre, yet dazzling, climatic phenomenon, it evoked both wonder and curiosity and was widely chronicled and speculated upon throughout Europe as yet another unique mystery of Africa. Many, though well versed in literary descriptions of the Tablecloth, still found themselves unprepared for the sight of the cloud-topped Mountain. De Cases (1817¹⁹⁴) in particular, marvelled at it, likening it to a snow covering of 'the most dazzling whiteness'.

The theme of Dante's southern paradise existing atop Table Mountain is very much apparent in artistic portrayals of the Mountain and its Tablecloth. Images such as that of Schouten (1638-1704, see plate 12) and produced for Kolb (1731, see plate 13) portray the Mountain as having impossibly steep sides and seem to hint that the only means of ascending to its cloud-enshrouded, heavenly plateau is via the stepped clouds. Subsequently Dante's claim that the righteous, having passed through purgatory, would be shown paradise, is consistent with the idea that God would reward the survivors of the Cape seas and wilds of Africa with a cloud based stairway to heaven. Nevertheless those who viewed the Tablecloth as a signifier and means to paradise were in the minority as the overwhelming response to the Tablecloth by sailors and settlers alike was one of fear and concern.

Over the centuries, the sight of the Tablecloth has been invariably linked to the arrival of high winds amid terrible storms. Throughout his journals, Van Riebeck¹⁹⁵ repeatedly looks up at the Mountain with a sense of dread, fearing the emergence of the Tablecloth and the heavy squalls it heralded which wreaked such havoc on the settlement. Kolb (1731¹⁹⁶) stated that sailors having sighted the Mountain would nervously scan for signs of the Tablecloth, which 'was looked upon to be the cause of the terrible Southeast winds at the Cape'. It was these clouds, and the storms they were believed to cause, that ensured that the Cape was held 'in very ill repute with all

¹⁹³ Lewis-Robinson, A. M., ed., 1993: *Op cit.* p153.

¹⁹⁴ Spohr, O.H., ed., 1970: *My residence at the Cape – Being an extract from Volume 4 of the Journal of Count de la Cases.* Balkema, Cape Town. p92.

¹⁹⁵ See for example the entry in Van Riebeck's journal for November 2nd 1653 in: Thom, H. B., ed., 1970: *Op cit.* Volume 1, p187.

¹⁹⁶ Kolb, P., 1971: *The present state of the Cape of Good Hope. 1731.* Joshua Reprints, London. p14.



Plate 12: W. Schouten (1638-1704: pen and wash impression of Table Bay.
(Source: Reproduced in Vergunst, N., 1999: *South Africa National Galleries Table Mountain Project*. Draft)



Plate 13: Table Bay in 1676 frontispiece engraving for P. Kolb 1727.
(Source: Reproduced in Vergunst, N., 1999: *South Africa National Galleries Table Mountain Project*. Draft)

the European trading nations'. In 1840, Reverend Campbell¹⁹⁷ told how his approach to the Cape, which had proved highly dangerous and nearly saw his ship wrecked on several instances, was tormented by Table Mountain and its:

'gloomy attire of thick clouds, and pouring forth with violence its windy treasures, like a lion roaring from his den, threatening destruction to all who should approach.'

When people saw clouds gathering over the Mountain there was a common saying; 'the Tablecloth is spread and soon we shall be served with ill-cooked food' (Iversen, 1650¹⁹⁸). One can imagine the alarm that the billowing Tablecloth would have caused as it slowly shrouded the Mountaintop. Van Riebeck tells of people racing to secure their property, whilst ships in the harbour would either put down two anchors or head out to sea, ahead of the impending storm. Once again, in these interpretations of the Tablecloth, the ironic juxtaposition of simultaneous forces, both good and evil, beautiful and destructive, is evident. The winds associated with Table Mountain were, for the most part, of an intensity unlike any experienced by the European settlers. Iversen¹⁹⁹ describes somewhat bemusedly, that the winds were so noisy 'one could not here another speak although not far apart'. Vogel²⁰⁰ visiting in 1679, claimed that the winds were so strong that they ripped stones from the Mountain slopes, which fell upon the houses and ships, and that this was not an unusual occurrence during storms. Cortemunde (1672²⁰¹) describes how when the clouds hit the 'Blower' [Devils Peak] they called forth a horrific growling and roaring, which rumbled through the Mountain up to three hours before the winds were felt. It was well known that when Table Mountain 'put on its wig' the winds would tear down into the town laying waste to whole gardens and fields of crops (Vaillant, 1790²⁰²).

The fact that many associated the Tablecloth with evil is apparent in the Malay myth of how Devils Peak got its name. The Malay community was transplanted from Asia in the seventeenth century as colonial slaves in order to help establish Van Riebeck's pioneer colony.²⁰³ The myth relates to how, centuries ago, a retired pirate named Von

¹⁹⁷ Campbell, J., 1840: *Voyages to and from the Cape of Good Hope*. Unknown publisher, London. p55.

¹⁹⁸ In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *Op cit.* Volume 1. p46.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p46.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p220.

²⁰¹ Heningson, H., Varley, D. V., translators and eds., 1962: *Op cit.* p16.

²⁰² Vaillant, M., 1790: *Anecdotes in Travels from the Cape of Good Hope into the interior parts of Africa*. Derton, London. SAL, AZ 968 7025T/LEV. p11.

²⁰³ Cape Mazaar Society, 1996: *Guide to the kramats of the western Cape*. F. A. Print, Cape Town.

Hunks, was out walking on the Mountain drinking and smoking his pipe. When a sinister stranger demanded a fill of tobacco and ultimately challenged him to a smoking competition, he obliged. The stakes were set, the soul of Von Hunks against the kingdoms of the world. The two smoked for days until the stranger collapsed, when the pirate tried to revive his opponent he saw the horns and realised he faced the devil. The devil suddenly disappeared into the Mountain yet he still occasionally puffs away, creating the devilish Tablecloth and all its incumbent evils.²⁰⁴

Renshaw (1804²⁰⁵) linked yet another destructive natural hazard to Table Mountain, again highlighting how those who lived below it blamed many of their woes upon it. He described a 'water spout' bursting over the Mountain, which rolled a huge body of water down the slopes and into the garrison to a depth of five feet, drowning a Dutchman, soldier, several slaves, and a large number of horses and livestock. It was this sheer power of the Mountain, its ability to unleash the mightiest of natural hazards with little or no warning, which heightened its mystery and revered stature in the eyes of the early settlers.

Residents in the Table Mountain landscape

In analysing the hopes and fears associated with the Cape, Table Mountain has so far been seen very much as a backdrop, a landscape, though influential, still essentially detached from those who viewed it. However the power of the Mountain's landscape was not only as an icon for all that Europeans imagined to be African, it was also often tangible in very real terms. As a haven for slaves, baboons, wild animals and recluses, Table Mountain was also a lived-in landscape that interacted with the surrounding people.

Again the overriding emotion felt by local settlers toward Table Mountain was one of fear. In the century or so following Cape Town's establishment, the Mountain was infamous for its resident viscous beats, dangerous baboons and murderous runaway

²⁰⁴ Green, L. G., 1947: *Tavern of the Seas*. H. B. Timmins, Cape Town. p21.

²⁰⁵ Renshaw, R., 1864: *Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope*. J. Watts, Manchester. p23.

slaves. Lion Hill, according to Kolb (1731²⁰⁶) received its name from being a great haunt of Lions, and one in particular:

‘made woeful havock among the cattle, and terribly annoy’d the inhabitants in the neighbourhood some of whom he devoured... he became the Terror and Plague of the whole settlement’.

The Mountain was also the haunt of leopards and tyger-wolves [hyenas] that would creep down at night and attack livestock and were widely rumoured to have mauled humans on occasion. In 1659 some clothing, bones and skull, with the cranium half bitten off, was found on Lion Hill, the person was presumed devoured by a lion.²⁰⁷ The mountains of the region were also believed by ‘the credulous country folk’, in true mythical style, to be inhabited by dragon-winged, four-footed serpents (Mentzel, 1785²⁰⁸). Even after it had been climbed and largely explored, the myths surrounding the Mountain, and the mysterious beasts, serpents and treasures it contained, persisted amongst the early settlers.

Creatures that certainly did live in large numbers on the Mountain were baboons, and they frequently troubled the capetonians. These Baboons were rather fantastically reported by visitors as attacking and even raping people who dared venture onto the Mountain.²⁰⁹ Tappen²¹⁰ in 1682 recalled how large numbers of viscous baboons would steal down from the Mountain at night, and with elaborate teamwork, plunder gardens and orchards. The baboons were unafraid of dogs and would hurl stones down on anyone who tried to follow them up the Mountain slopes. Vaillant (1790²¹¹) describes how the Mountain was also home to a large number of vultures; a bird that’s carrion feeding and ugly appearance ensured it was loathed by locals. Indeed, when the winds on occasion blew the vultures off the Mountain down into the Town’s streets, the residents would rush out of their shelters and stone the birds to death.

Whilst baboons, vultures and the occasional lion attack were a nuisance, runaway slaves were perceived by early settlers as a very real danger and deemed a poignant threat to their fledgling community. From the very start of Van Riebeck’s pioneer

²⁰⁶ Kolb, P., 1971: *Op cit.* p14.

²⁰⁷ Thom, H. B., ed., 1970: *Op cit.* Volume 3. p130.

²⁰⁸ Mandelbrote, H. J., translator, 1921: *Op cit.* p71.

²⁰⁹ In Bickford-Smith, V., Worden, N., Van Heyningen, E., 1998: *Op cit.* p80.

²¹⁰ In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *Op cit.* Volume 2. p237.

²¹¹ Vaillant, M., 1790: *Op cit.* p26.

settlement the Mountain was a place of refuge for escaped convicts, deserters and slaves seeking freedom. These 'droster's' fires would illuminate the Mountain slopes at night; a constant reminder to capetonians of their vulnerability to the Mountain and its inhabitants. The townspeople and castle soldiers were too afraid (of beasts, baboons and the slaves themselves) to venture into the Mountain and bring these criminals to justice. Table Mountain was effectively beyond the jurisdiction of early Cape Town, and as such, it was viewed with fear and its confines entered with trepidation. If ever a person went missing on or near the Mountain they were assumed to have fallen prey to some beast or murderous runaway. Meanwhile, these fugitives would fiercely resist attempts to capture them. The Mountain was their fortress against pursuers, offering vantage points, and rocks to hide behind and rain down on their would-be captors. Colvin (1912²¹²) in studying the records at the Cape Archives found an account on eight slaves; men, women and children who attempted to run away to Madagascar. They holed up on Devils Peak for a week, whereabouts they brutally tortured and murdered two shepherds, the wilds of their mountain existence having seemingly reverted them to horrific savages. In the late 1650's there was great alarm in the Town over the number of runaways, an estimated 28, in the Mountain. It was feared they would unite at a place known to them all and there grow strong, and being bolder and braver than the Hottentots, would become far more of a threat to the 'Hon. Company' than even these savage and unpredictable 'natives'.²¹³ This worry neatly encapsulates the fear and uncertainty with which the early settlers viewed Table Mountain. It existed beyond the regulations and influence of their society, it was a wilderness not only adjacent to, but also towering over, their Town. They truly believed that the same, malevolent, Mountain, which contained lions and baboons, could support a society of runaways and criminals that would ultimately threaten the embryonic civilisation they were struggling to grow in 'Darkest Africa'.

It is worth pointing out that not all human mountain dwellers were malicious criminals. The 'drosters' would often help the town slaves, and in return for supplies of meat and fish, they would collect and fell timber from the other side of the Mountain, and as such enjoyed a form of informal employment. Many deserters simply sought a reprieve, an escape from the strict regime of the early settlement.

²¹² Colvin, I. D., 1912: *Op cit.* p231.

²¹³ Thom, H. B., ed., 1970: *Op cit.* volume 2. p329.

Renshaw (1864²¹⁴), who travelled to the Cape in 1804, recalled hearing an account of how a deserter from the garrison concealed himself and a black girl, for upwards of six months in a small cave on the side of Devils Peak, despite rigorous searches for him. The famous Joshua Penny²¹⁵ fled the British Navy in 1773 and survived on plants, game and wild honey for over a year in the caves of Table Mountain. He described his mountain territory, with its many cave residencies, as akin to a city and claimed:

'I never enjoyed my life better than while I lived among the ferocious animals of Table Mountain because I had secured myself against the savage English'.

Nevertheless, the fear of mountain runaways persisted well into the eighteenth century. In 1760, after a group of slaves murdered a Cape Town family and fled into the hills, orders were made to stop slaves climbing the Mountain.²¹⁶ This ruling was also linked to another very great mountain-based danger; the threat of fire. Slaves up on the Mountain collecting firewood would make a fire where they worked, 'to light their pipes and dress their victuals', which they would often neglect to extinguish, resulting the following night in 'a most magnificent spectacle... for the elevation and extent of the fire, renders the Mountain a much more tremendous spectacle than Mt Vesuvius at the height of its eruption' (Le Vaillant, 1790²¹⁷). In 1835, Hershel²¹⁸ describes another such fire which included the eruption of a column of flame some 100 feet high and 20-30 wide, which made the Mountain resemble 'the crater of an enormous volcano with the lava first peeping over the brim and here and there overflowing'. The spectacular sights of Table Mountain were seemingly never divorced from very real danger and added to the mythical ethos settlers attached to the Mountain.

²¹⁴ Renshaw, R., 1864: *Op cit.* p12.

²¹⁵ Penny, J., 1982: *The life and times of Joshua Penny 1815*. SAL Reprint Series no.11, Cape Town. p35.

²¹⁶ In Bickford-Smith, V., Worden, N., Van Heyningen, E., 1998: *Op cit.* p80.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.* p80.

²¹⁸ Evans, D. S., Deeming, T. J., Evans, B. H., Goldfarb, S., eds., 1969: *Herschel at the Cape. Diaries and correspondence of Sir John Herschel 1834-38*. Balkema, Cape Town. p131.

Table Mountain myths

The myths and mysteries historically associated with Table Mountain by those who lived in its shadow form an integral part of its perception as a cultural landscape. Table Mountain was an icon for all the bizarre and intriguing phenomena that Europeans associated with the African continent. From Dias' 1488 rounding of the Cape of Good Hope until long after the Mountain had been climbed and explored, there abounded mythical tales relating to mysterious sights, hidden treasures and revelations of distant kingdoms. On arriving at the Cape, intrepid explorers could only have had their hopes of finding such fabulous treasures and lost kingdoms raised by the awesome spectacle of Table Mountain. With the southern tip of the continent holding such a unique and awe-inspiring feature, the imaginations of Europeans duly ran wild when contemplating what mysteries the interior beyond would reveal.

Of all the African myths, undoubtedly the most intriguing, from a European perspective, was the concept of the 'Dark Continent' holding lost Christian kingdoms. The search for the Empire of Monomotapa particularly obsessed Van Riebeck and as soon as he had founded the Cape's settlement he set about searching for this mythical kingdom. The Dutch East India Company had ordered Van Riebeck to make finding Monomotapa his prime objective once the settlement was established.²¹⁹ It was hoped that once the kingdom's people became acquainted with the Dutch and compared their kind treatment to the imperious domination of the Portuguese, they might be encouraged to bring their gold, ivory and pearls overland to the Cape, instead of to Sofali and Mozambique.²²⁰ Rumour had it that from the top of Table Mountain the edge of Monomotapa was visible just beyond the Hottentots Holland Mountains. With such knowledge, and aided by the maps and charts of his time, Van Riebeck actually mapped out not only the exact position of this fabled land but also fixed the locations of its mighty river and chief towns. Van Riebeck's adopted native girl, Eva, niece of the infamous Strandloper Harry, fuelled his curiosity, telling him that the kingdom was full of fabulous gems, abundant gold and stone houses and was ruled by a mighty Lord called Chobona. She confirmed the accuracy of Van Riebeck's charts agreeing that the kingdom lay within view of Table Mountain.²²¹ Eva was, it seems, a cunning

²¹⁹ Noble, J., 1896: *Op cit.* p143.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ Axelson, A., 1800: *Op cit.* p3

young girl intent on telling her master exactly what he wanted to hear. Van Riebeck himself set out in command of several expeditions, and ordered and patronised numerous others, yet without success, and he left the Cape still dreaming of this fantastic, promised kingdom.

Maintaining the theme of Table Mountain as a southern paradise, myths abounded of a fabulous lake lying on its plateau. Kolb firmly believed in this Table top oasis and Cortemunde (1672²²²) described the top of the Mountain as containing a running brook, which:

‘formed quite a considerable pond from which fish of many colours, black, white, blue, yellow, silver, gold, purple etc, can be caught, and when they die they turn grass green’.

Wintergerst (1699²²³) describes the waters that emanated from this lake and that cascaded down the Mountain as ‘the most tasty...such as not to be found in all the Indies’. Such fantastic accounts were undoubtedly false and were heavily criticised by the likes of Valentyn²²⁴ in 1726, amongst others, who pointed out that in winter the top of Table Mountain may hold a thin sheen of water but no fish-filled lake. However such myths merely serve to highlight the mysterious and powerful aura that surrounded the Table Mountain landscape and how people at the time were only too willing to write about, and believe, anything that would confirm it as a terrestrial paradise.

The commonly held opinion that the Mountain was once covered by the Great Flood confirmed the beliefs of those who viewed Table Mountain as a heavenly paradise, a relic of, and tribute to, the magnificence of Gods creation. Blount (1821²²⁵) was so amazed at the apparent age of the Mountain, seeing its crags and precipices as marks of vast antiquity, that he believed it must have been a prior creation to the rest of the Earth.²²⁶ He found his views supported by finds of shells and other marine substances

²²² Heningson, H., Varley, D. V., translators and eds., 1962: *Op cit.* p16.

²²³ In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *Op cit.* Volume 2. p401.

²²⁴ Serton, P., ed., 1971: *Description of the Cape of Good Hope with the matters concerning it – F. Valentyn 1731.* Van Riebeck Society, Cape Town. p37.

²²⁵ Blount, E., 1821: *Op cit.* p3.

²²⁶ In reality Table Mountain has never been covered by the ocean and the shell deposits according to Meadows, M., (professor of biophysical geography UCT 1999: Interview) are most likely the result of an archaeological midden (rubbish dump) or have been used in making cement for buildings upon the Mountain. To highlight this viewpoint, the Blockhouse on Devil’s Peak has large quantities of shell fragments in and around it, a legacy of its construction.

on the mountains of the Cape. This, he believed, was ample proof that 'the flood had been there'. Hence Table Mountain was portrayed as an idyllic landscape, uncorrupted by man, unspoilt and remaining just how God created it, proof of the Great Flood, a shrine to the magnitude and beauty of God's creation. In reflecting and reaffirming God's creation, Table Mountain held a deeply spiritual significance in the eyes of Christians such as Blount, however for many others its wealth was measured in more economic terms.

The dream of gold has fired many a pioneering spirit, and sixteenth to eighteenth century Africa proved no different. There had long been rumours in Europe of extensive goldmines in south-east Africa from which the fabled Queen of Sheba took her vast wealth. After Dias conquered, and Van Riebeck later settled the Cape, the search for this gold became a priority for the powers in Europe. In 1653 Van Riebeck and his followers were encouraged by the arrival of four Frenchmen who claimed to have persuaded a 'native' to show them the whereabouts of the regions mythical goldmines. The Frenchmen were convinced these mines existed after coming across some 300lbs of unrefined alluvial gold, only to have their hopes of finding the mines dashed when the 'native' had been recalled by his king. Nevertheless the Frenchman, bemoaning their misfortune, tantalisingly assured their fellow Europeans that the mines lay nearby.²²⁷ Unsurprisingly the first place people searched for gold was Table Mountain. It seems the Mountain was believed to hold the answer to all Africa's myths and secrets. In 1699, after much amateur prospecting, experienced miners and assayers were sent from Europe and sunk shafts up to 50 leagues deep into Devils Peak, the Lions Hill and the southern slopes of the Mountain.²²⁸ Again, the Mountain was to frustrate them and despite the later establishment of a small silver-mine (at what is aptly now known as Silvermine), nobody made their fortunes from Mountain gold.

It seems no myth or rumour, no matter how bizarre, was disbelieved as long as its foundations lay with Table Mountain. John Barrow, the traveller and author, reportedly reached the top of Platteklip Gorge in 1806 and discovered an anchor of 'ancient pattern' buried amid sand and rocks. The metal, though heavily corroded,

²²⁷ Thom, H. B., ed., 1970: *Op cit.* volume 1. p190.

²²⁸ Botha, G., 1962: *Collected works volume 1, Cape history and social life.* Struik, Cape Town. p267.

weighed 150lbs and it was suggested that Dias had left it there, hidden, in case he should need an anchor when he called again.²²⁹ In another fabulous account, Kolb (1731²³⁰) recalled how in the early eighteenth century, a few months before he arrived at the Cape, the residents had been both terrified and astonished to see at night, lasting for a month, atop Table Mountain 'something like a carbuncle stone; a resplendent something, resembling in the imaginations of many, a serpent with a crown upon its head'. During the day the people could find no trace of it, which according to Mentzel, was because the phenomenon was nothing more than a trick of the sun on the rocks or small fires burning through the night²³¹. Another tale, contrary to the Von Hunks myth, claims Devils Peak received its name from the fearsome clattering and mysterious lights that were often witnessed upon it at night, and which encouraged capetonians to climb up next day in search of treasure.²³²

Whatever their basis, however unreliable they may be, the existence and perpetuation through the years of such myths shows, if nothing else, that the Mountain was considered a landscape of mystery and intrigue, and as such it was a microcosm for European attitudes toward all of Africa. As a mysterious, largely unexplored, fabled mountainous realm, Table Mountain was the perfect embodiment of the imperial vision of 'Dark' Africa, a landscape of sinister secrets and fabulous potential. It was undoubtedly the lure of the Mountain's myths and mysteries that enticed early climbers, through a combination of curiosity and an intrepid willingness to overcome their fears, to conquer its heights in the name of Europe and enlightenment.

Climbing the Mountain

The dichotomy between paradise and purgatory in people's perceptions of Table Mountain's landscape is arguably clearest when analysing the accounts of those who climbed its heights. Many, particularly as knowledge of the Mountain increased in the eighteenth century, took undoubted joy in its ascent. The causes of this enjoyment were threefold. Firstly, climbing Table Mountain, as routes were established and fears

²²⁹ In Green, L. G., 1947: *Op cit.* p105.

²³⁰ Kolb, P., 1771: *Op cit.* p13.

²³¹ Mandelbrote, H. J., translator, 1921: *Op cit.* p93.

²³² Green, L. G., 1947: *Op cit.* p106.

dispelled, became a festive event and great occasion. Perhaps the most luxurious climb was made by Robert Gordon's party in the late 1770's. During their climb, Gordon treated his companions to a pre-prepared breakfast served in a cave halfway up the Mountain. Here they feasted to the accompaniment of haunting flute play by two servants positioned above them so as to maximise the Mountain's acoustic attributes. On the Table top, after Gordon had taken great delight in pointing out various reptiles and flowers, the party sat down to enjoy the views with a selection of hams, fowls, fruits and beverages, this time to the music of French Horns.²³³ Lady Anne Barnard²³⁴ also dined with friends on the Mountain and when on the summit led renditions of the National Anthem amongst other songs, drinking Madeira in order to fortify their spirits for the descent. By the turn of the eighteenth century the Mountain was fast becoming a landscape associated with both leisure and pleasure. James Lind²³⁵ stated that by 1779 the summit of Table Mountain 'had never been so oft visited' whilst Pama²³⁶ claims that by the end of the same century climbing the Mountain had become a near obsession.

Secondly, the amazing beauty of the Mountain slopes, its abundant flora and cascading waterfalls enticed locals and visitors alike to climb up and witness these marvels of nature. Blount (1823²³⁷) whilst climbing found a beautiful waterfall where water that fell:

'like tears wrung from the hard rock, had worn for themselves a little basin below, where they lie so pure, that Diana herself would not dread staining her lips with such delicious nectar'.

To Lady Anne Barnard²³⁸ the very air atop the Mountain was a source of wonder. She claimed its fantastic purity raised one up, embodied the spirit and beautified the soul. The third and final attraction of climbing Table Mountain was the fabulous views it offered over Cape Town and the Cape of Good Hope. Renshaw²³⁹ described the beautiful houses and gardens of the Cape as 'reduced to the appearance of a coloured

²³³ Rapiet, P. E., Boucher, M., eds., 1988: *Robert Jacob Gordon – Cape Travels 1772-86*. Volume 1, Brenthurst, Houghton South Africa. p32; Spencer, E., ed., *Memoirs of W. Hickey, 9th edition, Volume 2, 1775-82*. Hurst and Blackett, London. p109.

²³⁴ Lewis-Robinson, A. M., ed., 1993: *Op cit.* p223.

²³⁵ In Forbes, V. S., ed., *Notes on the Cape Peninsula taken from the London Archives*. Unpublished, held at Simonstown Museum.

²³⁶ Pama, C., 1997: *Bowlers Cape Town: Life at the Cape in early Victorian times 1834-68*. Tafelberg, Cape Town. p67.

²³⁷ Blount, E., 1821: *Op cit.* p119.

²³⁸ Lewis-Robinson, A. M., ed., 1993: *Op cit.* p221.

²³⁹ Renshaw, R., 1863: *Op cit.* p13.

map' to others they were 'atom-like'²⁴⁰. Attempting to express the magnificence of the view many were driven to uncharacteristically rich prose, Blount²⁴¹ describes

'the town, with its white houses and gardens looking like a fairy encampment: its streets dwindled to a space fit only for Queen Mab to drive her nutshell chariot'.

However, for numerous others, climbing on Table Mountain was a horror, arduous beyond belief and beset with dangers. Father Le Blanc (1667²⁴²) complained 'you need to be a goat to get up this dreadful Mountain properly'. To this effect, Valentyn claimed to have never met a man who, once he had climbed the Mountain, would ever choose to do so again²⁴³. The same runaways, baboons and savage beasts that caused terror for the settlers equally worried those seeking to climb the Mountain. Added to these dangers were the risks of loose footings, rock-falls and getting fatally lost. Heeck (1655²⁴⁴) recalled how the height was so horrifying that no birds lived atop the Mountain, whilst thick bushes, caves and rocks acted as convenient ambush spots for the fearless lions, tigers, leopards, wolves and even bears according to de Graaf (1679²⁴⁵). The common seventeenth and eighteenth century perceptions of the Mountain still revolved around wild beasts, looming cliffs and precipices that 'threatened you with momentary destruction'²⁴⁶ which added to the risk of encountering murderous slaves and escaped convicts, did not encourage its exploration. Sparrman²⁴⁷ demonstrated just such fear when he set out to 'botanize' the Mountain only to get half way up and be scared into returning by the treacherous nature of the climb and howling of animals. Such fears were not entirely unwarranted, in 1679 a party of three disappeared whilst climbing, presumed fallen or devoured (De Graaf²⁴⁸). Father Tachard²⁴⁹ recounts how his guide, whilst leading him up the Mountain, seized up with fear and told him of beasts far larger than any lion.

²⁴⁰ Evans, D. S., Deeming, T. J., Evans, B. H., Goldfarb, S., eds., 1969: *Op cit.* p100.

²⁴¹ Blount, E., 1821: *Op cit.* p120.

²⁴² In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *Op cit.* Volume 1. p133.

²⁴³ Serton, P., ed., 1971: *Op cit.* p61.

²⁴⁴ In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *Op cit.* Volume 1. p41.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p208.

²⁴⁶ Gordon-Brown, J., ed., 1970: *James Ewart's Journal covering his stay at the Cape of Good Hope 1811-14.* Struik, Cape Town. p52.

²⁴⁷ Forbes, V. S., ed., 1975: *Op cit.* p72.

²⁴⁸ In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *Op cit.* Volume 1. p208.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.* Volume 2. p325.

Once again, just as this view drove some to adulation, to a select view it was unnatural and evoked fear and loathing. Valentyn (1726²⁵⁰) described how the 'horror of the downward view is inexpressible' and how the yawning abyss below made one feel dizzy and faint. To the early Dutch and English such a sheer height, particularly when it incorporated views of the town below, would have been a new, unique experience, to some intimidating, to others a source of wonder. These accounts have all highlighted the highly subjective and emotive responses of those who climbed Table Mountain; it took the arrival of more scientifically minded visitors, free from imperial prejudices based on myth and speculation, to add a sense of objectivity to perceptions of the Mountain's cultural landscape.

Science and the Mountain

Clearly, Table Mountain as a cultural landscape was dominated by perceptions of it as either an enchanting paradise or hellish monstrosity. These perceptions reflected what people expected, and to a degree wanted, to see in Africa and they readily attached their hopes and fears to this awesome Mountain in the South. Yet to those who approached the Cape objectively, such as scientists, seeking knowledge and understanding, the Table Mountain landscape was largely free of these emotional trappings. Over the centuries, scientists, principally in the form of botanists, often overcame or ignored imperial rhetoric and its incumbent prejudices, and the subsequent myths, wonders and fears commonly associated with the Mountain. Instead they had more positivist motives, they sought to catalogue and rationalise Table Mountain and its features and contents.

It took until the latter half of the eighteenth century for the scientific and botanical interest of Table Mountain to truly interest and entice knowledge-thirsty visitors to the Cape. Carl Thunberg was among the first such visitors, as the first university graduate to travel extensively in the Cape he climbed the Mountain a total of 15 times between 1772-4. These numerous climbs were made at a time when uncertainties and fear of the Mountain's inhabitants were still acute. Thunberg's compatriot and close friend, Anders Sparrman, made it only half way up Table Mountain before he became scared of beasts and runaways and made a hasty retreat. Thunberg's eagerness to unravel the

²⁵⁰ Serton, P., ed., 1971: *Op cit.* p59.

mysteries of the Mountain overcame these concerns and instead, as a keen botanist, he marvelled at Table Mountain's wealth of unique flora. Clearly the Mountain was simultaneously one man's natural paradise, offering a unique opportunity for learning, and another's savage purgatory. Before the arrival of Sparrman and Thunberg in 1772, practically all the significant published research on the Cape flora had taken place in Western Europe by botanists who had never set foot on the shores of Table Bay. Thunberg, in particular, set about changing this precedent. He painstakingly catalogued the Mountain's flowers, arranging and packing an extensive collection of plant species, many of which he sent back to Europe for further study and appraisal. His studies, which included some important discoveries in natural history, were promptly published in Sweden.²⁵¹ The Barnard party, which climbed the mountain at the end of the eighteenth century, despite being a pleasure outing, also set about discovering and exploring the Mountain's secrets. Once upon the summit, and having eaten, the group went their separate ways, some with spades to dig up plants, others with guns to collect bird and animal specimens, and others still in search of reptiles and animal life.²⁵²

Thunberg also set about dispelling some of the popular myths of Table Mountain. He reported that, despite extensive searching, there was no sign of the fabled lake or even any sign of a visible spring on the summit. Similarly he made a detailed study of the Mountain's geology. Where others had seen fantastically or ominously shaped rocks and gorges, Thunberg simply saw intriguing rock compositions, bedding plains and strata.²⁵³ The Abbe de la Caille meanwhile used Cape Town, and Table Mountain more specifically, as a base for his studies in astronomy. In 1751-53 he spent many nights on the Mountain observing the stars. However, it was not until 1834 that the value of Table Mountain as a stellar observation station was confirmed with the construction of Maclear's Beacon, which was built to establish the size and shape of the Earth.²⁵⁴

This concept of Table Mountain becoming a source of knowledge and a place of scientific interest arose at the same time, the second half of the eighteenth century,

²⁵¹ Forbes, V. S., ed., 1986: *Op cit.* pxix.

²⁵² Lewis-Robinson, A. M., ed., 1993: *Op cit.* p220.

²⁵³ Forbes, V. S., ed., 1986: *Op cit.* p117.

²⁵⁴ Pama, C., 1997: *Op cit.* p3-4.

that both men and women increasingly climbed it, as a pleasurable pursuit. The myths of mythical riches had abated, many beasts had been hunted down and the Mountain was now a gateway to knowledge and learning as opposed to paradise or purgatory. The landscape of Table Mountain had, by then, been mapped, fully described and its wilds largely conquered. The Mountain had essentially been tamed by the imperial powers of Europe. Hence it became a 'usable' landscape, no longer a backdrop that people stood back and admired or dreaded, but an environment with which they actively wanted to interact, to personally know and conquer.

Chapter Three: The Imperial Approach to the Table Mountain landscape

Said²⁵⁵ insists that texts cannot be separated from the context that made them possible, and which render them intelligible:

'My position is that texts are worldly, to some degree they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, of human life, and of course of the historical moments in which they were created'.

The thematic analysis of Table Mountain as a historical cultural landscape presented in this section has been predominantly text-based. Moreover, being written by European colonists or visitors to the Cape, these texts have been very much the product of their time and circumstances. Subsequently, they are invariably biased and prejudiced by European myths and sentiments toward Africa. It has been highlighted how these biases constructed a polarisation in the interpretation of the Table Mountain landscape as a symbol of paradise to some and purgatory to others. In accepting that the colonists produced the majority of sources in this chapter, it is necessary to assess how imperial approaches to landscapes, and those of the 'dark' continent in particular, were reflected in writings on Table Mountain.

Much of the literature involved in this discourse has been in the form of travel writing, a medium that was very much imperial in outlook. Many African travel writers undoubtedly saw themselves dutifully contributing towards what Bell²⁵⁶ believes was a 'higher Imperial goal, to understand the world and its contents'. Crush²⁵⁷ pointed out that African travel writers tended to be intensely opinionated about the places they visited, turning their texts into a vehicle for 'substantial political and moral commentary'. For travel narratives to represent the unfamiliar, such as Table Mountain and the indigenous peoples of the Cape, in the 'language and tropes of exploration is to lend authority to the account, to represent as fact what is often fiction...and to appeal to deeply racist and/or Eurocentric notions of other peoples and places.'

(Crush 1993²⁵⁸)

²⁵⁵ Said, E. F., 1984: *The world, the text and the critic*. Faber, London. p4.

²⁵⁶ Bell, M., Butlin, R., Heffernan, M., eds., 1995: *Geography and imperialism*. Manchester University Press, Manchester. p3.

²⁵⁷ Crush, J., 1993: Landscapes apart: South African cities and the postcolonial gaze. *Paper for South African Geographical Society Meetings, Port Elizabeth, 3-7 July 1993*. p2.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Such travel writings clearly revealed the great 'intellectual schema's' by which Europe viewed distant lands and the 'others' they contained.²⁵⁹ Indeed it has even been argued that

'the entire structure of European knowledge, the very epistemological foundations on which the modern academy has been erected, is largely the outcome of unexamined, universalist (and hence imperialist) preconceptions about the world and its inhabitants.'

(Bell, 1995²⁶⁰)

The iconography of light and darkness, which embodied powerful images of race, science and religion, portrayed the European penetration of the African continent as simultaneously a process of domination, enlightenment and liberation.²⁶¹ This rhetoric of the 'dark' continent, a land of wild landscapes and primitive savages implied a need for taming and civilising for the glory of God and King. To this effect, the early Portuguese discoverers were given a Papal Bull granting them God's forgiveness for any sins that might be committed whilst claiming new lands and converting non-believers. The discovery of Africa was a wealth, knowledge, fame and religion driven crusade. Such motives ensured the early sailors, discoverers and settlers who encountered the Cape actively wanted to see Table Mountain as a long lost heavenly paradise, a wonder of creation, a reward sent from God at the end of a long, dangerous voyage, or as a heathen-infested, barren, alien landscape that it was their religious duty to tame, enlighten and civilise.

Heavily caught up in this Imperial rhetoric was the sense that Europe, be it in terms of civilisation, society or landscape, was superior to any other land. In a sense, Europeans viewing the Mountain were often blinded by their prejudices, as Coetzee²⁶² would put it, they had neither the eyes, nor the language, to do Africa justice. Consequently, instead of wondering at this unique, natural landscape, with its wealth of undiscovered plants and animals, viewers all too frequently compared it unfavourably, and inherently unfairly, to Europe. For example, Sparrman²⁶³ in 1772,

²⁵⁹ Coetzee, J. M., 1988: *Op cit.*

²⁶⁰ Bell, M., Butlin, R., Heffernan, M., eds., 1995: *Op cit.*

²⁶¹ In Daniels, S., Lee, R., 1996: *Op cit.*

²⁶² Coetzee, J. M., 1988: *Op cit.*

²⁶³ Forbes, V. S., ed., 1975: *Op cit.* p47.

as highlighted earlier, was immensely disappointed by the dull hues of the Cape grasses and stated how

‘these plains, therefore, cannot captivate the eye nearly so much as the European flora, with her green meadows replete with annual grasses’.

Meanwhile, Meister (1677²⁶⁴), when he saw the beautiful waterfalls and streams of Table Mountain, was inclined to think of the many miles of fabulous ornamental waters at Versailles. He speculated on how the waters of the Mountain could be harnessed to produce fountains and waterworks similar in grandeur and technical accomplishment to those of the French. To Meister at least, it would seem the natural splendour of Table Mountain was not enough, instead, it cried out for manipulation and control by man in order to heighten its beauty.

The accounts of the early inhabitants of the Cape are full of examples of their attempt to ‘Europeanise’ the Table Mountain landscape, to familiarise it to the worrying, homesick, European eye. One such method of familiarisation is what Mitchell²⁶⁵ brands an exaggerated form of *anaclysis* or ‘propping’ of one landscape paradigm upon another. This method sees the author, be it a writer, painter or poet, utilising known European symbols or descriptive frameworks to soften the impact of their representation of the new, unknown and alien landscape. It must be remembered that most of the journals, books, paintings and poems analysed in this text were produced for general consumption. Hence, ‘propping’ provided an easy descriptive method with which to convey the wilds of Africa, or in this case the unique Table Mountain landscape, to a wider audience. Lady Duff Gordon (1861²⁶⁶), for example, compared the Mountain to her native St George’s Hill and likened its streams and waterfalls to Scotch burns. Meanwhile, Van Riebeck²⁶⁷ described the top of Table Mountain as being about as wide and three times as long as the square in front of the Royal Palace in Amsterdam, and the Liesbeck River only half as wide as the Amstel.

²⁶⁴ In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *Op cit.* Volume 1, p199.

²⁶⁵ Mitchell, W. J. T., 1994: *Landscape and Power*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. p144.

²⁶⁶ Fairbridge, D., 1927: *Op cit.* p36.

²⁶⁷ Cited by Vergunst, N., 1999: *Op cit.*

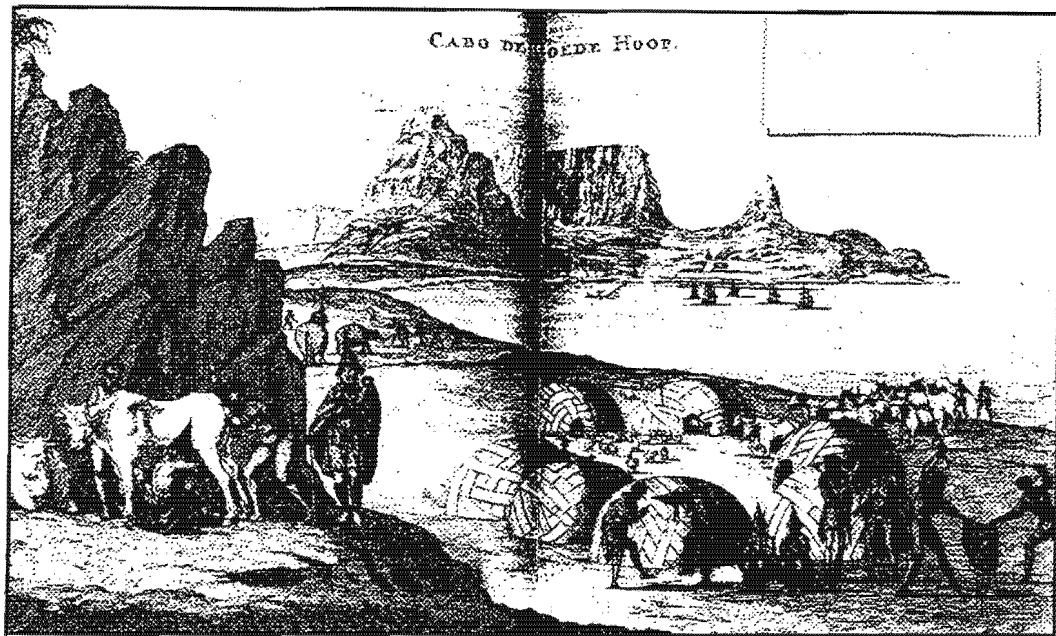


Plate 14: Khoi settlement near Table Bay engraving 1711 by A. Bogaert.
 (Source: In Raven-Hart, R. C., 1971: *The Cape of Good Hope 1652-1702. The first 50 years of Dutch colonisation. As seen by callers.* Volume 2. p489)

This method of 'propping' was used most extensively in the artwork of the period. Plate 14 is a classic piece of imperial art. The mountains provide a striking and magnificent backdrop, their heights, particularly in the case of Devils Peak, are grossly exaggerated and their profile portrayed as excessively steep. Atop the dramatic point of Lions Head the Dutch flag flies proudly, its grossly distorted size letting the person viewing the picture know that the Dutch control the Cape, and that any approaching ship would be made well aware of this fact. Beneath the mighty Mountain lays the European civilisation, its power graphically conveyed by means of falsities. The size of the Fort, the long pier and the presence of a church are all erroneous, their purpose is to familiarise, and add a sense of control and order to the otherwise dramatic scene. Were it not for the propping flags, church, European houses and ships, then the image could be deemed unbelievable and as such, from the artists point of view, probably less desirable and saleable. In the foreground there is a collection of Hottentots dancing, milking, lice hunting and playing music. Their huts and practices are all portrayed with the aim of heightening the sense of the bizarre and to make them as distinctive as possible from the civilised Europeans. The pervading fear of 'the other' is very much in evidence, the Hottentots are across the bay from the settlement, which is effectively walled off from the rest of Africa by the mountains.

Furthermore, the might of the settlers is made obvious. In the middle distance elephants, the largest and strongest of beasts, are being hunted by the apparently fearless Europeans, whilst the bay is protected by a fleet of ships in full sail. The Hottentots are not portrayed as a people to be feared, but as a curiosity, the landscape is unique, but ultimately conquerable. The imperial presence in Africa is glorified, the town and ships in the background are the controlling force, bringing knowledge of the marvels and mysteries of the land to Europe, and giving it in return God and civilisation. Artistic representations of the indigenous people of Africa were also constructed within a rigid Imperial framework.

The popular interest in Renaissance Europe engendered by the discovery of new lands saw a need to depict indigenous people (from newly discovered Africa and Asia) in travel journals and paintings. However with no pictorial convention existing for the secular depiction of naked 'natives', traditional poses had to be borrowed or copied. The predominant framework used for this copying was the classical scene of Adam and Eve in paradise, a biblical image and hence free from the sins inherent in depicted nudity (see plate 15). This method of portraying newly discovered peoples within existing and acceptable artistic mediums saw Americans distinguished by the use of feathers in their dress code, Asians characterised by the wearing of silks and Africans by their nudity and propensity for smearing their body in animal fat, practices deemed disgusting by Europe.²⁶⁸ Such depictions (see plate 16), in subverting the classical biblical conception of man and women in paradise into a naked, black African couple in an alien landscape, clearly accentuated the myth of Africa as the 'Dark Continent'. Eden with its familiar figures was gone, to be replaced with what imperials deemed the most barbaric and primitive of the world's people in a God-forsaken land.

More direct attempts at familiarisation involved the planting of European trees and flower gardens on and around the Mountain. In particular, the likes of Governor van der Stel, at the end of the seventeenth century, planted extensive oak forests on the Table Mountain slopes. Similarly, settlers built houses in the style of their homeland, with formal European gardens, all in an attempt to 'soften' the landscape. This concept of 'softening' the landscape extended to its animals, as van der Stel, in an attempt to 'civilise' the region's beasts, introduced familiar species such as the

²⁶⁸ Vergunst, N., 1999: *Op cit.*



Plate 15: 'The fall of man' (Adam and Eve) by A. Durer, 1504.
(Source: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Reproduced in Vergunst, N., 1999: *South Africa National Galleries Table Mountain Project. Draft*)



Plate 16: 'Natives of Algoa' woodcut by H. Burgkmaier c1509.
(Source: Reproduced in Vergunst, N., 1999: *South Africa National Galleries Table Mountain Project. Draft*)

European Starling and Grey Squirrel, in an attempt to make the Cape colony even more of a home-from-home. It was Table Mountain, looming over Cape Town, that constantly reminded settlers how far they were from home and motivated their attempts to manipulate its foreign landscape into something mirroring that of their homeland.

Behind these attempts to familiarise the landscape is a basic fear and distrust of the unknown. Kearns²⁶⁹ wrote of European colonist's fear of 'the sense of other' that led them to portray any indigenous people they encountered as primitive savages. In portraying these people as sub-humans, the objective was to make them appear as distinct from the colonists as possible and hence allay fears of potential hybridisation. This was the overwhelming fear that underlay all Empire building exercises in distant lands, that interbreeding, between savage and civilised, would ultimately corrupt, or at worst destroy, Europe's precious, enlightened, civilisation. Hence the 'other' had no right to consideration unless he accommodated himself to European, and therefore superior, social patterns and accepted Christianity as the sole possessor of truth.²⁷⁰ Therefore it was every colonial's duty to enlighten and civilise the indigenous people of Africa.

This concept of 'the other' was present in reflections on the Table Mountain landscape. In a land darkly associated with beast-like natives, and a region where nature and climate dominated, one can imagine how the colonists feared that this alien environment, typified by Table Mountain, might reduce them to the state of the Hottentots. In 'Europeanising' both the Mountain and its environs, people could allay these fears. One such means of subjugating and controlling Table Mountain was to tame its wild beasts. To this effect the early settlement contained a Menagerie within the Company Gardens (the remnants today being the Lions Gate in the Parliament Gardens). Here curious citizens could safely marvel at the mightiest of African beasts, the Lion, and other local wild animals held captive in the Gardens alongside exotic wild flowers, without the need to venture into the wilds of the Mountain.²⁷¹ This highlights the concept of 'Africa as a garden'²⁷² linking back to how, by growing

²⁶⁹ Kearns, G., 1997: The imperial subject: geography and travel in the work of Mary Kingsley and Halford Mackinder. *T.I.B.G.* N.S. 22, 450-72.

²⁷⁰ Vergunst, N., 1999: *Op cit.*

²⁷¹ Vergunst, N., 1999: Interview.

²⁷² McEwan, C., 1996: Paradise or pandemonium? West Africa landscapes in the travel accounts of Victorian women. *Journal of Historical Geography*. 22, 1, p68-83.

European plants and trees, early capetonians tried to create a safe haven, a home from home. Subsequently they were directly challenging the wilds of Africa, instead of letting African evils corrupt them, the colonists counter-attacked, penetrating into the landscape, cultivating, fencing and road building as they went. Hence the landscape was slowly delimited and manipulated into a semblance of order and familiarity, the boundary between enlightened civilisation and African wilderness was established, the former being driven ever further into the latter. The reason why Table Mountain featured so heavily in the lives of early capetonians is because it was seemingly impossible to control or manipulate, it remained a wholly African symbol of resistance, in the heart of their fledgling civilisation.

The only solution to the Mountain's resistance was to conquer it by climbing. Conquering and claiming mountains was, according to Kearns²⁷³, a classic imperial pursuit. Mountain climbing offered the greatest challenge to the colonist and 'actively constructed an assertive masculinity to uphold their imagined sense of Imperial power'. If Table Mountain stood as an icon of African power, a landscape resistant to imperial uniformity, then climbing it provided a physical means of enforcing European authority and subduing the landscape's wilds and mysteries. The significance Empire builders attached to mountains is apparent in the naming of the Table Mountain range. While the Portuguese named places after saints and martyrs, the British out of duty, respect, and patriotic fervour, traditionally named features such as high peaks, after their sovereign. Hence Green Point Ridge was originally named James Mount and Devil's Peak was called Charles Mount or Crown Hill.²⁷⁴ One exception to this rule was James Herbert²⁷⁵ who sailed into the Cape in 1627 and immediately named Devil's Peak, which he thought the highest point, Herbert's Mount, a name that failed to catch on. Having ascended the Mountain, climbers invariably left their mark, as proof of their conquest. Governor van der Stel having reached the top of Lion Hill in 1682, had a brick pyramid set up in honour of her Excellency Mevrouw Joanna Van Omnerman and had a record of the event carved in stone.²⁷⁶ Carving names, or leaving piles of rocks or some other token atop Table Mountain was a practice employed by most who reached its summit, and the Barnard party's Table top rendition of God save the King is further proof of the patriotic and

²⁷³ Hansen, 1995 In Kearns, G., 1997: *Op cit.* p450.

²⁷⁴ Gray, S., 1979: *Op cit.* p40.

²⁷⁵ In *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ Serton, P., ed., 1971: *Op cit.* p64.

indeed, imperial zeal with which people climbed and claimed the Mountain, both for themselves as well as King and country.

The sources used in this chapter are primarily secondary, English (translated), written accounts principally in the form of travel writings. Subsequently they are highly Eurocentric and largely dominated by imperial ideology, a fact clearly tangible in their reflections on the Table Mountain landscape. The paradise-purgatory construct commonly attached to the Mountain has undeniably European origins and was a prejudice set in the minds, perhaps sub-consciously, of many people long before they reached the Cape. It is accepted and appreciated that a Eurocentric bias frames the section's source material. This was a period when European culture influenced the farthest reaches of the world and it was certainly the dominant force in the early construction of Table Mountain as a cultural landscape.

Conclusion

To the early residents and visitors to the Cape the Mountain was yet another unknown in a continent full of mystery. As such it was readily perceived by some as a long sought paradise and by others as a brooding malevolent landscape in an inhospitable continent. This polarisation was at its greatest in the early years of Cape Town when Table Mountain was little explored and the interior of Southern Africa uncharted. The Mountain neatly encapsulated all the prejudices and mixed emotions with which early settlers approached the Cape and Africa. Table Mountain's magnificence and in particular its flat plateau, which hinted at secret plains, its verdant slopes, and views over distant Africa, all encouraged those who viewed it to portray it as a treasure of Africa. Many believed it had to be the mountain top paradise Dante had predicted would be found on the southern-most corner of Africa. On the other hand, this ever present, intimidating, alien landscape that loomed over Cape Town, and created destructive storms and gales and subsequent misery for settler and sailor alike, was to be feared. The Mountain's inaccessible slopes and savage inhabitants, its mysterious sights and sounds, sudden Tablecloth and harsh southeaster terrorised the Cape populace, and were a fitting testament to what many saw as a God-forsaken, inhospitable and evil land. The magnificent spectacle merely served to remind many that they were a long way from home, in a land beset with danger and filled with heathens, far from civilisation and perhaps too far away for even God to watch and protect. The Mountain, when coupled with the savage tendencies and primitive ways of the godless Hottentots, was no paradise but a far-flung purgatory.

As Cape Town developed, as its houses and burgher farms stretched European civilisation beyond the Mountain into the Cape Flats, and as expeditions explored ever further into the interior, the hopes, fears and prejudices that governed peoples perceptions gradually dissipated. However, even when homes had spread out over the plains surrounding it, Table Mountain remained an unconquerable, civilisation-resistant force, a landscape allied to the elements, that could not be housed or gardened. It is still a refuge for fugitives, a landscape too wild and inaccessible for even twentieth century civilisation to fully conquer; climbers still perish on its slopes. It remains an enigma, even when catalogued, rationalised and explained, aspects such as the Tablecloth still torment town and shipping alike.

The paradise-purgatory metaphor persisted well beyond the seventeenth century establishment of the town and discovery of much of Africa. Long into the eighteenth, nineteenth, and even the present century Table Mountain remains a unique landscape. The Mountain's endemic floral kingdom and moist, temperate climate, made it stand out in a continent infamous in renaissance Europe for its aridity and vast deserts. The Cape of Good Hope seas have never been made safe, Table Mountain is still a welcome sight for ocean voyagers, and no amount of explanation or prediction can lessen the impact of the region's fearsome weather. In an age where urban zones have run rampant over Earth's surface, Table Mountain still looms, a dominating natural landscape, over Cape Town. The wild beasts may have gone, Hottentots disappeared, ships can now ride the storms, houses are rarely blown away and man can build reservoirs on its plateau, but the fierce Table Mountain winds, that Herschel²⁷⁷ in 1834 described as making the place 'pass at once from purgatory to paradise', still persist.

'Still when the north-westerns blow
The sea's foundations shake
And forth the surging squadrons go
Some shattered beach to take

But when the breath of quietude
Is felt against the brow
Ah then t'is fairyland again
By more than wizards vow'

(Lance Fallow 'Lands end of Africa', 1909²⁷⁸)

²⁷⁷ Evans, D. S., Deeming, T. J., Evans, B. H., Goldfarb, S., eds., 1969: *Op cit.* p35.

²⁷⁸ Van Wyk Smith, M., ed., 1988: *Op cit.* p98-99.

SECTION THREE

The cultural landscape of Table Mountain in the 1990's

Introduction

The previous section demonstrated that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the cultural landscape of Table Mountain was generally conceived as one of savagery or opportunity, paradise or purgatory. In the twentieth century there is no such polarisation, the Mountain's personality is more subdued and its cultural landscape has come to reflect the many and varied interpretations of Cape Town's cosmopolitan populace. However, in the 1990's Table Mountain's cultural landscape has increasingly become characterised by conflict as its various interest and user groups, be they conservation, community or commercial based, have sought to dominate the Mountain. Explaining the cultural landscape of Table Mountain in the 1990's provides an excellent opportunity to reintroduce some of the theoretical underpinnings of landscape theory in geography as outlined in section one. Indeed the frameworks evident in the theories of Cosgrove and Sauer amongst others, and inherent in the ideologies of modernism and post-modernism, have clear value to a cultural landscape study of Table Mountain in the 1990's.

Firstly, the section explores how Table Mountain holds a variety of values, meanings and ideals to Cape Town's culturally diverse populace. A post-modern approach to Table Mountain's 1990's cultural landscape highlights how the Mountain is a community asset; the people's Mountain, a place of leisure and relaxation, yet also a source for economic empowerment. Within the local communities different religious outlooks, be they Christian, Muslim or New Age, all have their own spiritual interpretations of the Mountain landscape. Meanwhile scientists evaluate the Mountain in ecological terms whilst economists see it as a vital asset in driving the regional and even national economy. Set against this spectrum of cultural meanings the Mountain, now under the control of South Africa National Parks (SANP) is increasingly subject to a metanarrative of control and order. This modernist discourse, which is the focus of chapter two, entails Table Mountain having a universal, grand vision and definition and has resulted in its managers mapping, delimiting and hence taming its landscape, making it accessible and financially viable.

Chapter three details how these two contrasting ideological approaches to the Mountain inevitably clash with conflict arising over land-use, financial and access issues as Capetonians criticise the SANP management and in particular, question its aims and visions for the Mountain. In chapter four the section also utilises two further frameworks, Sauerian and iconographical, to broaden its analysis of Table Mountain's cultural landscape in the 1990's. In employing Sauer's method of studying artefacts such as the Cableway and Oudekraal development, the cultural forces that framed their construction become readily apparent. The encroachment of contemporary manmade artefacts into the Mountain landscape provides the most tangible evidence of the passion with which local cultures; religion, community or conservation based, defend their Mountain against the growing pressures of commercial influences.

Finally an iconographical approach to Table Mountain, in deconstructing the imagery and mental constructions of the Mountain, reveals the immense significance it holds to the people of Cape Town and beyond. The iconography of Table Mountain is a theme that underlies all the varying perceptions of its cultural landscape, be they modern, post-modern or Sauerian. Just as in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Mountain was an icon for Africa; an alien and inhospitable landscape in the eyes of colonists, in the 1990's the same medium is a symbol of hope, opportunity and unity to all South Africans.

Chapter One: A polyglot of meanings

Table Mountain in the 1990's to all intents and purposes has no resounding cultural landscape definition or interpretation. The city of Cape Town is a cultural melting pot, its cosmopolitan community coming from a wide spectrum of ethnicities, religions, nationalities and socio-economic backgrounds. This is very much evident in the varied approach of capetonians to the Mountain. The meanings, values and emotions the Mountain evokes in those who encounter it, are too many and too diverse to comprehensively study, understand and represent. Four cultural interpretations of Table Mountain provide the foundations for understanding the passion, ambition and fierce devotion that it evokes in so many people. Hence Table Mountain, seemingly an archetypal, post-modern cultural landscape, represents a vital economic asset to some, and a community resource, the people's Mountain, to others. The bulk of this postmodernist based framework for analysis focuses on the many and varied religious interpretations centred around the Mountain as well as the ecological and scientific significance it holds throughout the world. It is these social constructs, occurring simultaneously in the 1990's, using the same medium; the Mountain, yet appealing to such vastly contrasting cultural groups with their very different perspectives on life, that best highlight the truly polyvocal nature of Table Mountain as a classic post-modern cultural landscape.

A Mountain for the people

Table Mountain, as a dominating natural space contained within an urban environment, is with perhaps the exceptions of Hong Kong and Rio de Janeiro, a globally unique landscape. As such it is very much a twentieth century landscape, reflecting the forces of urbanisation that have come to dominate the era and effectively run rampant over the planet. That the Mountain has largely resisted this urbanising force is the key to its uniqueness, instead of a cultural landscape of urban uniformity with suburbs blanketing all but the steepest slopes and plateaux, it remains a largely uncorrupted medium that capetonians can envisage on their own terms.

Arguably one of the greatest challenges facing Table Mountain, and especially those seeking to manage it, is that it is very much the people's mountain and must remain so. With the 1994 democratic transformation in South Africa, the country embarked

on a process of reconciliation, barriers were removed and common ground sought. In such a climate Table Mountain cannot be developed as part of the metropolis whereby only the wealthy can afford its properties, equally it cannot be fenced off and exclusively preserved for natural conservation. Table Mountain is a community resource, and perhaps more than that, it presents a medium through which those who were previously divided can be united, be it through shared knowledge or usage of the Mountain and its environs. Institutions such as SANP, National Botanical Institute at Kirstenbosch and numerous non-government organisations (NGO's) are using the Mountain as their flagship in environmental outreach programmes to all communities. For example the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa: Western Cape (WESA: WC) launched the 'Table Mountain Environmental Project' in 1995 to enable local schools to realise the potential of the Mountain as an environmental education resource.²⁷⁹ The second phase of this project, initiated in 1997, has set about resource building by generating booklets and pamphlets on the Mountain for education purposes in local schools.²⁸⁰ The emphasis of this project and other initiatives, such as the Kirstenbosch Outreach programme,²⁸¹ is very much on building an environmental awareness, particularly as regards Table Mountain, in the young people who represent the nation's future. Such initiatives specifically target previously disadvantaged peoples in an attempt to further environmental understanding and unite all capetonians behind the conservation cause.

Indeed, there can be little doubt that integrating society and the environment is the future of conservation.²⁸² In South Africa this takes on a whole new perspective as for many this link between the people and their environment was forcibly broken under the old regime. In Cape Town thousands were removed from their homes on the mountain slopes under the apartheid system.²⁸³ Hence the aim of both regional authorities and government institutions, to take Table Mountain back to the communities that once shared and cherished it and, in reverse, bring these people back to the Mountain. This is very much a healing process, symptomatic of the

²⁷⁹ WESA, 1998: *Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa- 50th anniversary Western Cape Region*. Cape Town.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ See, for example, the Kirstenbosch Outreach programme that started in 1996 and brings busloads of local school children for environmental education courses. This programme reaches c20000 children each year.

²⁸² Cape Peninsula National Park information paper, 1998: *A partnership approach*. 5/6/98.

²⁸³ Western, J., 1996: *Outcast Cape Town*. University of California Press, Berkeley;
Jeppie, S., Soudien, C., 1990: *The struggle for District Six: past and present*. Buchu Books, Cape Town.

transformation processes countrywide. SANP are acutely aware that managing Table Mountain must be a partnership, any developments in the park must also benefit the local communities. The social ecology objectives of SANP and their new park are therefore very much geared to making the Mountain more accessible to all capetonians, increasing environmental education in the community and using the Mountain to provide opportunities for those who need them most.²⁸⁴ The rationale holds that people living in the borders of the park must have a broad sense of ownership and there must be an effective partnership and unity of purpose between conservation authorities on the one hand, and communities and organisations representing ordinary people on the other. The future of conservation, and therefore the future of an SANP controlled Table Mountain, is very much as a community resource.

The most obvious manifestation of Table Mountain as a community resource is in the sheer number and range of activities that people pursue within its confines. Of these community activities climbing is one the most prominent. The Mountain Club of South Africa (MCSA), established in 1891 and based in Cape Town, has around 4000 members over half of whom are capetonian.²⁸⁵ The club holds at least one organised climb up the Mountain every week as well as monthly rock climbs. The Mountain Club is also an umbrella for numerous, more informal, local climbing groups, such as the 'Monday Boys' and 'Thursday Girls', who are dedicated to climbing Table Mountain and its immediate environs such as Silvermine and Simonstown.²⁸⁶ Another, this time very much conservation based, activity upon the Mountain, is alien vegetation clearing. Highlighting the passion within the Cape for alien vegetation clearing one local group, the 'Bettys Bay Wildflower Society', founded in 1973, celebrated its 400th organised alien hack in 1996.²⁸⁷ Numerous other mountainside communities, such as Red Hill and Hout Bay, also have dedicated alien hack groups.²⁸⁸ Such communal activities, and the passion and dedication with which they are pursued, highlight the very important role Table Mountain plays in the lives of many city residents.

²⁸⁴ SANP, 1998: *SANP Corporate Plan: A framework for action and transformation*. Pretoria.

²⁸⁵ Barange, R., 1999: Interview.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ Atwell, J., 1996: Battle of Bettys Bay. *Veld and Flora*. 12/96. p4.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

The park's new managers are also keen to point out that conserving Table Mountain can serve local communities in economic terms. The Government's 'Working for Water' programme has poured millions of Rands into training and employing dedicated alien vegetation clearers, from less privileged communities, to clear Table Mountain and the rest of the Cape Peninsula.²⁸⁹ Since 1978 SANP has supported a similar community based, alien clearing scheme. This economic empowerment project involves 20 local community contractors each with 13 workers who are trained and given Park-based clearing contracts.²⁹⁰ In supporting and training hack groups, training new wardens, local field guides and site maintenance groups, the Park's managers aim to highlight to local communities, especially the less privileged, that conservation, and economic empowerment and advancement, can be harmoniously achieved in the Mountain landscape.

The concept of the Table Mountain landscape as a community resource can be stretched further, for lying as it does in the centre of the Cape Town metropolis, it is a much needed, and appreciated, natural escape for many citizens. It is an open park, a traditional site for recreation and relaxation. Branding it Cape Town's playground is too contemptuous; it is more a natural sanctuary, a source of joy and escapism. Table Mountain is a resource that belongs to capetonians; it is their Mountain that one can get to know only through interaction and involvement. This idea is crucial to the psyche of the city's inhabitants as regards the Mountain's cultural landscape. Many of the fiercely contentious issues and debates concerning the Mountain have seen local conservation groups and communities in general seek to defend the Mountain not for exclusively environmental reasons. They have not necessarily been 'greens' fighting developers, but rather devoted capetonians, who see the Mountain in its entirety, not just its biological contents, as sacred.²⁹¹

Hence, this view of the Mountain as a community landscape is two pronged. Firstly it is an asset that's utilisation must seek to right some of the wrongs of the past; it must again become a resource to those who were evicted from its slopes, a symbol of equality. Equally, for many citizens Table Mountain belongs to Cape Town, it is a resource and an asset that makes them and the city feel special. There are a variety of discourses concerning the views of specific communities on Table Mountain as a

²⁸⁹ Details in CPNP, 1999: Park Funding. <http://www.cnp.co.za>.

²⁹⁰ Details in CPNP, 1999: Community. <http://www.cnp.co.za>.

²⁹¹ Vongai, C., 1996: Ball, Oliver to fight Oudekraal plan. *Cape Times* 21/10/96.

cultural landscape. Perhaps the most obvious point for study would be political, and more specifically would focus on how apartheid, with its policies of zoning, forced removals and restricted access, brought about divisions between race groups in their perceptions of Table Mountain.²⁹² One of the most tangible manifestations of this division is still evident when viewing the hut of the Cape Province Mountain Club (also known as the 'Black Mountain Club') which sits below and away from the larger, better equipped MCSA hut on Devils Peak.²⁹³ However an equally powerful, yet less well documented approach, is to analyse how Cape Town's different religious communities view and translate the same Mountain landscape.

The religion of the Mountain

To fully comprehend the nature of Table Mountain as a post-modern cultural landscape it is worth uncovering two approaches to the Mountain in particular. The fact that it is important to a starkly contrasting variety of religions is intriguing especially in view of the fact that it is also a landscape of fascination for scientists around the world. This is the essence of a polyvocal, post-modern cultural landscape. The same medium, the Mountain, can be utilised simultaneously and largely without conflict, to represent utterly contrasting cultural landscapes.

The clearest and most intense spiritual meanings derived from the Mountain landscape come from the 'New Age' movement. Here Table Mountain is seen as a vitally important cog in the spiritual wheel of the planet. Sometimes referred to as the 'new conscious' or 'new thought' movement, what will be branded here the New Age belief, provides a useful umbrella term for a range of philosophies that essentially entail a universal approach to life and spirituality. This Universalist approach to life seeks to distil essences of a vast range of philosophies, religions, lifestyles and spiritual experiences into a life experience.²⁹⁴ Cape Town is now fast taking over from California as the world centre for new age pilgrimage, second only to sacred places like India and Tibet. The reason for this new-found New Age Mecca status is that Table Mountain is regarded as one of the world's most sacred sites by some strands of

²⁹² Linda Fortune of District Six Museum is conducting a survey on how the community's forced removal affected their perception of Table Mountain.

²⁹³ Fortune, L., 1999: Interview.

²⁹⁴ Weaver, T., 1999: Mystic crystal revelations and the mind's true liberation. *Cape Times* 1999.

the belief. The theory states that just as our bodies have energy centres called chakras, so does the planet and hence 'we can relate to her in precisely the same way we do to the subtle energies and qualities in our own systems' (Fuller, 1994²⁹⁵). Table Mountain, as the mother energy centre of Africa, is a crucial chakra. A Chakra is best described as a spinning wheel of energy. In this theory there are eight 'driver wheels' moving the worlds energies along the Dragon line of Infinity (the main Ley line artery of the planet) and four powerful spinner wheels (see plate 17 for a graphical illustration). These spinner wheels represent the four elements, two within each loop of the infinity symbol. Table Mountain is one such spinner wheel and corresponds to the earth element. The planet's chakra points have an energy radius of 500 miles, when activated; spinner wheels have a 1750-mile radius.²⁹⁶ From the 1960's, in an era this theory brands the dawning of the New Age of Aquarius, through to the 1990's, 13 major energy sites on earth were activated. The opening of the Table Mountain chakra was timed to occur at the moment of the third and most potent Saturn/Neptune conjunction of 1989 on November 13th at 2pm. Fuller²⁹⁷ believed that this conjunction of planets 'encouraged humanity to initiate new dreams and ideals, while dissolving outworn structures and thought patterns'. With Table Mountain being one of the planets four key chakras it was hoped its activation would initiate an ultimately humanity wide transformation process. This idea of activating the Mountain has a very definite link to the myth of Credo Mutwa (detailed in the introduction), whereby the African goddess hid herself in Table Mountain awaiting a messenger to arrive whereupon she would release her awesome energy into the world.

The process of unlocking the Table Mountain spinning wheel was centred upon three sites, Rhodes Memorial at dawn, higher up the mountain in Van Riebeck Park at 2pm and upon Signal Hill at dusk. A group of devotees initiated the process of liberating the Mountain at Rhodes Memorial using gongs, Tibetan temple bells, drums and chanting. It was proclaimed an international event with people the world over linking their minds, including Mahatma Ghandi who, according to Fuller²⁹⁸, was present at the ceremony through the trance medium. The activation was deemed a success and

²⁹⁵ Fuller, S. P., 1994: *Rising out of chaos: The New Heaven and the New Earth*. Kima Global, South Africa. p30.

²⁹⁶ Fuller cited in Weaver, T., 1999: *Op cit*.

²⁹⁷ Fuller, S. P., 1994: *Op cit*. p52.

²⁹⁸ In Weaver, T., 1999: *Op cit*.

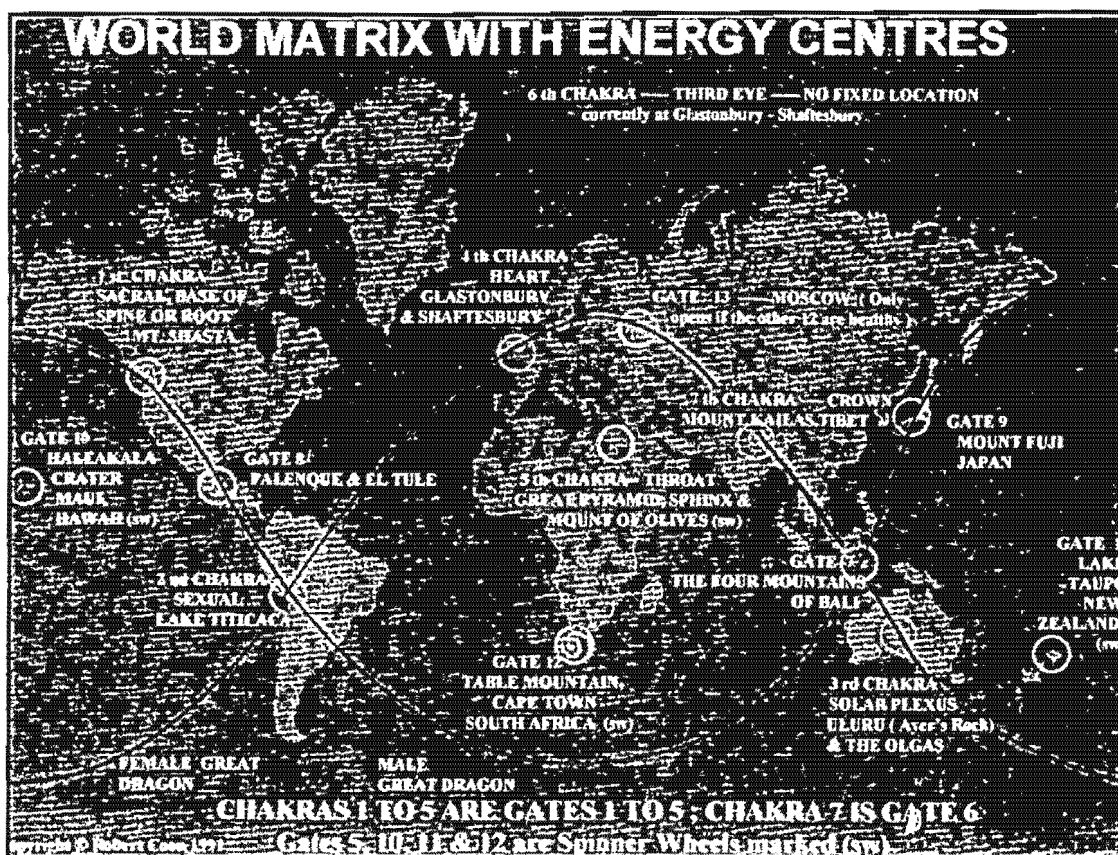


Plate 17: Map of the world's chakra system.
 (Source: Wallchart by Coon, R., 1991, reproduced courtesy of Buirski, D.)

those involved believed that the new energies released in a short time, triggered a sufficient shift in consciousness that was felt first in South Africa, then the rest of Africa and ultimately throughout the world. The results saw P.W. Botha toppled from power, tens of thousands of capetonians take to the streets in peace marches, the ANC start negotiations with Government, Mandela and other political prisoners released and Madiba ultimately become president of a nation that has now embarked on a new and bright future. Elsewhere the Berlin Wall fell and Soviet Union finally disintegrated.²⁹⁹ Fuller claims that through working with the natural rhythms and cycles of Earth and cosmic energies, rigid human thought patterns can be dissolved and change can take place. The belief is that once South Africa has sorted itself out and achieved a greater sense of harmony the energy system, directed by Table Mountain, will start to lift the rest of the world into a greater, more peaceful, level of consciousness. To this New Age belief Table Mountain is far more than a mountain, it is a planetary energy source, a vital medium for a global transformation.

²⁹⁹ In Weaver, T., 1999: *Op cit.*

The Christian approach to Table Mountain is far less direct than that of the New Age movement. That said on the day of the chakra opening ceremony, a large crowd of Christians gathered at the various sites to sing hymns and generally heckle and disrupt the spiritualists. Although there was no direct violence on the part of the Christians (the spiritualists responded with passive resistance) the occasion, if not a direct confrontation, was still heated and intense.³⁰⁰ Direct links between Christians and Table Mountain include the fact that Rhodes Memorial tea-room was for a long time a traditional meeting point for Christians and the focal point for a deep spiritual group (Winter, 1999³⁰¹). Similarly the Salvation Army has for decades held a service at Rhodes Memorial on Easter Sunday where, from the Mountains slopes the congregation could watch the sun rise over the lands beyond symbolising the rising of Christ from his resurrection.³⁰² Table Mountain does hold a spiritual significance for Christians be it as a wonder of God's creation or as a place where oneself can be at peace with himself, nature and God. For Christians, Table Mountain is more of a medium through which one can contemplate and perhaps draw closer to God, rather than a source of latent power. Whether the Christians were defending the Mountain, or rather their own consciousness and that of their Cape Town flock, when they challenged the chakra ceremony, is debatable. More likely these Christian fundamentalists objected to the fact that Table Mountain was apparently being idolised as a spiritual entity.³⁰³ What is apparent is that the presence of the New Agers on Table Mountain produced an impassioned response from the city's Christians.

Although Table Mountain has no direct religious significance to Christians, its role in providing a place of solitude for contemplation means it is used and valued by a variety of Christian groups. The Zionist Christian Church, South Africa's largest religious group, has weekly walks upon the Mountain. The Zionists put a strong emphasis on healing and groups of around twenty regularly use the Mountain as a place of solitude where they can spiritually heal themselves and others. The group also regularly takes water from Kirstenbosch Ravine and blesses it for religious usage.³⁰⁴ Groups of Cape Town Methodists also utilise the Mountain environment to enhance their worship. In 1997 a group of Methodists held an organised

³⁰⁰ Fuller, S. P., 1994: *Op cit.*

³⁰¹ Winter, K., 1999: Interview.

³⁰² Oliver, G., 1999: Interview.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ Newby, D., 1999: Interview.

contemplative walk, carried out in silence, on Table Mountain. Whilst walking in the Mountain's confines the group contemplated biblical passages. The walk was designed to use the beauty of nature and natural grandeur of the Mountain as a stimulus to worship Gods works.³⁰⁵ Other Christian users of Table Mountain include the Scripture Union who hold Christian activity camps on the slopes above Simonstown and numerous, more informal, groups of Christians who use the Mountain as a retreat for more personal worship. For example a group of retired Anglican clergymen regularly undertake Mountain walks to find peace and tranquillity away from the city.³⁰⁶ However, the fact is, that Christians, in Cape Town at least, do not have a strong sense of place other than with their church. Hence, although they may feel attached to the Mountain on a personal level and appreciate it as a feat of God's creation, it holds no great spiritual ties. Unlike Temple Mountain in Jerusalem, with its ties to Jesus, Table Mountain is not generally a site of religious significance to the city or world's Christians.

If one is prepared to range more widely into the subject there are more direct links between Christian beliefs and Table Mountain. Adler (1987³⁰⁷) wrote of Africa being at the heart of the Christian world. He describes there being a valley cross inscribed into Africa as well as a greater valley cross apparent in the face of the whole Earth. This world etheric cross has its vertical beam in the Great Rift Valley (the north-south trench scoring the planet's surface) with its foot stopping at Table Mountain. In the north this cross tapers out in the Dneiper valley, its lowest point in the Dead Sea. This is crossed by the greatest east-west trench, the Mediterranean and its outrunners to the American Great Lakes in the west and the Aral Sea and lake Baikal in the east. At the intersection of the cross lies the Holy Land where Christ walked on earth. Crucial in Adler's theory is the presence of Table Mountain, likened to a 'mighty altar' at the foot of the cross, its clouds an 'altar cloth'.³⁰⁸ Adler suggests that Lions Head and Devil's Peak conjure up the names Lucifer and Ahriman, and that the 'Cape Diablo' (the Devil's Cape), sees these forces raging against the Lord. Meanwhile the Twelve Apostles approach the Table and watch the sacrifices that the Cape brings to the cross of the world. Admittedly this is a rather obscure text and can by no means be taken as

³⁰⁵ Newby, D., 1999: Interview.

³⁰⁶ Pedersen, L., 1999: Interview.

³⁰⁷ In Shepherd, R., Lee, N., Fife, I., eds. 1987: *Invisible Africa: A search for the Grail in Africa*. Proof Copy.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p151.

a wide-ranging Christian interpretation of the Mountain. Nevertheless it amply demonstrates that Table Mountain produces a variety of responses, perceptions and cultural landscape interpretations between and even within religious outlooks.

The Cape Muslim community also consider Table Mountain important, not so much as a spiritual power or symbol, but more for its human artefacts. According to Muslim beliefs, 250 years ago a prophecy was made that there would be a 'Circle of Islam' around the Cape. Local Muslims believe that this circle is complete, comprising of the tombs of Saints and 'Auliyah' (friends of Allah) who were brought as slaves to the Cape.³⁰⁹ The Table Mountain chain, and Devils Peak and Signal Hill in particular, are vital components in this circle, holding a series of important kramats. Muslims believe that those who live within the Circle are will be protected from natural disasters such as fire, famine, plague, earthquakes and tidal waves.³¹⁰ Over the centuries Cape Town's Muslim community, originally transplanted from Asia as colonial slaves, has traditionally buried its leaders, their followers and hundreds of other Muslims on the mountain slopes of the Cape Peninsula. Each buried Saint's history, often linked to Table Mountain, has been orally preserved by generations of Cape Muslims, and proves an important part of their beliefs and subsequently their culture.

At Oudekraal (for details see plates 18 and 19) stands one of the region's most important kramats, the burying place of Sayed Noorul Mubeen. It is situated alongside a stream in a wooded site on the mountain slopes where the sheikh frequently prayed. Legend has it that he escaped imprisonment on Robben Island (by either swimming or walking on water) to this mountainside refuge where he taught local slaves and fishermen the ways of Islam. A modern legend tells of a spirit who comes on horseback to the kramat to take his lessons. For pilgrims to this holy site there is a 'quiet serenity, an ideal spot for meditation away from the rigours of urban life'.³¹¹ Hence, for the Muslim community, much of the mountain's spiritual significance comes from the human history associated with it, rather than from Table Mountain itself.

³⁰⁹ Cape Mazaar Society, 1996: *Guide to the kramats of the Western Cape*. Cape Town.

³¹⁰ CPNP, 1999: Park profile: Myths and Legends. www.cpnnp.co.za.

³¹¹ Cape Mazaar Society, 1996: *Op. cit.* p2.

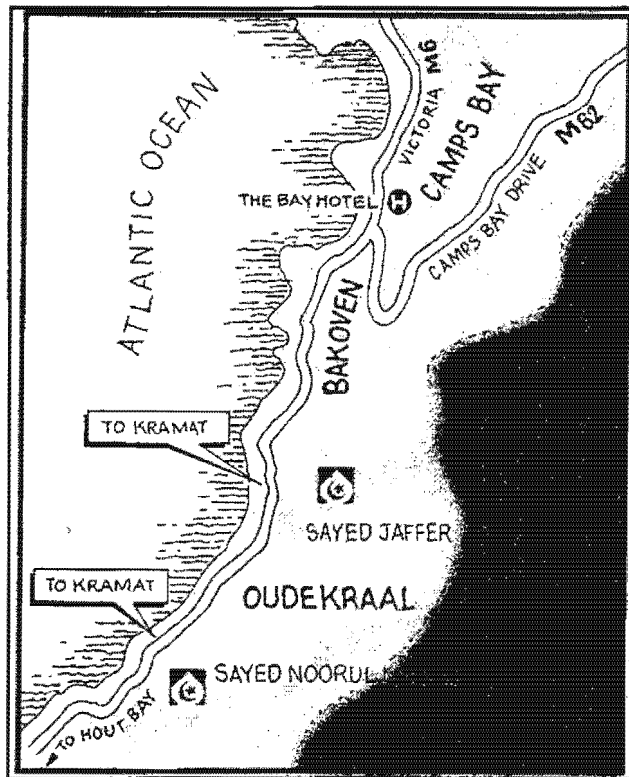


Plate 18: Map of the Oudekraal kramats.

(Source: Cape Mazaar Society, 1996: *Guide to the kramats of the Western Cape*. Cape Town.p8)



Plate 19: The kramat of Sayed Noorul Mubeen, Oudekraal.

(Source: Cape Mazaar Society, 1996: *Guide to the kramats of the Western Cape*. Cape Town. p30)

The legend of Sheikh Ali (Sayed Bassier) whose grave is a recent discovery along the Signal Hill ridge, tells of a stonemason finding a rock in the form of a man which came alive to warn the mason to stop, with the support of his fellow Muslims, the construction of a school on the site.³¹² The history of the Cape Muslims is inextricably linked to Table Mountain. Subsequently its spiritual significance to the Islamic faith has made it a national and increasingly an international site for pilgrimage. As such the Cape Town Muslims, dating back to the plea of Sheikh Ali, have a vested and passionate in the mountains integrity being preserved.

These three very contrasting beliefs have a common ground in perceiving the Mountain as a very spiritual site. Where they generally agree to disagree is in the nature and manifestation of this spirituality. To those belonging to the New Age movement, the Mountain's cultural landscape is seen as a medium for a planet wide power as well as a source of global energy in its own right. For Christians it represents a medium for drawing closer to God and as a marvel of his creation. Finally the Muslims see the Table Mountain landscape very much as a palimpsest, a text which contains the history of their saints and people at the Cape. All these interpretations are different, they all utilise the same landscape but fix upon it a different cultural interpretation, and, as will be seen shortly, they all essentially unite in the common cause of preserving the mountain.

Scientific and ecological evaluations of the Mountain

Just as religion offers a philosophical framework for translating and appreciating the Table Mountain landscape, science in turn, offers its own philosophy for interpreting and evaluating the Mountain. An increasingly prevalent discourse in the study of contemporary Table Mountain focuses on the landscape's ecological prowess. The Cape Floral Kingdom is globally recognised as unique in being one of the world's six floral kingdoms. The region's intense floral biodiversity, when coupled with the scientific and economic potential it offers, provides one of the most compelling cases for preserving the Table Mountain chain. For scientists, ecologists, botanists and nature lovers in general, around the world, the Table Mountain landscape is an icon

³¹²Cape Mazaar Society, 1996: *Op cit.*

for a natural paradise that is increasingly under threat from the city and its economic and even community based agendas.

The Cape Floral Kingdom is the worlds smallest and, for its size, richest plant kingdom. With some 8500 plant species crammed into a mere 90000 square kilometres including 5800 species, 193 genera and 6 families that grow nowhere else, it is the world's hottest hot-spot of plant biodiversity.³¹³ The Cape peninsula, of which the Table Mountain chain is an integral part, has more than 2285 species of plant, more than the entire British Isles (1492), of which 90 are endemic (see plate 20 for a distribution map). This biodiversity is severely threatened. Already 5 plant species restricted to the peninsula are known to have become extinct, 25 are endangered, 28 vulnerable and 50 critically rare. A further 66 species potentially qualify for inclusion in the Red Data Book of globally endangered flora.³¹⁴ Cowling³¹⁵ gloomily predicts that were urbanisation in the peninsula to be allowed to continue unchecked then the area would lose the vast majority of it's biodiversity within the next 50-100 years, rapidly on the lowlands and eventually on the mountain slopes and plateaux.

What ecologists and scientists are at pains to point out is that destruction of the Cape peninsula's fynbos would not just be a catastrophe for nature lovers but could have global ramifications. Many researchers believe that the vegetation on the mountain slopes of the region is a vast untapped resource most specifically in terms of medicinal potential and as a vital gene-bank. Such an argument urges people not to see the Mountain's biodiversity in purely natural terms (i.e. preserving it for the sake of nature) but as a resource important to all humanity. Fynbos has, for a long time, been an under-researched and ill-understood biome. When one appreciates the fact that the world's present stock of plant-based drugs has been derived from only 90 species, while half a million species, including almost all the Fynbos species remain untested, the importance of the regions biodiversity is more apparent.³¹⁶ Hence to destroy this floral abundance is to perhaps lose the keys it holds for present and even future diseases, for all time. Equally, it doesn't necessarily have to be untapped

³¹³ Cowling, R. M., 1995: *Table Mountain: A World Heritage Site*. Inaugural Lecture New Series 191. UCT.

³¹⁴ WWF, 1995: *Op cit.*

³¹⁵ Cowling, R. M., 1995: *Op cit.*

³¹⁶ Cowling, R. M., Richardson, D., 1995: *Fynbos: South Africa's unique floral kingdom*. Fernwood Press, Vlaeberg.

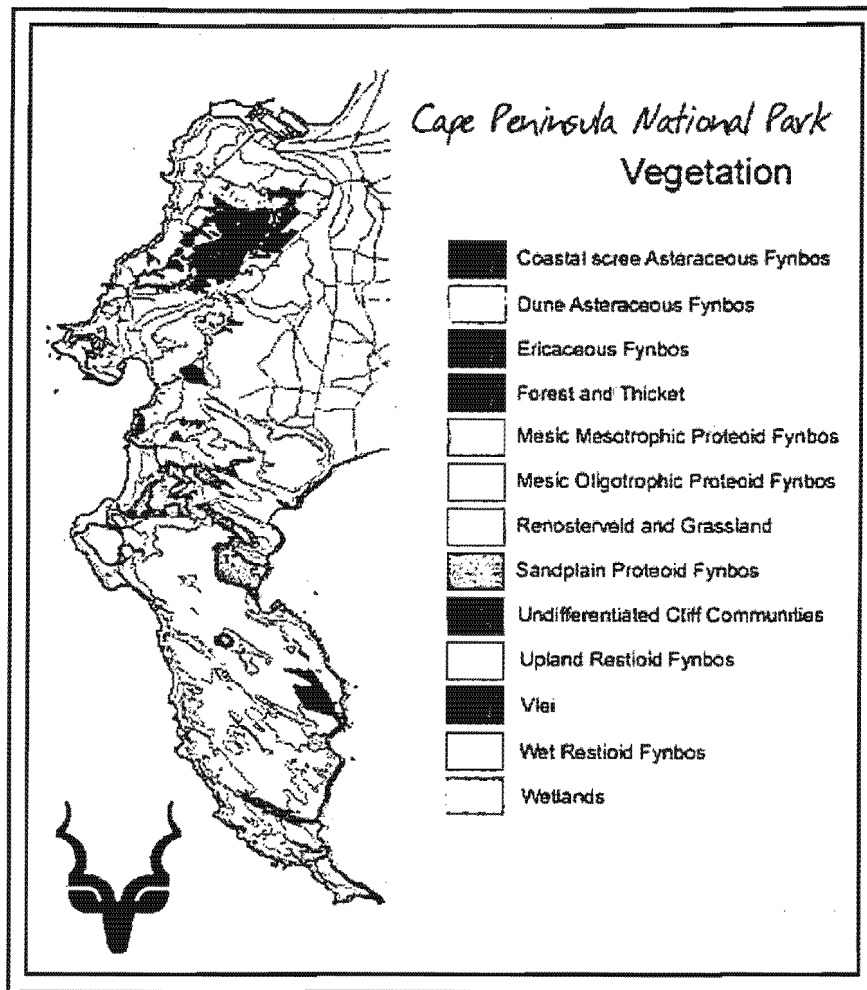


Plate 20: A vegetation distribution map for the CPNP.
 (Source: <http://www.cnpn.co.za>)

medicinal resources that are wasted; it could also be economic opportunities. For example only recently have farmers been alerted to the lucrative possibilities of growing aloe plants (gel for beauty and pharmaceutical trade amongst other uses) and Canola (lowest fatty acid content of all plant oils).³¹⁷ Such crops are in all probability two of a vast number of fynbos plants, as yet not researched or utilised, that have a lot to offer society.

Perhaps the greatest biological importance of the fynbos that coats the Table Mountain chain and the region more widely, is as a gene-bank, not just for South Africa, but the world. The need to conserve genetic diversity is often overlooked particularly in the developing world where it is ironically at its peak. Genetic diversity refers to the variation in genes and genotypes between and within species. Without genetic diversity it is impossible to improve cultivated plants. If natural biodiversity is wiped out, then with it the world will lose its natural stock of genes and mankind will run the risk of being left with nothing but genetically modified, and often ultimately

³¹⁷ Brase, W., 1995: Drop wheat – think of rooibos, fynbos, flowers. *Farmers Weekly*. 19/5/95. p5-7.

flawed, plants and crops. A natural gene-bank provides the baseline for commercially grown plants and crops around the world. Commerce sees many of these species genetically modified, be it through pest or virus immunity, or manipulating water or temperature tolerances, to make them more suitable for profitable farming. Often these enhanced products have a short lifetime as pests and viruses become immune and tolerances deteriorate, in which case it is vital to have the original stock that has evolved over thousands of years, to fall back on. South Africa owns its fynbos biodiversity and it is a key asset, if left unresearched or potentially worse, if researched by foreign institutions, the nation could find itself in the unenviable position of paying for the use of plants and crops developed from its own gene-bank.³¹⁸

Ecologists, scientists and conservationists argue that South Africa has a duty both to itself, and the rest of the world, to preserve its biodiversity. Table Mountain as the Cape Floral Kingdom's most recognisable feature is a vital starting point for this conservation. The Mountain itself, not to mention its adjacent chain, holds a significant number of critically endangered flora and fauna and hence is an icon for the conservation movement. From the perspective of biodiversity, the Table Mountain landscape is unique; it is one of opportunity, a vital natural asset symptomatic of the pressures, mysteries and untapped potential that characterise the whole floral kingdom. Hence conservationists argue that it must be preserved, if not for its biological splendour, then as an investment for future generations.

Table Mountain: an economic goldmine

In a country struggling after the decline of its dominant gold industry to kick-start and redefine its economy, tourism is being widely hailed as South Africa's great hope. Table Mountain is one of the great tourist 'honeypots' in Africa and only the vast expanse of the Kruger National Park attracts more visitors in South Africa.³¹⁹ Cape Town is undoubtedly South Africa's, if not one of Africa's, greatest tourist draws, and the Mountain is its 'crowning glory', as a universal icon it is a 'must' on the wider travel agenda which compels tourists to visit it as South Africa's foremost national

³¹⁸ Littlejohn, Dr, G., 1994: Boost for wildflower industry. *Farmers weekly*. 9/9/94. p5-7.

³¹⁹ Daitz, D., 1999: Interview.

asset.³²⁰ In a final attempt to overcome international prejudices that seemingly perpetuate the 'dark continent' of Africa myths highlighted previously, South Africa, and Cape Town in particular, is trying to reinvent itself in the eyes of the average international tourist to whom the mother city is still a relatively unknown dot on the map of a foreboding continent.³²¹ Table Mountain is the key to this reinvention, a proposed World Heritage Site and a National park, it is the prime marketing tool of the regional and indeed, national, tourist drive.

The tourist industry represents 9% of the Gross Regional Product of the Western Cape (see plate 21).³²² It is widely recognised that the tourist industry has the greatest potential for growth in the region. If the province's and indeed nation's hopes of economic upliftment are to be fulfilled then tourism must be the catalyst and its growth must be sustained. The country remains a relatively small player in the world tourism market, handling less than 1% of foreign arrivals in the world.³²³ Studies confidently predict that tourism will become the nation's growth industry bar none. Furthermore the W. Cape will lead this tourist boom with near exponential growth predicted (see plates 22). Estimates indicate that if current tourist growth rates continue, then the Cape will need to accommodate 3.4 million visitors by 2000 and 9.3 million by 2010 (The compelling Cape, 1997³²⁴). Table Mountain will be a key driving force behind this growth as increasing numbers of ecotourists seek 'holidays in nature'. Local authorities hope that the knock-on effects of this tourist influx will see vitally needed job creation and an influx of foreign money and capital investment. There can be little doubt that the economic potential offered by Table Mountain and its environs to the tourist industry is unparalleled.

The economic potential of the mountain is reflected by the fact that its slopes contain some of the continent's most expensive real estate. Luxury property prices in Cape Town are generally higher than those found anywhere else in South Africa and the 'scenic beauty, solace, spiritual upliftment and sheer joy of living in the proximity

³²⁰ Concor Holdings, Unknown Date: *Visitor developments on Table Mountain: Technical Report*. Fuggle File.

³²¹ Sunday Times Business Times, 27/9/98: Bold plan to put Cape Town on the map.
<http://www.btimes.co.za>.

³²² CPNP, 1998: *CPNP Draft Development Framework: Channelling visitors in the CPNP*. Cape Town.

³²³ *Ibid.*

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

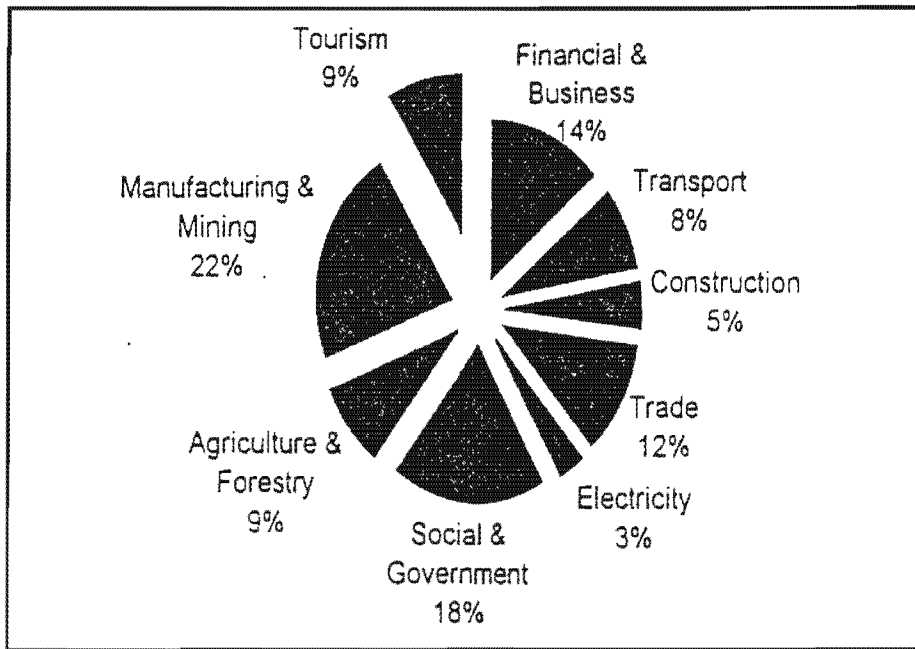


Plate 21: Western Cape Contributions to Gross Regional Product.
 (Source: WESGRO, Western Cape Development Data, 1997 in: CPNP, 1998: *CPNP Draft Development Framework: Channelling visitors in the CPNP*. Cape Town. p10)

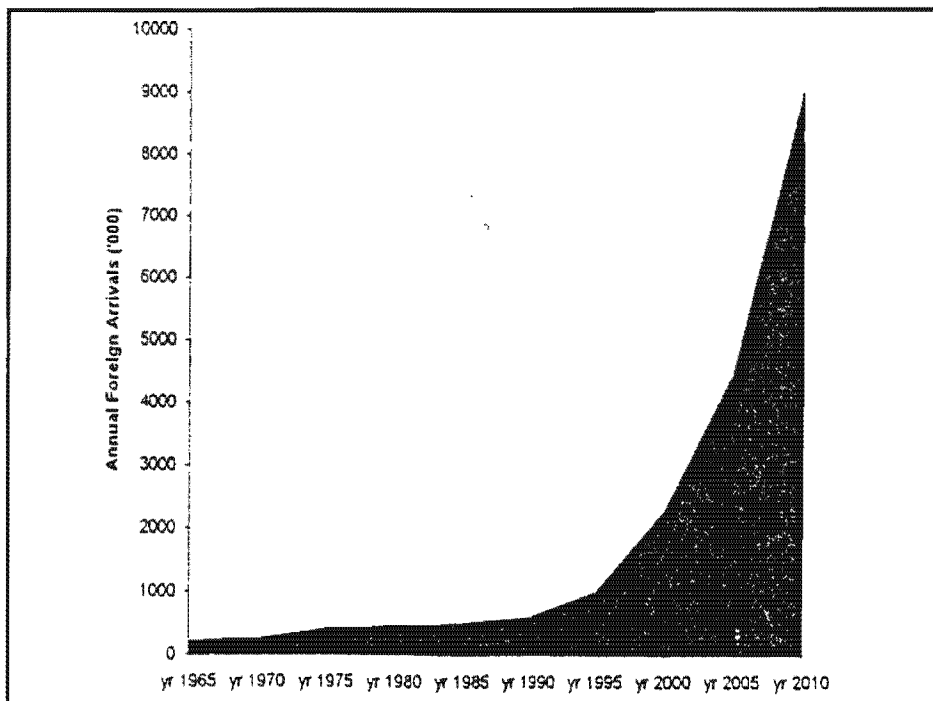


Plate 22: Annual foreign arrivals (Western Cape).
 (Source: Compelling Cape 1997 in: CPNP, 1998: *CPNP Draft Development Framework: Channelling visitors in the CPNP*. Cape Town. p10)

of Table Mountain' is the principal cause of these inflated values.³²⁵ Developable land on the mountain slopes is highly sought after with private investors endlessly seeking to construct luxury homes, hotels or restaurants on the ever fashionable and desirable mountain. Hence, Table Mountain, be it in terms of a tourist attraction or in offering lucrative development opportunities, is a vital economic asset to city, province and nation. To the economically minded, the Mountain represents the region's 'golden goose' with tourism its golden gift to the Cape economy. However, this mindset in implying a real material usage of the Mountain as an economic asset, frequently clashes with those who view the values of Table Mountain as lying elsewhere. Indeed, it was the increasing influence of economic forces upon Table Mountain that prompted local communities, scientists and religious groups to unite in their drive for a single management body to preserve the Mountain, a goal that was ultimately achieved in 1998 with the appointment of SANP as caretakers of Table Mountain and the new Cape Peninsula National Park.

³²⁵ WWF, 1995: *The Table Mountain Fund*.

Chapter Two: Modernism and the Mountain

On May 1st 1998, SANP signed an agreement with three local authorities, namely the South Peninsula, City of Cape Town and Cape Metropolitan Councils, that paved the way for the formal proclamation of the new park which saw Table Mountain and more than 14000ha of the CPPNE placed under SANP care (for details see plate 24). Ultimately the park is expected to total more than 30000ha when other state land and privately owned property is incorporated. On May 29th 1998, the Cape Peninsula National Park (CPNP) was proclaimed by notice in the Government Gazette. The establishment of the SANP as sole controllers of the new park, and hence Table Mountain, marked the end of a long campaign by local communities, scientists, conservationists and NGO's alike, to unite and conserve the area under one management body. The drive to conserve, consolidate and manage natural assets in South Africa has clear parallels with the emergence of modernist doctrines in post war Europe that saw restructuring, uniformity and order become guiding principles. In 1926 South Africa promulgated the National Parks Act, which immediately saw the county's premier natural asset, Kruger Park, along with Sabie Game Reserve, offered renewed and enhanced environmental protection.³²⁶ A few years later in 1928, the World Wildlife Fund: South Africa (WWF: SA) first proposed Table Mountain be consolidated and managed as a National Park. The subsequent campaign to achieve this vision saw a series of Nature Reserves; Cape of Good Hope in 1938, Table Mountain in 1964 and Silvermine in 1974, proclaimed and consolidated within the Cape Peninsula. However, numerous reports and commissions throughout the past few decades have all highlighted the inadequacies, in terms of funding, legal protection and operation, of these reserves and pressed for a more conclusive and legally, financially and organisationally empowered, Park system and management. Quite why it took 66 years for the foundation of the park to become a reality is a mystery, though the answer probably lies in the petty rivalries between any number of parties each with its own vested and selfish interests, the insatiable egos of some individuals and inadequate funding.³²⁷ Plate 23 is a timeline for the establishment of the CPNP. In the year or so since its formation some 700ha of private land has been

³²⁶ Fuggle, R. F., Rabie, M. A., eds., 1998: *Environmental management in South Africa*. Third edition. Juta, Cape Town.

³²⁷ Borchert, P., 1996: Table Mountain a National Park at last. *Africa Environment and Wildlife*. May/June vol 4, no.3. p70-76.

Timeline for the declaration of Table Mountain as a National Park.

1929

The Wildlife Society of South Africa proposes the idea of Table Mountain being a National Park.

1938

Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve at Cape Point proclaimed.

1953

The National Monuments Commission declares Table Mountain a natural and historical monument.

1964

The Table Mountain Nature Reserve is proclaimed.

1965

Further consolidation of the Cape of Good Hope reserve.

1974

The Silvermine Nature Reserve is proclaimed.

1976

Moll and Campbell write a report on the 'Ecological status of Table Mountain'- states national urgency to implement a scientifically based management plan for the whole mountain and that a single authority should own and control the natural areas of the mountain chain.

1978

Hey Commission recommends protected area be extended throughout the peninsula and be united under a uniform management policy.

1983

Hey Commission recommendations give rise to the proclamation of the Cape Peninsula Natural Area (later the CPPNE) and establishment of the CPPNE advisory committee.

1995 (June)

Huntley Committee appointed by the Environmental Affairs Minister to make recommendations 'on the appropriate legal framework to create a single statutory Cape Peninsula authority for the future management of the CPPNE.

1995 (October)

Huntley Committee recommends the National Parks Board of South Africa (later the SANP) be entrusted as the single authority to conserve the CPPNE.

1996 (January)

National Parks Board found a Table Mountain project team to establish a new National Park based on the CPPNE

1996 (April)

National Cabinet approves National Parks Board appointment to manage Cape Peninsula natural areas and urges all ministers in the CPPNE to support it in establishing a new National Park.

1996 (August)

Western Cape Cabinet declares its unequivocal support for the creation of the National Park and initiates a process to vest its landholdings in the new park.

1997

Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism establishes a Cape Peninsula National Park advisory Committee after a process of public nominations.

1998 (May 1st)

After negotiations with local authorities, SANP paves the way for the new park's formal proclamation having had 14000ha of the CPPNE put under its care.

1998 (May 29th)

Cape Peninsula National Park is proclaimed by notice in the Government Gazette.

Plate 23: Timeline for the establishment of the CPNP.

(Source: *Cape Peninsula National Park Information Newspaper*. 1998)

incorporated into the CPNP, which has recently been renamed the Cape Peninsula Mountain Park (CPMP). It would appear that at the turn of the millennium, Table Mountain, with SANP as its guardian, is fast becoming a distinctly modernist cultural landscape. The SANP framework for managing and developing the park will by necessity tame the Mountain, making it no longer the landscape of mystery, danger and excitement it has proved in the past. The very ethos of modernism, as a discourse of structure and order, will by default, reduce the complexity of multi-layered meanings that have come to characterise Table Mountain, and replace them with its own universal meaning and vision.

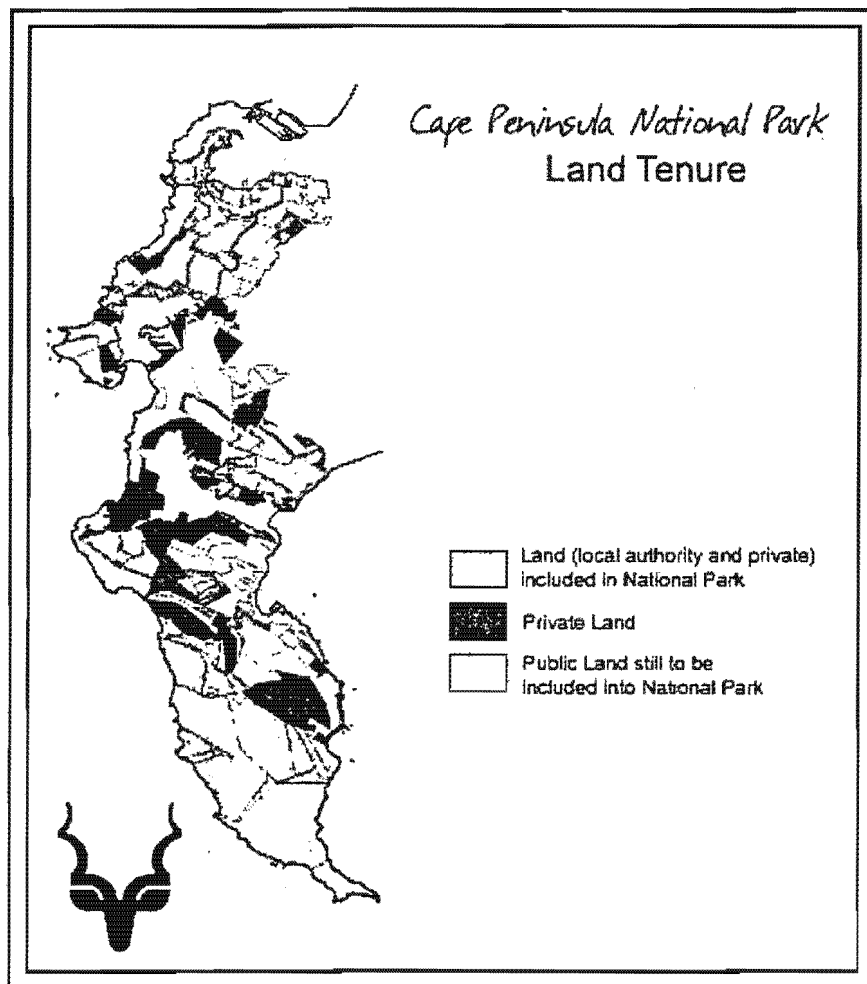


Plate 24: CPNP land tenure map.
(Source: <http://www.cnp.co.za>)

A definition of a National Park accepted Internationally and endorsed by SANP was formulated by the IUCN³²⁸ in 1994:

‘As a protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection; natural area of land and/or sea designated to (a) protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations, (b) exclude exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area and (c) provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible.’

As Table Mountain is now a national park, this universal IUCN definition becomes its definition, its justification and *raison d’être* whilst simultaneously bracketing it with thousands of other national parks around the world. The role of Table Mountain is now to function not as a mountain but as a park, according to the above criterion and their internationally sanctioned ideals and objectives. SANP established their modernist framework for managing the Mountain in order to meet this criterion and ensure that Table Mountain functions as a National Park. Within this modernist approach Table Mountain is defined, both legally and spatially, guided by a vision and governed by a management system as well as mapped, divided and made accessible and hospitable.

The SANP³²⁹ has its own vision: ‘to be the pride and joy of all South Africans,’ and mission: ‘to acquire and manage a system of national parks that represents the wildlife, vegetation, landscapes and associated cultural assets of South Africa, for the joy and benefit of the nation’. Such objectives are undoubtedly just and good, but still cannot hide the fact that Table Mountain, as part of the CPMP is now subject to an external agenda and rationale. Intrinsic to this vision and its subsequent manifestation in plans and policies is the fact that the Mountain is an asset, to be divided up, made accessible and hospitable, by its SANP controllers so that it might serve the people to whom it belongs. The contrast with people’s perceptions of Table Mountain in centuries past could not be more acute. In the 1990’s policy makers are far more detached in their approach to the Mountain, it has no personality, it is a resource to be utilised not a malevolent titan guarding the oceans. It is no longer the towering,

³²⁸ Firer, R., 1993: *Boundary delimitation of protected areas: case study of the CPPNE*. Unpublished Honours Dissertation. EGS, UCT.

³²⁹ SANP, 1998: *SANP Corporate Plan: A framework for action and transformation*.

indeed menacing, presence that lay beyond the early settlers control as an unconquerable symbol of African resistance.

Before 1998, an eclectic, and ultimately confused and unproductive mix, of some 23 different government bodies and over 200 private landowners controlled the CPPNE.³³⁰ With development pressures and other urban challenges such as fire hazards, invasive alien plant spread and illegal squatting and settlement encroachments on the mountain slopes of the Cape Peninsula, there was widespread agreement on the need for the land to be consolidated and protected under one institution. SANP was eventually selected as this management body and since then the CPMP has been granted Schedule One National Park protection. As such, the land is accorded the highest conservation status and legal protection possible in the South African system. Once proclaimed, it takes a joint sitting of the two houses of Parliament and a two-thirds majority to reduce this status. Under its new management Table Mountain has been legalised and formalised. Projects, such as the Peninsula Urban Edge Study (Draft report, 1998³³¹), have set about establishing the boundaries of the CPMP, and hence the Table Mountain chain. Table Mountain is now defined and delimited, mapped and charted, but more than that it is, under SANP, part of an institution and subjected to that organisation's rationale and policy metanarratives.

This modernist interpretation of the 1990's Table Mountain cultural landscape is further highlighted by many of the policies, developments and initiatives that the SANP have established for the Mountain. Common Ground Consulting, funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), is currently establishing an Integrated Environmental Management System (IEMS) to provide a modern, internationally compatible and very much computerised system to guide SANP in running and developing the CPMP. Much of this new system will concentrate on what David Daitz (Park Manager of the CPMP³³²) sees as the greatest threat to the area's conservation; people, and will establish ways and means of channelling visitors into and around the park in an ecologically sustainable manner.

³³⁰ Want, A., 1999: About the Table Mountain chain. <http://www.modelsforthemountain.co.za>.

³³¹ Cape Metropolitan Council (CMC), 10/98: *Peninsula Urban Edge Study, Draft Report*. Cape Town.

³³² Daitz, D., 1999: Interview.

To facilitate the channelling of visitors SANP has plans, which are likely to be formalised in the forthcoming IEMS, for the construction of access gateways.³³³ These will provide visitors with paths, signs, restaurants and services such as parking, in a bid to channel people around the Mountain with a minimum of environmental disruption. Such a system, when coupled with information boards and signs, strict adherence to path systems and the presence of wardens, again all suggests an end to the mystery and freedom that personified the Mountain over the centuries. The Table Mountain landscape is, perhaps inevitably, no longer the backdrop to life that it was in the past, but is now, largely in a bid to make it financially viable and hence its conservation sustainable, being brought into the foreground of everyday living. The SANP argue that Table Mountain, in an age of falling Government subsidies, must be self-sufficient, it must be economically viable. Visitors and recreational users paying fees is deemed the means to achieve this end. Hence there is the apparent paradox of commercialisation and development being pushed on Table Mountain by its very protectors, the SANP.

The 1996 Table Mountain Use Zone Map is a classic example of how far things have come as regards man's perceptions of Table Mountain. 'The map is the fundamental geographical discourse' (Haggett, 1969³³⁴). Maps themselves have a discourse, they are socially constructed texts. Maps have power; 'power is the ability to do work, which is what maps do, they work' (Wood, 1993³³⁵). The ideology and power behind the Table Mountain Use Zone Map is modernist and positivist, it is a map of control. As Haggett, a positivist geographer, stated, 'to map something is to capture its knowledge'. If something is mappable it becomes knowable, definable and usable, work can be done on it. In the Use Zone Map seemingly every inch of the Mountain is charted and zoned according to its usage potential. Ecologically sensitive areas are branded quiet or remote zones for minimal human interference, whilst other areas are designated as high intensity leisure or utility zones for service provision. The Mountain, now mapped, known and divided, is ready for human manipulation. Short of building homes on its slopes and plateaux, this is perhaps the ultimate humanising of the Mountain.

³³³ Details on the forthcoming IEMS for the CPMP were gained from: Laross, M., 1999: Interview. And can also be found on the CPNP website, *Op cit*.

³³⁴ Haggett, P., Chorley, R. J., 1969: *Models in Geography*. Methuen, London.

³³⁵ Wood, D., 1993: *The power of maps*. Routledge, London.

The SANP's apparently modernist style of managing Table Mountain and the CPMP has clear links back to the perceptions of the Mountain's cultural landscape in centuries past. In essence the Mountain is still very much a part of the European Grand Tour concept. The tourists the Mountain is geared to attracting are predominantly European or American and there are clear parallels between how Africa markets itself and Europe perceives it, both now and in the early days of the Cape Colony. Table Mountain is again marketed and perceived as the unique African landscape that visitors are encouraged to conquer by path or cableway, and once atop, to admire the stunning views. The marvels of the region's botany as experienced by Thunberg,³³⁶ amongst others, in the eighteenth century, are now a key attraction for ecotourists. The proposal of Table Mountain as a World Heritage Site (WHS) is a further attempt to attract International attention to the area, and in particular to attract the 'well-healed' travellers who seek to visit and 'tick off' these sites. South Africa submitted Table Mountain along with Robben Island and the St Lucia wetlands for WHS in 1999 and has plans to put forward a further 19 sites for consideration.³³⁷ Clearly the ultimate aim is for South Africa to be in a position to hold its own internationally recognised 'eco-tours' and attaining WHS status for the country's prime conservation areas is an excellent means for gaining this recognition. Meanwhile proposals to have the park ranged by armed wardens is a clear testament to the dangers the Mountain still poses; unruly squatters are the twentieth centuries equivalent to runaway slaves.³³⁸ It might no longer be dichotomised as a landscape of paradise or purgatory, but the Table Mountain landscape still entices curious travellers eager to witness the dramatic spectacle of the Mountain and its Tablecloth. Indeed, in the eyes of many tourists, Africa's west coast, characterised by civil strife is as inhospitable as ever, and Cape Town, with its cosmopolitan culture and beautiful Mountain, is the closest they wish to get to the 'wilds of Africa'.

There is a deep sense of irony in the present predicament that Table Mountain, SANP and the people of Cape Town find themselves. The diverse cultures of Cape Town were largely united in their push for SANP to become sole managers of Table Mountain and the CPPNE. Whether it was recreational groups such as the Mountain Club of South Africa, religious groups Muslim or Christian, conservationists or

³³⁶ In Forbes, V. S., ed., 1986: *Op cit.*

³³⁷ Mutume, G., 1998: St Lucia: Will World Heritage status bridge the racial gap?
<http://www.woza.co.za>.

³³⁸ Mentioned at: Meeting of the CPNP committee. 16/9/99, Kirstenbosch.

ecologists, all saw a single controlling authority as the only real means of preserving the region. In effect such an organisation, be it SANP or any other, could only disappoint these supporters. The SANP announced its grand vision for Table Mountain incorporating financial self-sufficiency, conservation, an open access park, not only for, but working to benefit, the people of Cape Town and the nation. To achieve these noble goals the managers set about constructing the necessary structural and organisational metanarrative in order to tame, organise and transform the mountain landscape. Such a metanarrative, based on the modernist principles of ordering, structuring and controlling, could only cause conflict with the many cultural perceptions of the Table Mountain landscape, for the precise reason that, due to their post-modern nature, they have no grand unifying vision. In the real world, in the daily process of managing and using the Mountain, the different approaches and perceptions of interested parties as regards Table Mountain cannot be compartmentalised and separated from each other for the sake of harmony. Hence there is an ongoing struggle for the integrity and best interests of the Mountain between the modernists; the SANP, and the postmodernists; coming from a broad range of capetonians.

Chapter Three: Conflict and co-operation – Table Mountain in the 1990's

A contested landscape

This section has so far proposed two very contrasting frameworks for perceiving the cultural landscape of Table Mountain in the 1990's. The post-modern framework for analysis highlighted the rich variety of values and meanings that Cape Town's cosmopolitan populace draw from the Mountain. Meanwhile the SANP approach to controlling Table Mountain was portrayed as an essentially modernist attempt to establish a new, controlled and organised future for the national park, whilst seeking to balance and satisfy a variety of users and interests. After Table Mountain's proclamation as a national park in 1998, these two discourses have been forced to co-habit the same landscape. SANP have adopted a modernist doctrine, delimiting, mapping, legalising and consolidating the Mountain landscape with a view to managing it as a community and economic asset. The polyvocality of the cultural landscape that appeals to so many capetonians is in effect the antithesis of the modernist ideals of SANP. Any policy for Table Mountain necessarily requires a step back from the Mountain and to view it in a calculating and detached manner, a process that will inevitably draw criticism from those who view it more passionately. In order to achieve its organisational objectives as regards the new park, SANP in attempting to tame and control the Mountain, will indirectly be suppressing its polyvocality and post-modern appeal. Subsequently there has been a clear-cut conflict of interests and objectives between these two conceptualisations of Table Mountain.³³⁹

The conflict of interests regarding Table Mountain's evaluation and usage can be likened to the theory proposed by Berger (see Chapter Two) whereby landscape is a curtain behind which its inhabitants react. In Table Mountain's case, having no real inhabitants, the curtain applies more to those who live in the surrounding landscape and project their ideals and values onto the Mountain. Table Mountain largely stands physically divorced from these conflicts; the battleground is in effect ideological.

³³⁹ Many of the theories expressed in this section, although well informed by literature and interviews, are nevertheless somewhat subjective. This text does not aim to take sides as regards the interpretations of Table Mountain's cultural landscape in the 1990's, it merely seeks to utilise the variety of views encountered, including the extremes, to establish the depth of meaning the Mountain engenders in contemporary society

Issues and policies concerning the Mountain are often fiercely contested, yet this conflict seldom has any direct impact upon it, it is enacted in the city below. Hence the validity of Berger's theory, if you wish to study the real human nature of this cultural landscape then you must first pull aside the curtain of physical serenity and look beyond the Mountain to the cultures below. The crux of the conflicts between the SANP and its critics, be they environmentalists, communities or other NGO's, is a concern, and genuine fear, for the Mountain's future. Many capetonians, whatever their evaluation of it, fear a transformation of the Mountain they cherish under its new guardians.

One of the greatest areas for concern and hence a topic that has caused great consternation, is the financial approach of SANP to the Mountain. Daitz believes that the first principle of sustainable conservation is financial sustainability. It is estimated that Table Mountain and the new park will need between R25-30 million a year to manage its assets to world class standards.³⁴⁰ The subsidisation that South African conservation areas benefited from in the past is fast coming to an end because of the enormous challenges of the social agenda facing the nation's government. Daitz states that the reality in South Africa at the moment is that the state does not fund conservation. The SANP cannot enter the political fray and instead generates 80% of its own cash flow. The 20% of funding that the government contributes is under ever-increasing pressure.³⁴¹ Although the CPMP received a R38 million kick-start from a combination of sources including the GEF, the three local authorities and the French equivalent of the GEF, the FFEM, it is still deemed imperative for the park's survival that it become self-sufficient.³⁴² SANP traditionally funds its parks from two sources; firstly money generated from admissions and secondly through facilities provided inside the park.³⁴³

A reality is that South Africa's national parks are under increasing pressure to be run more like a business. Daitz the CPMP manager holds an MBA, whilst other SANP park managers have all undertaken business management courses at the

³⁴⁰ CPNP, 1999: Park profile: Funding. <http://www.cnp.co.za>.

³⁴¹ PMF, 1999: *Minutes of the workshop on SANP Draft Development Framework*, 13/8/99.

³⁴² Yeld, J., 1998: R38m Kickstart, but park will become self-sufficient. *Cape Peninsula National Park newspaper* 5/6/99.

³⁴³ PMF, 13/8/99: *Ibid.*

Witwatersrand University.³⁴⁴ Such facts all act to confirm the fear expressed earlier, that commercialisation will be increasingly pressed upon Table Mountain by its protectors. SANP unashamedly state their desire to run financially sustainable, business-like parks, believing that financial viability does not have to come at the expense of conservation. If tourism is the catalyst for both national and regional economic growth then national parks can be the drivers of the economy. Daitz believes it is wrong to look at conservation and tourism in 'either/or' terms and hence the CPMP has established a series of policies and development plans that will seek to attract and capitalise on the massive tourist potential of the park, in harmony with conservation.³⁴⁵ The CPNP Draft Development Framework (1998³⁴⁶) clearly pushes for the economic development of the Mountain. Such plans inevitably draw questions and criticisms. The SANP, according to Andy Gubb³⁴⁷ (Regional Director of WESA: WC) and many others, seemingly believe that Table Mountain as a 'dollar stripper' is the 'goose that will lay the golden egg'. Such views have caused considerable alarm and subsequent protests from a spectrum of capetonians.³⁴⁸

The financial policy of the SANP as regards the CPMP has not only been questioned, its whole validity, rationale and objectives have been heavily criticised. One such critic was Dr Hey, the man behind the 1979 Hey Commission that suggested a single authority control the Cape Peninsula. Dr Hey stated his opposition to the idea of making the park self-sufficient, believing that the principle must remain that the state is custodian, and hence a financial supporter of the park. He also expressed his concerns over an overemphasis on tourism and development within the Draft Development Framework.³⁴⁹ Instead Dr Hey believed SANP could generate sufficient income within the carrying capacity of the area without affecting the natural environment, something that increased tourist levels and subsequent developments would undoubtedly do.³⁵⁰ At the SANP workshop concerning the draft (13/8/98³⁵¹) a variety of further criticisms and objections were raised as regards their commercial plans for the CPMP. A widely supported view was that local authorities could not opt

³⁴⁴ Shroyer, M., 1999: Interview.

³⁴⁵ Daitz, D., 1999: Interview.

³⁴⁶ CPNP, 1998: *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ Gubb, A., 1999: Interview.

³⁴⁸ As voiced at: PMF, 1999: *Minutes of the workshop on SANP Draft Development Framework, 13/8/99.*

³⁴⁹ PMF, 1999: *Work session on the CPNP Draft Development Framework. Minutes 21/7/99.*

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ PMF, 1999: *Minutes of the workshop on SANP Draft Development Framework, 13/8/99.*

out of funding the new park. It was pointed out that the local population pays taxes to these authorities, and ratepayers must pressurise them to ensure a proportion of these rates go towards conserving the Mountain.³⁵² Participants reflected on the irony that local authorities, which will undoubtedly gain from the tourist boom that Table Mountain is expected to fuel, are not prepared to contribute to its upkeep.

Perhaps the greatest and most widely felt fear among local NGO's such as Save Table Mountain, the Peninsula Mountain Forum (PMF) and the Wildlife and Environment Society of Africa: Western Cape (WESA: WC), is that SANP is going to use Table Mountain to fund its other, less profitable parks. The SANP vision for Table Mountain openly proclaims that the CPMP is one park in a system of parks and that such a system necessitates cross-subsidisation between those parks that are net earners and those that are not.³⁵³ Such a policy is superficially very commendable; after all it is all money going to conservation. Unfortunately from an SANP point of view only two of its parks make profits, Kruger and Tsitsikamma,³⁵⁴ therefore the CPMP is a vital addition to its portfolio. The CPMP with Table Mountain as its big attraction, will undoubtedly make money, what many fear is what, if any, limits will be put on this revenue earning potential? How far will SANP be willing to sacrifice Table Mountain, through commercialisation, to first fund the rest of the CPMP and secondly support other national parks? The concern is that Table Mountain if not the entire CPMP will see conservation policies take a backseat to financial objectives, and as such will be overdeveloped and over-commercialised. This has led to calls for a more modest management plan for the CPMP whilst Gubb commented on the general feeling that the SANP start managing the park first, providing proof that they can manage the area and do conservation work before they do tourism work.³⁵⁵

Another issue that has caused conflict between the Mountain's controllers and those who see themselves as its guardians, concerns the SANP proposed use of Gateways to access the park. The SANP rationale for gateways is that 70% of the park is open access and, since people pose the greatest threat to conservation, channelling visitors into and around the park is essential. Gateways, which will often incorporate services ranging from restaurants, parking, formal and informal shops and information centres,

³⁵² PMF, 1999: *Minutes of the workshop on SANP Draft Development Framework, 13/8/99.*

³⁵³ SANP, 1998: *Op cit.*

³⁵⁴ Shroyer, M., 1999: Interview.

³⁵⁵ PMF, 1999: *Minutes of the workshop on SANP Draft Development Framework, 13/8/99.*

will act as honeypots. They will attract park visitors to sites where the system of paths and facilities can lessen their impact on the environment. This is the concept of channelling 90% of people onto 2% of the park.³⁵⁶ SANP are quick to point out that such a policy is as much geared for local visitors as it is for tourists. Critics claim that the planned provision of these gateways is excessive and that their importance as a means of channelling visitors around the park is overemphasised. Furthermore concerns were expressed, by Dr Hey amongst others, that the Gateway facilities would prove prohibitively expensive to construct, which in an age where, as SANP themselves admit, funds are pressured, makes these developments an unnecessary extravagance.³⁵⁷ Ultimately there would appear to be an inherent paradox in the claim that people are the biggest threat to conservation³⁵⁸ yet, in developing honeypots, the emphasis is clearly on attracting more visitors onto the Mountain.

At the heart of these debates, and the concerns expressed by many capetonians over SANP management policies, seems to be a fear that the Mountain is slipping away from those who cherish it most. One of the greatest concerns is that access to the new park will prove prohibitively costly for many citizens. SANP counter such fears with the fact that 70% of the park will still be open access.³⁵⁹ That said the proposed gateways, which are geared to serving locals as well as tourists, will undoubtedly involve entry fees and site costs. Daitz dismisses fears that the park will be fenced off at its perimeters and entry fees charged.³⁶⁰ It is widely accepted that in order to effectively manage and conserve the new park SANP will have to tighten up accessibility and impose restrictions on activities within the park.³⁶¹ The possibility of issuing paid-for permits for recreational users has received widespread support from NGO's environmental or otherwise. Indeed, it would seem a sound principle that commercial groups who charge customers for recreational pursuits upon the Mountain, should contribute something to its upkeep, particularly when activities such as mountain biking often degrade roads and paths that the SANP must upkeep. This is another example of commercialisation slowly tightening its grip on Table Mountain. What was once the ultimate free, open space is increasingly becoming constricted. In

³⁵⁶ CPNP, 1998: *Op cit.*

³⁵⁷ PMF, 1999: *Minutes of the workshop on SANP Draft Development Framework, 13/8/99.*

³⁵⁸ A view expressed by Daitz, D., 1998: PMF, *Minutes of the workshop on SANP Draft Development Framework, 5/8/98.*

³⁵⁹ Daitz, D., 1999: Interview.

³⁶⁰ Borchert, P., 1996: *Op cit.*

³⁶¹ Meeting of the CPNP committee. 16/9/99, Kirstenbosch.

many areas of the park a person can actually be fined for wandering off demarcated paths.³⁶² Although this rule has seldom, if ever, been enforced, it is another worrying precedent for traditional users of the Mountain, such as climbers, who value above all else their freedom to roam its expanses. Central to this debate is the overwhelming fear of capetonians that they may find themselves as 'outsiders' in a Mountain landscape that is becoming progressively more restricted in terms of usage and access, and which could be viewed as being developed more with tourist interests and financial objectives in mind than those of local communities.

There are also provisional plans to initiate charging for the use of the Table Mountain image. At the moment, providing the National Monuments Council and SANP grant permission, the image is available for commercial use for free. Numerous companies, corporations and institutions, mostly South African, ranging from national banks to car dealerships, utilise the Mountain's image for commercial purposes (for example see plate 38 on page 146). In an age where marketing and advertising is big business the move to charge for using Table Mountain is arguably long overdue. Clearly not all the aims and ideals of the Park's management prove contrary to those with a more post-modern outlook. The vast majority of capetonians, whether their evaluation of the Mountain is in religious, conservation or community terms, would appreciate that elements of Table Mountain, particularly as regards commercialisation and marketability, require a more modern outlook. In this sense the modernist doctrine of SANP has widespread support in its bid to ensure Table Mountain does not become a cultural anachronism in the 1990's with it's natural environment, and the people who depend upon it, losing out as a result. It is, for the most part, the means through which SANP seek to achieve this objective that bring criticism. There would undoubtedly be near universal support for SANP raising conservation funds by charging major national and international institutions for using Table Mountain in their advertisements. However, advertisement plans that utilise the Mountain more directly are infinitely less popular, as no capetonian wishes to see their Mountain become an advertising billboard. Along these lines many signs in the new park will bear sponsors logos whilst the millennium laser projections on the Mountain will also feature large, sponsor's adverts. Such commercialisation flies in the face of those who see Table

³⁶² Shroyer, M., 1999: Interview.

Mountain as sacrosanct, as a national icon, a source of pride, above brand names and corporate logos.³⁶³

What is clear is that in the 1990's the cultural landscape of Table Mountain is increasingly subject to capitalist forces. McDowell's theory of mass cultural landscapes evolving as a product of global consumerism is arguably becoming evermore applicable to contemporary Table Mountain.³⁶⁴ It is perhaps only the strictures of the apartheid regime that managed, however socially unjust the means, to keep the Mountain to some extent free from commercialisation in the past. With international tourists boycotting the country, economic sanctions limiting foreign investments and apartheid policies enforcing strict population controls in Cape Town, the Mountain during much of the latter half of the twentieth century, was largely free of the social and commercial pressures that effect it today. Now with SANP determined to run their assets with a business ethos, concepts such as marketability, supply, demand and profitability, all have a role to play in shaping the future nature of Table Mountain's cultural landscape. This theory is most evident when analysing the concerns of those who challenge the park management over their seeming intent to make Table Mountain less of a mountain and more of a tourist park. Crucial to this idea is the view that the Mountain must remain a dangerous environment where snakes and baboons still roam and pester humans, and where climbers can still fall to their deaths. It is this danger element, this last hint of the unpredictable, that appeals to many capetonians and they fear it will be progressively restricted, and ultimately tamed, by the modernist rationale and objectives of the CPMP.

The 'them and us' mentality that has arisen in some quarters as regards Table Mountain and its new management can be linked to the theme of post-modern approaches to the Mountain challenging the modernist metanarrative of the SANP organisational superstructure. Most of the CPMP's policy, rationale and objectives come from the SANP headquarters in Pretoria. There has long been a rivalry, predominantly healthy, between capetonians and the rest of the country essentially based around the city's residents believing that Cape Town with Table Mountain and its cosmopolitan community was different from the rest of the nation. In the run up to

³⁶³ Hey, D., 1994: *The Mountain: An authoritative guide to the Table Mountain chain*. Tafelbergh, Cape Town.

³⁶⁴ In Gregory, D., Martin, R., Smith, G., eds., 1994: *Op cit*.

appointing SANP as the single management body for the CPMP, many conservationists criticised the highly parochial nature of capetonians. This parochialism saw people argue 'we won't let Pretoria manage our Mountain because they don't care' and repeatedly demonstrated the 'pettiness, naked territorialism and small-mindedness that has bedevilled the management of the Mountain for decades' (Yeld, 1995³⁶⁵). The fear that Table Mountain is slipping away from Cape Town, to be ultimately controlled by Pretoria, is still very much apparent. The people of Cape Town are, for the most-part, fiercely patriotic as regards their Mountain, and therefore it is inevitable that any contentious issue regarding SANP and Table Mountain is blamed on the fact that it is directives emanating from Pretorian bureaucrats that are leading to the Mountain's corruption.

When the new CPNP was established with SANP in charge of it, the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Dr Pallo Jordan, also set up the Cape Peninsula National Park Committee (CPNPC). This committee was formed to counter many of the fears expressed by capetonians as regards the Mountain being governed by distant Pretorians. The terms of reference of the CPNPC set out that, after wide public consultation, it act to monitor and advise the National Parks Board (now SANP). Indeed it was to be the "driving force" for the new national park in the Cape Peninsula within the general policy framework of the National Parks Board'.³⁶⁶ In essence the CPNPC's role was to ensure that the Cape Town public had a say in the running of what was to be very much their park. It was the committee's role to inform SANP of public opinion so as to limit conflict between the two and let the park operate as harmoniously as possible.

As the illustrated conflicts of interest, feelings of mistrust and general 'them and us' mentality have shown, the CPNPC has not been overly successful in uniting SANP and capetonians in a joint vision for the new park. Indeed, it has been widely criticised for being ineffectual and in particular, by groups ranging from WESA: WC to the National Council of Women of South Africa,³⁶⁷ for a lack of transparency and insufficient interest in soliciting public opinion. Many committee members in turn

³⁶⁵ Yeld, J., 1995: Wake up Capetonians: this mountain jewel belongs to us. *Cape Argus*, 25/9/95.

³⁶⁶ Jordan, P., Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 1997: *Letter to Aleida Croudace appointing her to the CPNP committee*. 21/4/97.

³⁶⁷ The National Council of Women, 1998: *Letter to the CPNP Committee 15/6/98*. Held by WESA:WC, Kirstenhof.

feel that the park management has made their task impossible and progressively undermined them. When, in September 1998, Richard Cowling³⁶⁸, a leading botanist, resigned from the committee he bluntly informed the Minister that the park committee lacked 'administrative and political context', its terms of reference were unworkable, and it was 'dysfunctional'. Whether it be through sustained undermining from SANP, a failure to come to terms with its terms of reference, a lack of capacity, or internal bickering and politicking, the CPPNC, formed with the park's and Cape Town's best interests at heart, has undoubtedly failed to achieve its aims. What is also clear, is that the SANP and their CPMP management have little or no time for the committee. A new policy, currently being submitted, proposes that in future, SANP will be able to appoint its own advisory committees (of the CPNPC's 15 members 6 were selected by the Minister and 9 by the public). The PMF and WESA: WC in a meeting with the Minister (16/3/99³⁶⁹) claimed that SANP was a law unto itself and that in a move reminiscent of past regimes, wished to 'disband the CPNPC and create a new constitution which arrests decision making powers from the people and place it in the hands of apartheid era bureaucrats and the scientific community of yesterday'. It must be stressed that no defence of the SANP as regards such allegations is being offered, yet such criticisms whether real or perceived clearly illustrate the concept of the SANP as a modernist framework for controlling Table Mountain, often proving incompatible with the fiercely opinionated Cape Town public. The CPNPC was supposed to be a bridge between these two contrasting groups. The lack of harmony, and the perpetual bickering between SANP and its critics, bears testimony to the committee's failure to fulfil this 'bridging' role.

Returning to Berger's theory, so far Table Mountain has clearly been the curtain behind which various conflicts between culture groups, each with their own ideals and agendas for the Mountain, have been enacted. The cultural landscape is very much polarised by this 'them and us' mentality. Many of the local conservation and community groups fear that they are being alienated and marginalised from Table Mountain, and that their knowledge, gained from years of experience of the Mountain, is being ignored and wasted. Daitz admits SANP may have misled them. In the 6-month period after SANP were given control of the new park they were charged

³⁶⁸ Yeld, J., 1998: Deep division in Cape conservation. *Cape Argus online*, held by WESA: WC, Kirstenhof.

³⁶⁹ PMF, 1999: *Details of PMF and WESA:WC meeting with Minister Pallo Jordan concerning CPNP Committee problems 16/8/99*. WESA:WC, Kirstenhof.

by the authorities involved with achieving significant results, in effect their management was on trial. The new park management realised that public opinion was crucial to them ultimately being given control of the park and so embarked upon a grand public relations exercise. The park manager realised that many local conservationists saw SANP as a 'knight in shining armour come to rescue the damsel in distress of Cape conservation'.³⁷⁰ This was a conception, though misplaced, that SANP did little to correct.

When SANP were given the unequivocal support of the provincial authorities in establishing the new park, they soon distanced themselves from the conservationists. This action caused palpable resentment, many who had previously been in the trenches with SANP, fighting for conservation, now found themselves largely excluded from the all important negotiations which SANP conducted with politicians and developers.³⁷¹ Daitz uses a simple analogy for the present conflict between SANP and its critics. The SANP opponents, most visibly in the form of local NGO's, have their feet up against the dam, attempting to hold back the raging torrents of reality (commercialism of the Mountain).³⁷² The implication being that SANP is attempting to utilise these torrents whilst minimising their destructive potential. What results as regards the conflict over Table Mountain is effectively cold war style attrition. The issues and clashes between the two groups have become increasingly personal and vindictive. Local NGO's, primarily in the form of conservation groups, to some extent thrive on confrontation; Table Mountain is a rallying point for support, a noble cause in the hearts of all capetonians. They counter claims that the vast majority of their members are white (and hence not entirely reflective of Cape Town) by pointing out that they are embarking on education programmes in the city's poorer communities. They also point out that it is not a matter of who champions Table Mountain's cause, so long as it has a champion. Critics of these conservationists claim they have too narrow a perspective in seeking to preserve Table Mountain whilst seemingly ignoring the pressing social and economic needs of the city. Professor Seigfried (1989³⁷³) claimed "many local conservationists have an unfortunate arrogance, having limited mindsets leading to distinctly narrow value-judgements. They make

³⁷⁰ Daitz, D., 1999: Interview.

³⁷¹ Fortune, L., 1999: Interview.

³⁷² Daitz, D., 1999: Interview.

³⁷³ Cited by McDonald, D. J., 1989: Report on the Table Mountain 2000 Symposium. *South African Institute of Ecologists*. 8/99, Vol 8 (2).

the mistake of 'climbing the moral elitist ground!' In the case of Table Mountain and the Cape Peninsula mountain chain, the needs of the environment must be addressed together with sociological needs'.

This cultural contestation of the Table Mountain landscape has links to Gramsci (see Chapter Two) who looked at how, in capitalist societies and their subsequent cultural landscapes, hegemony is never fully achieved. Instead, there is a general organisation of consent formed without recourse to violence or coercion. This theory is very much applicable to the Mountain in the 1990's where SANP are undoubtedly now the dominant force in influencing Table Mountain's cultural landscape. In mapping, planning, controlling and ordering the Mountain, SANP are attempting to suppress the unknown and wild aspects of the Table Mountain landscape and achieve a hegemonic position. With SANP emphasising financial sustainability, tourism and hence, to some extent, commercial interests and economic determinism, their ideology has clear links to capitalism. Yet SANP, and especially their financial objectives and policies, have been heavily criticised and faced continued opposition from local conservation and community groups. These groups have ensured, through persistent, organised consent, that neither SANP or capitalism-driven commercial interests have achieved an undisputed hegemonic control of Table Mountain.

Both sides of the argument claim that the olive branch is extended. Critics of the SANP believe that constructive criticism, publicly informed, must have an influence on the CPMP's management. SANP equally claim that they want to heal the rifts and end the contrition that has recently come to characterise Table Mountain's cultural landscape. Whether the two sides can find a more co-operative middle ground, a joint vision for the Mountain's future cultural landscape, one can only speculate. A cynic might see the logical conclusion of Daitz's analogy being that critics of SANP either climb aboard with them or be swept away. This is perhaps the crux of the modernist approach to managing Table Mountain within which SANP has clear goals be they financial, conservationist or in defining and operating the park. To achieve these all-important objectives and fulfil the grand vision of an efficient, financially self-sufficient and internationally renowned National park, its managers are prepared to be brutal. SANP believe their modernist framework for managing the Mountain is the correct one. As Daitz stated, the SANP vision takes the wider perspective, it views

Table Mountain in the real world terms of the 1990's, where social, economic and environmental concerns inevitably interact. If in taming, ordering and controlling Table Mountain SANP suppress some of the more narrowly based visions of select groups of capetonians, then it is an unfortunate but necessary consequence that has the Mountain's best interests at heart.

There is an inherent paradox in what is outwardly a modernist metanarrative for managing the Mountain. On the one hand SANP policy, in defining, legalising and consolidating the park, reflects the very modernist ideals of control and order. However, set against these modernist forces are SANP plans to reform, develop and ultimately transform many aspects of the CPMP. With plans for gateways, enhanced marketing of the Mountain, and ultimately making Table Mountain a more profitable, commercial asset, the park's management is very much geared to the future. As shall be highlighted later in the section, the park's managers frequently find themselves in a negotiating role, attempting to reach compromises over developments and other issues of conflict concerning Table Mountain. These qualities of negotiation, flexibility and compromise, and the sacrifice of ideals they often entail, are the antithesis of modernist doctrines. One can only conclude that although modernism provides a useful framework for interpreting SANP policy as regards the CPMP, it is not all encompassing. The boundaries between the SANP brand of modernism, and the approaches and objectives of more eclectic discourses upon the Mountain, are not always clearly defined. To highlight the adaptability of the SANP approach to Table Mountain there are clear instances of co-operation, tolerance and consensus of opinion in the cultural landscape of the Mountain in the 1990's.

A harmonious landscape

It would be convenient to polarise those who view the Mountain as sacred and sacrosanct, something that must be conserved above all else, against those who see it as a useable asset. The truth is that there is a growing middle ground, where a sense of compromise dictates people's approach to the Mountain. It is in this neutral territory that the park managers increasingly find themselves in trying to formulate policy for Table Mountain. So far analysis has portrayed Table Mountain as a cultural landscape

dominated by conflict and antagonism. However there are also instances when conservationists, economists, communities and SANP manage to co-operate and are united in their approach to Table Mountain.

Firstly it is worth pointing out that although much criticised there is no real alternative to SANP as the authority in charge of establishing and controlling the CPMP. Many of the SANP's fiercest critics, such as Andy Gubb of WESA, when asked if they had their time again whether they would campaign again for SANP to control the Mountain, admit they probably would, all be it with a few extra provisos.³⁷⁴ Before the single management authority was formulated, the majority of the CPPNE was in an administrative and legal mess that desperately needed some element of control and order. SANP critics would probably concede that conservation in the area is in better condition with the new managers than without. However they might question just how much better off it is given the region's immense environmental importance. Nevertheless, the widespread support evident in the campaign for SANP to manage the Mountain, still largely backs the new park and its management. There may be considerable disunity and criticism over certain elements of the Mountain's management, yet there has never been any real suggestion that the decision to appoint SANP as managers to the new park be revoked or reviewed.

A field in which environmentalists, ecologists and SANP unite is in the concept of putting a value to the region's natural assets and in particular its fynbos. Such a policy has been viewed by some as a sell-out, with ecologists willing to sacrifice certain areas of the Mountain to commercialisation in return for full protection of especially significant ecological areas.³⁷⁵ The joint defence of such ecologists and SANP is that modern conservation necessitates compromise. In an ideal world the whole Cape Peninsula and Cape Floral Kingdom would be strictly preserved, in reality a balance must be found between conservation and financial survival. Cowling (1995³⁷⁶) argues that although putting a value to the environment, and in the case of Table Mountain, to its fynbos contents, to some may seem offensive, it is a vital process. Looking at fynbos in financial terms is, according to Cowling, the only promise for its long term conservation. The key to the argument proposed by environmental economists is

³⁷⁴ Gubb, A., 1999: Interview.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁶ Cowling, R. M., Richardson, D., 1995: *Op cit.*

that conservation can, largely without compromising its ideals, justify itself in the monetary terms that dominate the capitalist world. The reality according to Cowling amongst others is that the fynbos region, of which Table Mountain is an integral part, is particularly well suited to these environmental economics. Brase (1995³⁷⁷) points out that, though the Western Cape province can boast no gold or diamonds, it does have Fynbos. It is the sustainable use of this fynbos that is deemed the key to its survival. The floral industry in South Africa already employs 20000 people, exports 2500 tonnes of fresh and 3000 tonnes of dried flower and plant material, and turns over R30 million, annually. Surely, Cowling argues, growing fynbos commercially is better than not at all. Equally, once farmers and economists alike, realise the commercial importance of fynbos they will add their not inconsiderable support to the cause of conservation in general. Subsequently the true value of genetic diversity and gene-banks such as Table Mountain will be realised. It has already been shown how fynbos has massive economic potential in terms of research for new medicines and other marketable products. Clearly conservation and commercialisation do not have to be at opposing ends of the spectrum as concerns approaches to Table Mountain.

Another development in environmental economics, and one with special relevance to Table Mountain is the cost-benefit analysis of mountain water catchments. Cape Town has had a long history of water shortage that has seen reservoirs constructed, first within the city bowl, and eventually atop the Mountain. Today much of the city's water supply is dependent upon mountain reservoirs and runoff. Fynbos provides an ideal plant cover for ensuring a good supply of water from mountain catchments, primarily through its low absorption rates and capacity for binding soils. Alien vegetation within catchments can, depending upon its age and the nature of precipitation, reduce runoff by between 30 and 70%. In summer, when needs are greatest, aliens can reduce runoff by 100%, turning perennial streams into seasonal ones.³⁷⁸ Environmental economists have produced statistical analysis, couched in monetary terms, that clearly shows that conserving alien-free, fynbos clad, mountain catchments such as Table Mountain, makes good financial sense. It shows that in the long run, such conservation will provide a greater, cleaner, more reliable runoff, and hence considerable financial savings for local authorities. The concept of 'use it or

³⁷⁷ Brase, W., 1995: *Op cit.*

³⁷⁸ Cowling, R. M., Richardson, D., 1995: *Op cit.*

lose it' is seemingly gaining support and influence over the 'use it and lose it' philosophy that has long dominated the approach of many to Table Mountain.

In analysing Table Mountain from the twin perspectives of modernism and post-modernism there is a clear case for viewing the Mountain in the 1990's as a cultural landscape dominated by conflict. On the one hand there is the modernist approach of SANP with its materialistic view of Table Mountain as an asset in need of order and control. In direct contrast, within a post-modern variety of local interest groups, the Mountain is viewed as a medium for the projection of ideals and values by select spiritual and religious groups, whilst locals and conservationists alike seek to preserve its physical integrity against the destructive influence of developers. Subsequently there is effectively a stand-off whereby, despite growing instances of co-operation, the chief protagonists; developers, managers and conservationists, are at loggerheads, with the Mountain caught in the middle, an ideological battleground. Two further theories of landscape study, in the form of a now, often neglected, Sauerian framework and an iconographical approach to the Mountain shed greater light on the conflictual nature of its cultural landscape as well as adding a series of further dimensions to the meanings and values attached to the Mountain in the 1990's.

Chapter Four: A cultural landscape of artefacts and icons

Just as modernism and post-modernism are useful frameworks for understanding the present Table Mountain cultural landscape, it may well be that in the future, artefacts will provide the means for analysing cultural discourses in the landscape. Hence an analysis of Table Mountain in the 1990's offers an excellent opportunity to reintroduce a Sauerian-style study of artefacts, as a basis for identifying the cultural forces that dominate the Mountain and understanding how human uses and perceptions of it are culturally conditioned. As documented in chapter two, Sauer pioneered the study of the cultural landscape in geography. However, contemporary geographers have heavily criticised and all but abandoned his artefact-based approach for delimiting and understanding modern cultural landscapes. More modernist, positivist geographers have criticised the lack of process inherent in Sauer's overtly historical study of artefacts. Postmodernists meanwhile, have attacked the Sauerian approach as being too holistic and too narrowly defined to adequately comprehend the intricacies of contemporary cultures and their incumbent landscapes. For those who concentrate on a more iconographical approach to landscape, Sauer's main failing was deemed to be his reliance on the superorganic concept of culture. This entailed focusing on more material forms of symbol, or historic artefacts, rather than the more abstract symbols of ideas and values that influence so many of today's cultural landscapes. Perhaps the most overriding, universal criticism directed at Sauer's methodology was that it overlooked cultural processes, and in particular, the forces of production and consumption that are so significant in modern cultural landscapes.

Within the Sauerian approach to landscape there are a series of concepts that are applicable to the study of Table Mountain's cultural landscape in the 1990's. For Sauer, culture is embodied in the custom and tradition recognisable in patterns and marks imprinted upon nature. With Table Mountain a very physical and natural landscape that is still largely uncorrupted by civilisation, the man-made artefacts it does contain are very obvious embodiments of a Sauerian cultural landscape where 'culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium and the cultural landscape the result'.³⁷⁹ The majority of conflicts concerning Table Mountain have revolved around the planning and construction of developments upon it. Attempts to build on the

³⁷⁹ Sauer, C. O., 1925 in: Agnew, J. A., Livingstone, D. N., and Rogers, A., 1996: *Op cit.*

Mountain, which in effect leave contemporary artefacts, have seen fierce arguments between all sectors of the community and even mass public protest. Two key debates over developments on and around the Mountain will be illustrated in order to highlight how a study of contemporary artefacts cannot be oblivious to the cultural forces, especially those of production and consumption that influence modern landscapes. In studying Table Mountain's human artefacts one cannot fail to contemplate the cultural forces that inevitably framed their construction. Modern constructions such as the Cable Car Upgrade and Oudekraal development are in effect a snapshot of the forces behind the wider Table Mountain cultural landscape. In their development the forces of consumption can be seen ranged against those of conservation, and more specifically, the interests and influences of environmentalists and communities, ranged against those of developers and tourist bodies.

By far the most visible, and hence contentious, manmade artefact on Table Mountain is the Aerial Cableway. It is the perceived aesthetic and environmental damage created by the cableway's construction that has seen it become a protracted cause of cultural conflict. The lower station attracts a stream of unsightly parked cars the length of Tafelberg road, whilst the upper station is a discernible pimple viewable from miles away, on the otherwise perfectly flat mountaintop. Nevertheless, since its operation started in 1929 the cable car system has ferried nearly 11 million visitors to the top of Table Mountain.³⁸⁰ Unsightly though it is, none would deny that the Cableway is one of South Africa's premier tourist attractions. In 1991 the Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company (TMACC) outlined its proposal for a much needed upgrading of the cable car operation (plans of which are viewable in plates 25 and 26). With waiting times for the cable car trips reaching five or more hours in peak season, no one disputed the need for an increase in capacity and efficiency.³⁸¹ It was the nature, extent and ultimately the process itself, that saw Table Mountain's various interest groups clash over the upgrade. The intricacies of the Cableway upgrade are many and often convoluted, what this analysis shall focus upon is the polarisation the development caused with tourist boards, developers and commercial interests on the one side and conservationists, mountain support NGO's and elements of the community on the other. Despite the upgrade being completed in October 1997, the

³⁸⁰ Fuggle, R. F., 1996: *Advisory Committee report on the proposed upgrading of the Table Mountain Cableway*. UCT.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

conflict and polarisation still persists (plate 27 shows the upgraded upper cableway facilities).

Once again the polarisation between commerce and conservation interests seemingly produced a 'them and us' mentality. Much of the debate was centred upon the deleterious effect the upgrade was expected to have on the Mountain. Objections were raised that TMACC, having misled the public, were carrying on with their development regardless. Critics claimed that the Cableway Company had not completed the legally required Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) or the promised carrying capacity survey. The result, environmentalists feared, was that the Mountain would be unnecessarily damaged due to a blatant disregard for legal procedures on the part of TMACC. Mountain interest groups, from the Mountain Club to environmental NGO's, feared that commercial interests were again dominating the issue and that TMACC, with the support of the city's commercial powers, was acting as a law unto itself. What is clear is that Cape Town's tourist bodies and other commercial bodies fully supported TMACC during discussion workshops held by the Ministerially appointed Cableway Upgrade Advisory Committee. Groups such as the Guest House Association of Southern Africa and the Tourist Operators Association criticised the long delays brought about by conservationist and community representatives in turn criticising and hence hampering the upgrade process, and pleaded for the upgrade to be completed as soon as possible.³⁸² These organisations saw the Cableway upgrade as vital in marketing Table Mountain and believed lengthy delays could prove economically disastrous. This view was supported by the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce, which claimed to be fully aware of the development versus environment debates, and whilst expressing its support for environmental issues, the Chamber outlined its belief that they should not be allowed to stand in the way of progress. The Chamber also stated that if people wanted the Mountain to stay in its pristine 1688 form then progress, and the job creation and economic development it entailed, would have to be stalled. Such an outcome they predicted, supported by other Cape Town commercial interests ranging from Investment firms to Consultancies, would be disastrous for the Cape³⁸³. Plates 28 and 29 mock the lengthy deliberations over the cableway upgrade.

³⁸² Summary of comments submitted to the Table Mountain Cableway upgrade advisory committee. In Fuggle file.

³⁸³ Table Mountain Cableway upgrade Advisory Committee: 1996: *Minutes of meeting on 16/7/99 concerning the status of the Cableway upgrade*. Fuggle file.

Set against these commercial forces were those of conservation and the community. The upgraded Cableway enables the transportation of 65 (as opposed to the 27 before) people at a time up the Mountain in a considerably quicker process than previously possible.³⁸⁴ It was the environmental impact these people, and the infrastructure needed to support them, would have on the Mountain that concerned conservationists. SANP, as the soon to be appointed managers of the Mountain, once again found themselves in the middle of the conflict, trying to negotiate a solution. Ultimately the upgrade went ahead despite the vehement protests of locals and conservationists who accused SANP of selling out to the developers (they renegotiated with TMACC to receive 10% as opposed to 2.5% of all revenues). Where local communities, led by bodies such as the Upper Valley Ratepayers Association, conflicted with the TMACC was in terms of the noise and aesthetic pollution created by the upgrade. Today issues such as light spillage, sewage disposal and protruding viewing platforms are still outstanding and contentious. Protestors claim that all these problems resulted from TMACC's consistent flaunting of rules and it's ignoring of the promises it made as regards the upgrade uglifying the Mountain.³⁸⁵ Despite public criticism there do not seem to be the mechanisms in place to address these issues and the antagonism between certain capetonians and TMACC is likely to persist. On 18th September 1999, the Cableway Company refused to offer its assistance to a Table Mountain cleaning initiative that coincided with both the International Mountain Protection Day and National Clean Up Week. Mr Harrison, the Chief Executive, defended this public relations debacle by claiming he had been given insufficient time to respond to what he deemed a 'demand' for assistance.³⁸⁶ Such an incident could only act to confirm the suspicions of many Mountain supporters, that commercial interests care little for the integrity or ecology of Table Mountain and merely value it for its financial attributes.

The Oudekraal development is a further example of conflicting perceptions of Table Mountain's cultural landscape. The land at issue, viewable in plate 30, is a large tract of prime mountainous coastline, over which a local landowner holds development rights that he plans to realise in the form of luxury accommodation. What developers see as a legitimate and lucrative commercial site, the community, including Muslims and other religious beliefs, interpret in conservation and spiritual terms. The spiritual

³⁸⁴ Fuggle, R. F., 1996: *Op cit.*

³⁸⁵ Views expressed by Buirski, D., 1999: Interview. And Fagan, H., 1999: Interview.

³⁸⁶ Jordan, B., 1999: Spring clean for top of Table. *Sunday Times, Cape Metro 19/9/99.*

significance of the Oudekraal site for Muslims is very much artefact based. The kramats and other less obvious burial sites that litter Oudekraal's slopes

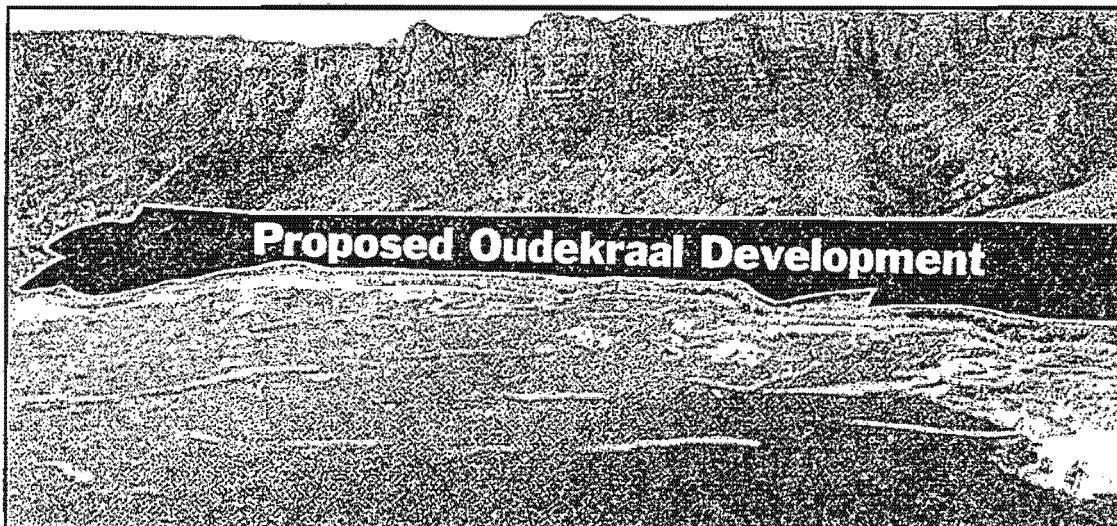


Plate 30: A dramatic depiction of the land viable for development at Oudekraal. (Source: *Cape Times*, 1/10/98)

and form an integral part of the 'Circle of Islam' are vitally important to Cape Muslim culture. In true Sauerian superorganic style, these artefacts transmit elements of the Muslim culture. The burial sites are the visible imprint of the Muslim culture group on the land, a palimpsest that holds the history of the Islamic tradition at the Cape. Behind each kramat and burial site is a legacy, usually the tale of a local saint or holyman, and these artefacts provide a vital link for present Cape Muslims to their past. To the colonial Asians transplanted from their homeland, the Table Mountain landscape was alien and unknown. Now, generations later, it holds much of the spiritual history of Islam at the Cape and is consequently cherished and fiercely guarded by local Muslims. In looking at the creation of contemporary artefacts at Oudekraal the cultural forces that framed their construction, and more specifically the conflict between religious and commercial approaches to the site, are very much apparent. The 'battle for Oudekraal' has resulted in numerous outbursts of conflict in the 1990's and shows no signs of abatement. The legalities, politics and background concerning the issue could provide the scope for a thesis in themselves; so again, this will by necessity, prove a somewhat superficial insight into the debate in a bid to highlight the cultural forces and agendas behind the conflict. One individual privately owns some 44ha of land on the slopes of Table Mountain at Oudekraal for which he claims to have extensive development rights dating back to 1957. These rights are

complicated, yet the owner believes he has the legal right to turn the majority of the site into a luxury built environment.

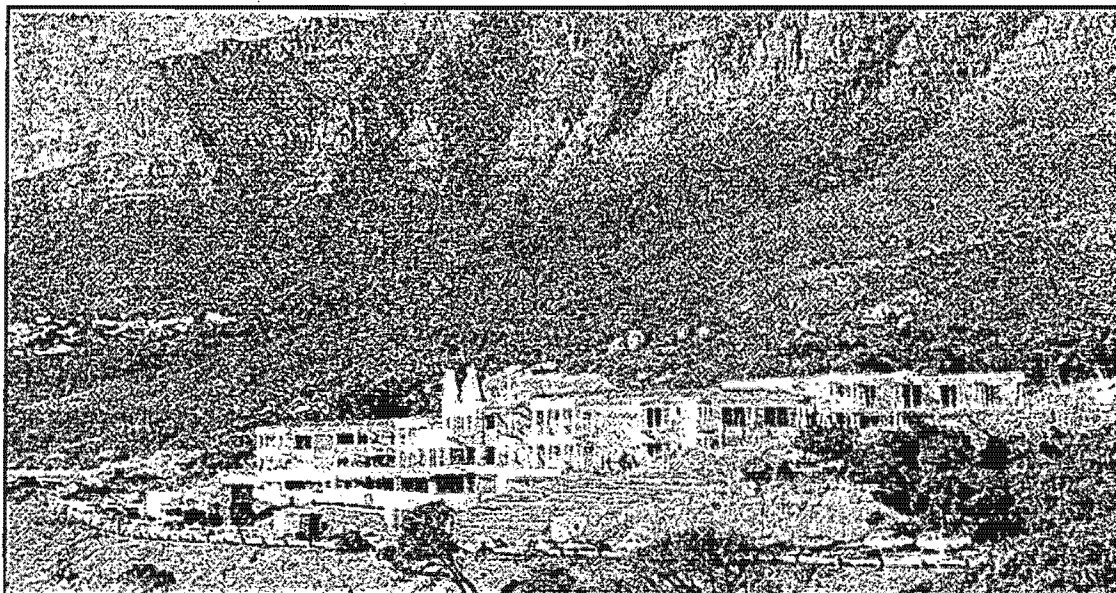


Plate 31: The new White House Hotel complex at Oudekraal.
(Source: Photograph by Lestrade, L., *Cape Argus*, 15/9/98)

Development of a new hotel at the White House Site has, despite heavy protest, been largely completed (the new Hotel is visible in plate 31), and the potential for numerous new buildings, probably in the form of luxury accommodation, is causing widespread alarm. The argument is currently at a stand-off, opponents of the development claim the rights have not only expired but are no longer legally binding or applicable.³⁸⁷ The landowner is seemingly unwilling to test his rights in court, whilst SANP are keen to negotiate, and this will in all probability involve establishing a trade-off whereby some development is allowed in return for the majority of the site being incorporated into the CPMP. Conservationists see the site as unique within the CPMP as it offers the potential for 'coast to crest' conservation of a cross section of the Cape floral Kingdom that is free (bar a road) from any human artifice. As such, these groups are unwilling to compromise, believing that any development of the site must be prevented. Seemingly this is another classical Table Mountain debate, commerce versus conservation, SANP negotiating in the middle. Where the Oudekraal debate differs is in the fierce, united public outcry it produced from thousands of capetonians and the Muslim community in particular. Oudekraal has proved by far the greatest rallying point for those seeking to defend and preserve

³⁸⁷ Gosling, W., 1997: Oudekraal deal on the cards. *Cape Times* 9/10/97.

Table Mountain and has produced some unlikely alliances within the plethora of cultural approaches to the Mountain. February 1996 saw scores of protestors take to the streets of Cape Town in defence of the Mountain and Oudekraal in particular. These 'Guardians of the Mountain' attempted to catch the attention of President Mandela by marching to the opening ceremony of Parliament brandishing placards proclaiming 'Earth first, money later' and 'kill the Earth, kill your children'.³⁸⁸ Ultimately 24 of these demonstrators were arrested; adding to the numerous other protestors arrested over the years at Oudekraal itself, which for a period, saw the development guarded by shotgun toting security men.³⁸⁹

The sheer depth of antagonism felt toward the plans for Oudekraal is highlighted best in the mass protest marches organised in its defence. For Muslims especially, Oudekraal has immense spiritual significance, it holds the kramat of Sheikh Noorul Mubeen, which is a fundamental part of the Cape's Circle of Islam'. Additionally the slopes at Oudekraal are the resting-place of hundreds of Muslim slaves dating back to the colonial days. To develop the site would be sacrilege to the Muslim community. The spiritual significance of Oudekraal extended beyond Muslims, and in October 1997, 30 Sangomas from the Western Cape Traditional Healers Association marched on the site. They warned that the ancestors were angry with developers repeatedly 'raping the Mountain' and after performing a sacred ritual nearby (they were not allowed on the site), warned that the ancestors had 'forbidden development, it has been cursed and will be severely punished'.³⁹⁰ Other, more commercially orientated, interests, also supported the protests against Oudekraal including the chief executives of Captour and the Olympic Bid Company, proclaiming that development must be environmentally sustainable. This view was supported by the then Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Dr Pallo Jordan, who likened the overdevelopment of Table Mountain for short-term benefits to 'cutting off our nose to spite our face'.³⁹¹ The upshot of this cross-cultural opposition to the development was tens of thousands of protestors embarking on a series of marches in 1996-7, which seem to have stalled proceedings.

³⁸⁸ De Villiers, D., 1996: Protestors play cat and mouse with the police. *Sunday Times, Cape Metro* 4/2/96.

³⁸⁹ Bowyer, J., De Villiers, C., 1996: White House: Greens out – shotgun guards in. *Sunday Times, Cape Metro* 4/2/96.

³⁹⁰ Wrigley, R., 1997: Angry Sangomas put a curse on Table Mountain development. *Sunday Independent* 26/10/97.

³⁹¹ Vongai, C., 1996: *Op cit.*

The mass appeal of the challenge to Oudekraal's development is at least partially due to its ability to evoke fears for the Mountain's future in sections of community that are not traditionally associated with conflicts concerning Table Mountain. These fears were undoubtedly fuelled by media reports that latched on to capetonians parochial approach to the Mountain, by suggesting that Oudekraal was being developed by, and for, foreigners. Headlines such as 'Monte Carlo Mountain' and rumours of a complex larger than the Waterfront being planned, evidently stirred the emotions of local citizens.³⁹² Worse still were reports of the Oudekraal properties, as yet unbuilt and not even permitted, being advertised for sale in Gauteng.³⁹³ Added to these reports was news that fibreglass models of Table Mountain and the 12 Apostles were being used for planning purposes by developers in Malaysia, Japan and the USA.³⁹⁴ The concept of Table Mountain being drawn up and divided by uncaring developers, continents away, is a powerful one for its protectors to draw upon. As has been highlighted countless times before, capetonians are fiercely devoted to their Mountain, they feel passionately about it, and if the idea of foreigners controlling and corrupting it from miles away could not stir them up in protest, then nothing could. Sauer's belief that artefacts are the vehicles for transmitting culture in the landscape is reflected in capetonians fears over developments at Oudekraal. The plans for luxury accommodation, golf courses and marinas being developed for tourists are symptomatic of the commercial forces that influence Table Mountain's natural landscape in the 1990's. The underlying concern for locals is that these developments will effectively, through their construction being geared to appeal to tourists, transmit the qualities of foreign cultures in the Table Mountain cultural landscape. This concern again highlights the fear of capetonians that they are progressively becoming 'outsiders' from a Table Mountain cultural landscape that is increasingly reflecting the values of external cultures. The Oudekraal issue clearly demonstrates the ability of Table Mountain to unite cultures, despite their contrasting outlooks, both in life and in their perceptions of Table Mountain as a cultural landscape, in a common response in rallying to the defence of the Mountain.

In the case of Oudekraal and the Cableway upgrade, as well as other debates regarding developments upon the Mountain, the principal concern appears to be over the legacy today's society bequeaths future generations. This concern is very much

³⁹² De Villiers, C., 1996: Fears over 'Monte Carlo' on Mountain. *Sunday Times, Cape Metro* 4/2/96.

³⁹³ Gosling, W., 1997: Developers woo investors. *Cape Times* 28/2/97.

³⁹⁴ De Villiers, C., 1996: Fears over 'Monte Carlo' on Mountain. *Sunday Times, Cape Metro* 4/2/96.

linked to Sauerian theory as people fear what others will think of them if they turn Table Mountain into a 'cheap hotel site'.³⁹⁵ A recurring theme is the fear of contemporary capetonians that the future of Table Mountain as a cultural landscape is in their hands and they do not wish to see it become a concrete, theme park, characterised by hotels, car parks and tourist facilities. This fear is neatly captured in the plaintive wail of one capetonian, 'Goodbye Cape Town, hello Los Angeles'.³⁹⁶ Hence, the construction today, of what will one day become the historical artefacts that modern capetonians believe they will be judged by, causes such fierce emotions, debate and often, conflict. One local likened developing Table Mountain to spraying the statue of liberty with graffiti, a desecration of a national icon.³⁹⁷

In adopting a Sauerian style study of the diffusion of artefacts upon the Mountain it is possible to identify the extent of various culture groups influence in shaping the cultural landscape. Table Mountain is still a predominantly natural environment yet constructions such as the Cableway and White House Hotel at Oudekraal clearly show the slow but insidious creep of commercialism and its forces of consumption into the Mountain's cultural landscape. However such an approach only presents one side of the story, in every artefact upon Table Mountain's construction there has been opposition, debate and often conflict. Therefore what is required is, in effect, a post-Sauerian approach, one that takes into account the full, conflictual, nature of the process behind these artefacts construction. Such a process, just as Berger decreed in looking behind the 'curtain' of landscape, must entail looking beyond the superficial structures and dispersions of artefacts and analyse the discourses that framed their construction. If such an analysis can take Sauer's methodology this stage further, beyond it's much criticised 'object fetishism',³⁹⁸ then it can provide an invaluable insight into the psyche of capetonians in their approach to Table Mountain. The conflicts and compromises surrounding developments such as the Cableway and Oudekraal undoubtedly represent the most revealing example of the wide variety of forces, be they religious, conservationist, community based, or embodied by the park's managers, which control and shape the Mountain's cultural landscape. Hence,

³⁹⁵ Rubiero, V., 1999 in: Grassroots-have your say. Discussion forum at <http://www.modelsforthemountain.co.za>.

³⁹⁶ Mowszowski, R., 1997: Everyone loves the fairest Cape, but can such beauty survive the world's embrace? *Sunday Independent*.

³⁹⁷ Gardner, J., 1997 in: Grassroots-have your say. Discussion forum at <http://www.modelsforthemountain.co.za>.

³⁹⁸ Duncan, J. S., in: Price, M., and Lewis, M., 1993: *Op cit*.

in looking at the contemporary artefacts of Table Mountain, whether planned or realised, it is possible to uncover the social forces and particularly those of production, consumption and increasingly conservation that so dominate Table Mountain's cultural landscape in the 1990's.

Chapter Five: The iconography of contemporary Table Mountain

This chapter has so far utilised three geographical frameworks with which to interpret the cultural landscape of Table Mountain in the 1990's; modernist, post-modern and Sauerian. However, there is an equally strong aesthetic and iconographical value to Table Mountain that exists alongside all three of these frameworks and applies to the people of Cape Town and beyond, no matter what their cultural outlook upon the Mountain. From supermarket adverts to government logos, Table Mountain's image is a much utilised, multicultural symbol, easily identified and readily associated with. Yet this instant recognition factor goes beyond Table Mountain being an icon for all things capetonian, it is also very much a symbol for the nation. Consequently, there is merit in deconstructing the 1990's iconography of Table Mountain, in viewing it as a socially constructed text, reflective of the societies responsible for its production and consumption. The view of Cosgrove and Daniels³⁹⁹ that 'every culture weaves its world out of image and symbol' has clear relevance to Table Mountain as its cultural landscape embodies and portrays all that South Africa is and aspires to become.

Table Mountain is an icon for a new, brighter and better future for both Cape Town and South Africa. On a national scale, the government, and Nelson Mandela in particular, have been quick to utilise the universal appeal of Table Mountain, as something that is quintessentially South African, and therefore an icon for nation building. On World Environment Day, 5th June 1998, President Mandela gave a speech in which he recalled how during his many years of incarceration on Robben Island, he and his fellow inmates looked longingly across Table Bay at the magnificent silhouette of Table Mountain. In their eyes, Table Mountain was a symbol of freedom and of the land to which they hoped to one-day return. In a sense Robben Island was again Dante's purgatory and Table Mountain a distant paradise, seemingly unreachable, a far-off beacon of hope. Mandela detailed how, over the centuries, Table Mountain has stood as a symbol of the human capacity for patient endurance, moral courage and strength. It has been both a refuge and a symbol of hope and freedom, whether for the khoi-khoi tribes fighting colonial domination, for Indonesian and Malayan slaves who for generations have buried their leaders, scholars and holymen on its slopes, or for twentieth century political prisoners.

³⁹⁹ Cosgrove, D., Daniels, S., 1998: *Op cit.*

Mandela also made an analogy between the Mountain and the nation, as if the fate of the two were intertwined. He told how as a people and a country, South Africa is embarking on a long, arduous and challenging climb. This climb he likened to an ascent of Table Mountain, in meeting new people and making new friends in warm and encouraging encounters as a host of different voices urged you onward saying 'not much further to the top'.⁴⁰⁰ The overriding sentiment being one of a determination to succeed coupled with unity and optimism, two vital ingredients for a successful climb. Again, Dante's ascent to paradise springs to mind, as South Africa climbs the challenging peaks whilst constructing a new democracy, hoping one day to reach the ultimate plateau and there find an utopian paradise.

Indeed, establishing Table Mountain as a national park was as much an exercise in nation building as conservation. The Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Dawie De Villiers (1996⁴⁰¹), told of his hopes that Table Mountain and the new park 'would become a model of co-operative governance and help build national unity and trust'. Clearly the management of such a national icon was, and still is, extremely important to the psyche of the whole nation. The creation of the CPMP, in wresting control away from the authorities and private landowners of old, and putting the land into the hands of a national institution, to serve and belong to all South Africans, was a powerful ideology, very much in keeping with the ethos of the new South Africa. The transformation and revitalisation of the nation's premier icon, was a clear demonstration, to the people of South Africa and the world, that the nation was itself dedicated to change and regeneration.

Furthermore, there was something deeply symbolic in Mandela's gift of Table Mountain and the new park to the rest of the world on World Environment Day. The gift was made as part of the conservation organisation's, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), campaign that encouraged governments, international organisations, individuals and corporations to work together to achieve unprecedented levels of nature conservation.⁴⁰² Mandela's dedication of Table Mountain his country's and one of the world's greatest natural icons, to this cause, was testament to the fact that South

⁴⁰⁰ WWF Press Release, 1998: President Mandela pledges Cape Park as gift to the Earth.

<http://www.panda.org/news>.

⁴⁰¹ Yeld, J., 1996: De Villiers bows out with appeal for joint Mountain management. *Cape Argus* 17/5/96.

⁴⁰² WWF Press Release, 1998: *Op cit*.

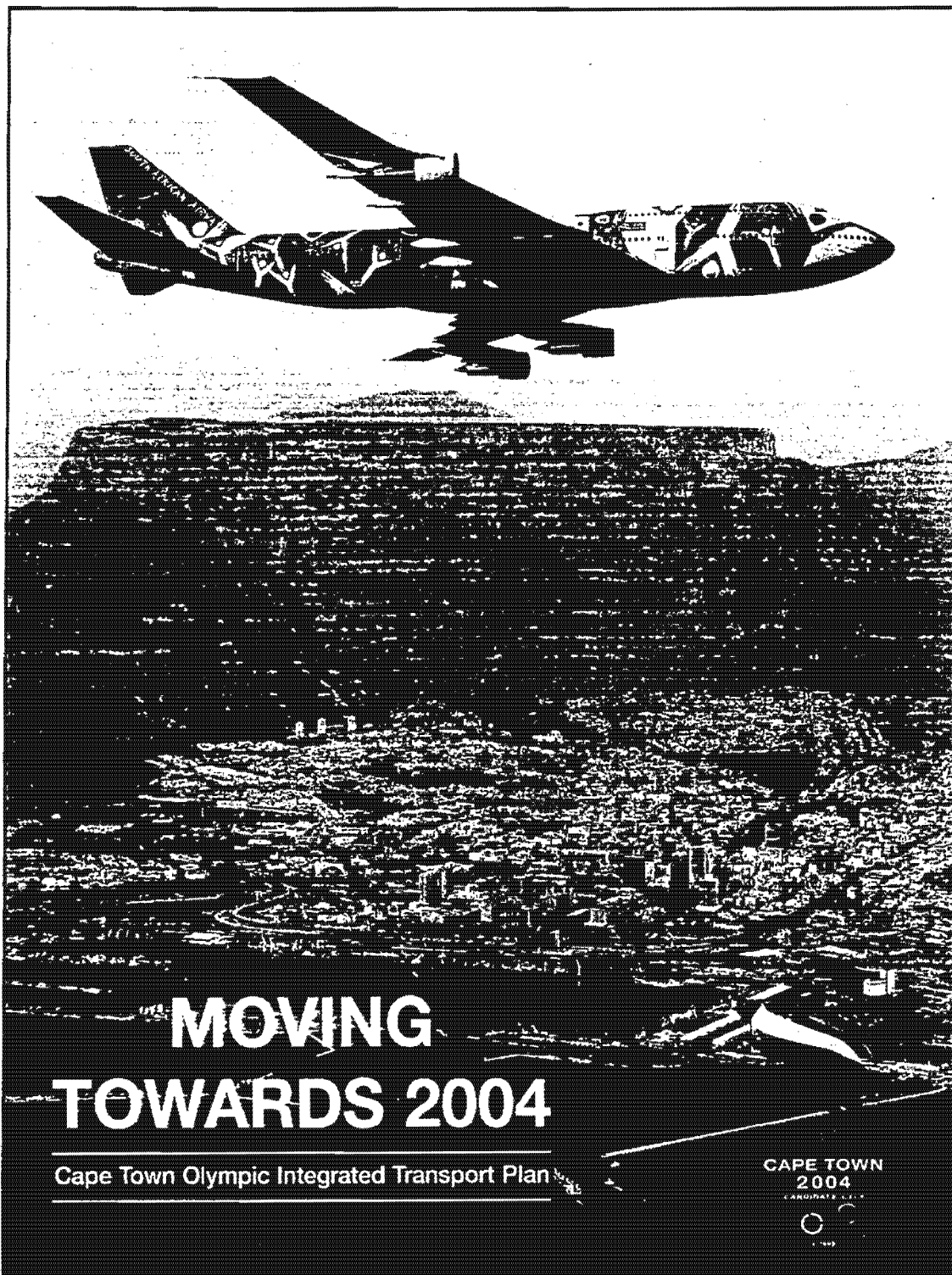


Plate 32: A South African Airways Jumbo Jet bedecked in the national colours flies over Table Mountain, an image used to promote Cape Town's 2004 Olympics bid. (Source: Cape Town Olympic Bid Company, 1995: *Moving Towards 2004: Cape Town Olympic Integrated Transport Plan*. Frontispiece.)

Africa was not only committed to transforming itself, but also the world into a better environment for living.

The fact that Cape Town relies heavily on Table Mountain for promoting and attracting commerce, and tourism in particular, has already been illustrated. However, the city's use of the Mountain goes further than a mere marketing ploy. The Table Mountain cultural landscape has all the qualities that Cape Town itself wishes to be associated with on a wider scale. In presenting Table Mountain as a place of cultural harmony, scenic and natural beauty and mystery, and as a unique, yet easily accessible landscape, the city clearly hopes to deflect some of the more negative perceptions of Africa, that have by default extended to South Africa and Cape Town. In looking at how the city promotes itself, locally, nationally and internationally, it is readily apparent that Table Mountain is everything to Cape Town. The Cape Town Olympic bid utilised the Mountain at every opportunity. Perhaps the classic example of the Olympic bid's reliance on the iconography of Table Mountain to broaden and enhance its appeal is evident in the Cape Town Olympic Integrated Transport Plan (see plate 32).⁴⁰³ The frontispiece of this text marries two quintessentially South African icons the South African Airways Jumbo Jet, resplendent in the national colours, which is flying just above the Tabletop. The grey expanse of the Mountain face is the perfect backdrop to highlight the multicoloured plane and vibrant city bowl. Deconstructing the juxtaposition of the Jumbo Jet, the ultimate in transport, the thriving city and port, and naturally beautiful Mountain suggests that the modern city, advanced transport and natural environment all exist in harmony. In focusing attention on the natural amphitheatre of the universally loved Table Mountain, the bid recognised it as the city's biggest asset and sought to use it to deflect concerns at the time about the city's and, indeed, the nation's future. The message seemed to be that whatever the future holds, Cape Town will have Table Mountain and surely there can be no better natural backdrop for the Games. Table Mountain is Cape Town and South Africa's key to global recognition. During the millennium celebrations, global media will focus upon Table Mountain (and hence Cape Town) for the final countdown to 2000 (see plate 33). Egypt, another focal point for global millennium celebrations, is planning a laser show on the pyramids. South Africa will counter this event by utilising its two greatest icons; Mandela, who will be at a party on Robben

⁴⁰³ Cape Town Olympic Bid Company, 1995: *Moving towards 2004: Cape Town Olympic Integrated Transport Plan*. Cape Town.

Island, and Table Mountain, which will have a laser projected countdown upon its slopes. The plan is for the eyes of the world, nation and all capetonians to be on Table Mountain at this historic time.

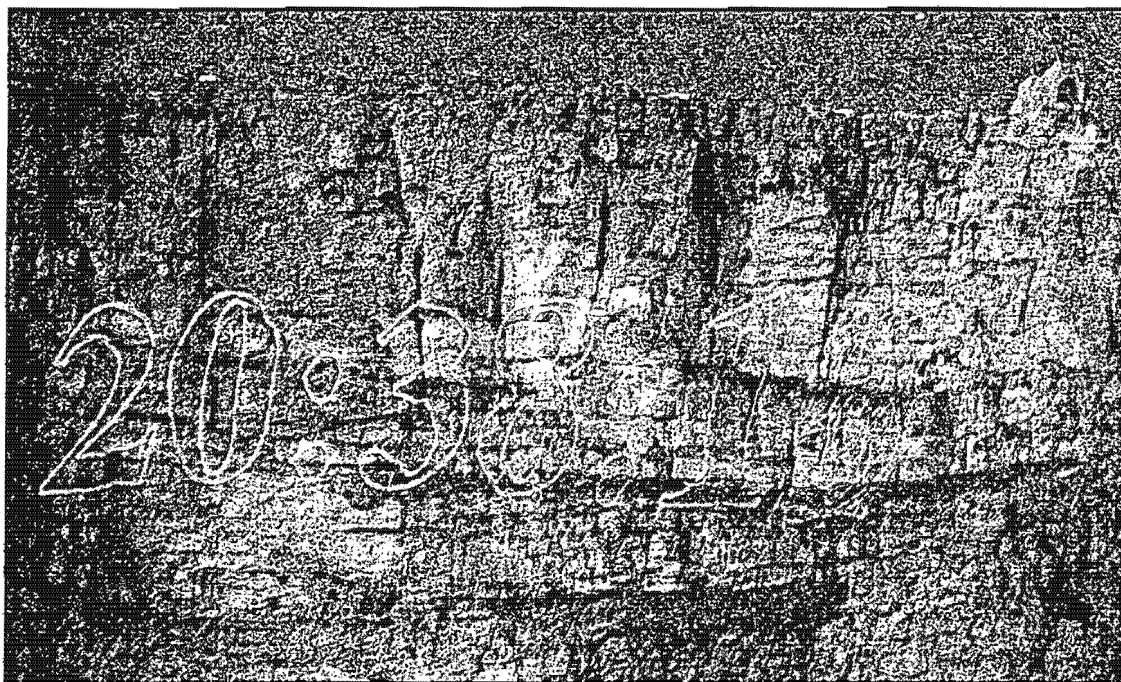


Plate 33: Picture of the practice laser show on Table Mountain in preparation for the Millennium celebrations in Cape Town.

(Source: Photograph by Thiart, H., *Cape Times*, 26/8/99)

The value of Table Mountain as an icon is more to Cape Town than a means of external promotion; it is also a medium for internal rebuilding and unification. As we have seen Table Mountain means something to all capetonians, and the city authorities see the common ground this love for the Mountain holds as the medium through which to reach and unify all sectors of the community. The city's emblem (see plate 34) for the millennium celebration is testament to the significance Table Mountain plays in the lives and outlooks of all capetonians. The emblem's rationale explains that the Mountain forms the most prominent feature in the image due to its instant recognition and appeal, both at home and abroad. The loose feel of Table Mountain in the emblem is supposed to epitomise the progressive attitude of the city and its inhabitants, which is vibrantly depicted below the Mountain by the red band whose gold dash is symptomatic of its cosmopolitan composition. The blue band symbolises the blue, unpolluted skies and oceans, and the green reflects the lush natural environment that surrounds the city. The largest stroke, transcending time (as represented by the 12 indicators of a clock), that soars above the Mountain, represents

the celebration of the spirit of mankind.⁴⁰⁴ In deconstructing the iconography of this emblem the message is clear. Table Mountain is the universal beacon, which Cape Town wishes to build its future around, a timeless landscape of cultural harmony and a source of joy and inspiration to all capetonians.

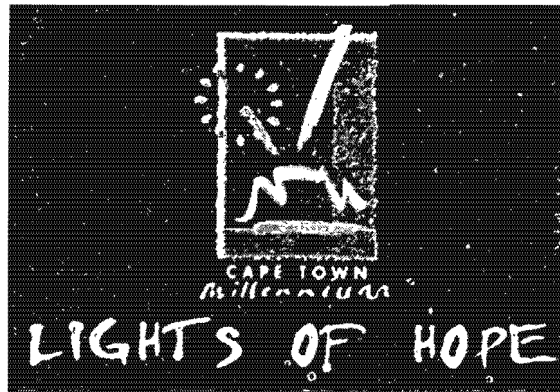
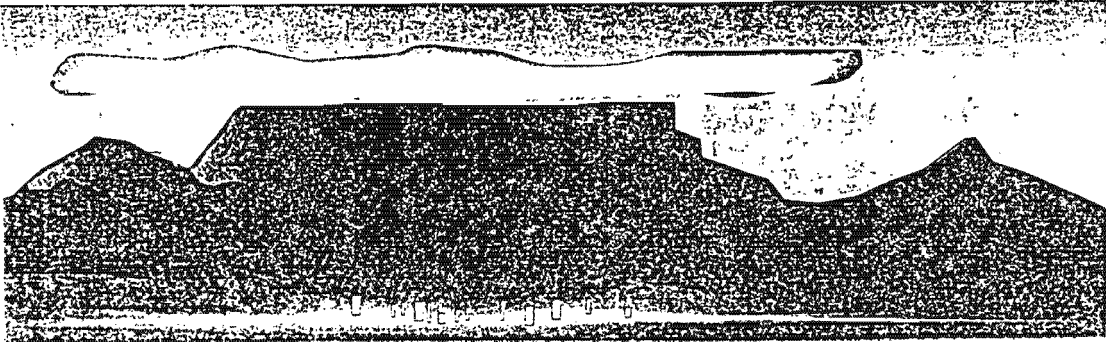


Plate 34: Cape Town's millennium emblem.
(Source: CMC, 1999)

The mass appeal of Table Mountain as regards capetonians has not been lost on local companies who frequently utilise its image for advertising purposes. Companies such as 'Pick n Pay Supermarkets' have built their whole corporate image around the Mountain. 'Pick n Pay' are a national body whose origins lie in Cape Town and to celebrate this fact, and at the same time capitalise on the parochial nature of capetonians, the company uses Table Mountain as a rallying point for local support. Hence the company promotes Cape Town events alongside its own discount offers with slogans such as 'Millennium Magic: we're setting the table for 2000' referring to the city's planned millennium party and 'We're setting the table for 2000' an advert linked to the Cape Town Olympic bid (see plates 35 and 36). The image of Table Mountain forms the central focus of these advertisements, with the company trying to attach itself to the sense of community spirit and unity engendered by the Mountain and events such as the Olympic bid and Millennium celebration. The Mountain's image is visible in an immensely diverse range of commercial advertising, from local plumbers to national banks. Many of these adverts play on the strikingly visual nature

⁴⁰⁴ Cape Town City Council, 1999: Creation of an emblem for the city's Millennium celebration.
<http://www.ctcc.gov.za>.

We're setting the table for 2004...



Pick'n Pay
Discount Supermarket

Pick'n Pay

Discount & FAMILY Supermarkets

We're setting the table for 2000



Plates 35 and 36: 'Pick' n Pay' Supermarkets adverts for the Cape Town Olympic Bid and Millennium celebration respectively which utilise Table Mountain.
(Source: Extracted From *Cape Argus* adverts in 6/8/96 and 11/11/99 respectively)

of the Mountain, for example, the planned Casino development in Cape Town has billboards claiming 'the cards are on the Table' with an image depicting a hand of cards splayed across the Tabletop (shown in plate 37). Similarly the arrival of a new car dealership in Cape Town was promoted in advertisements with the Corporate badge of the firm rising like a new sun over Table Mountain and the city (see plate 38). The universal appeal and instant recognition factor of Table Mountain affords companies that use it as an advertising prop an excellent means of integrating and associating themselves with Cape Town and its parochial citizens.

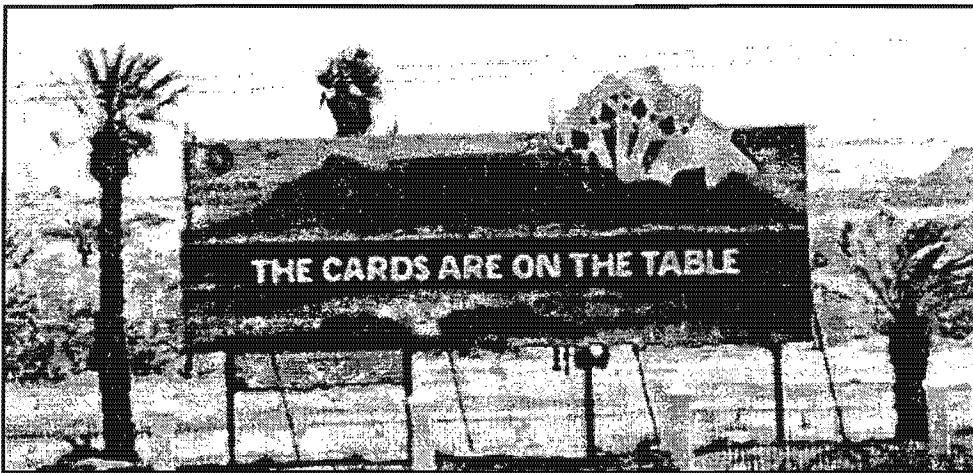


Plate 37: A roadside billboard advertising Cape Town's planned casino.
(Source: Photograph courtesy of Poyser, M.)



Plate 38: An advert for a new car dealership opening in Cape Town.
(Source: *Cape Times* 10/7/99)

One final value that must be recognised in studying the cultural landscape of Table Mountain in the 1990's, is its aesthetic appeal and value. The mental construction capetonians have of Table Mountain, what they think and believe it should look like, is very important and has been an undercurrent in all the approaches this chapter has studied. In some instances it would appear that local citizens are more concerned with the view of Table Mountain, its silhouette and profile than what happens to its contents. During the Cableway debate much of the local protests came from the suburbs below the facility and centred upon the visual impact of the development rather than any environmental issue. Protests ranged from complaints that viewing platforms protruded from the profile, and that lights in the upper station spoil the otherwise perfectly black night time silhouette, to concern at plans that would see pipes on the Mountain scar and uglify its image.



Plate 39: Garden and Table Mountain, Bloubergstrand and Cape Town.
(Source: Goldblatt, D., 1998: *South Africa: the structure of things then*. Oxford University Press, Cape Town. p39.)

In the increasingly consumer-orientated culture that is blossoming in Cape Town, the Mountain is almost a luxury, fashionable accessory. Cape Style magazine,⁴⁰⁵ a text reflective of this emerging culture group, recently ran an article on which Cape Town eateries offered the best views with their food, promoting Table Mountain as the perfect backdrop to luxury dining. It commended restaurants with 'a picture-postcard view of Table Mountain spread across the picture window'. Similarly many of the new, designer homes constructed in Cape Town, incorporate huge viewing windows, glass enclosed dining rooms and wide balconies, all geared to soaking up the view of the Mountain. Plate 39, David Goldblatt's⁴⁰⁶ photograph 'Garden and Table Mountain, Bloubergstrand and Cape Town, Cape,' is a prime example of 1990's living embracing the Mountain and, despite the absence of a family, the hose-pipe, lawn, birdbath and garden ornament are cogent signifiers of the domestication and private ownership of the natural landscape. In this image the most acclaimed view of the Mountain, from across Table Bay, has been privatised and the Cape's colonial frontier neatly turned into someone's front garden.⁴⁰⁷ Hence, when construction or management policies impact upon this aesthetic evaluation of the Mountain, opposition is quick to surface. Several of the NGO's that featured in this chapter in defending the Mountain are not primarily concerned with the environmental status of Table Mountain. Groups such as Save Table Mountain are more Mountain purists than conservationists; they seek to preserve this mental and visual construction of Table Mountain, of how they believe it should appear and what it should represent. In an age of growing environmental pressure and ever increasing economic demands both globally, and especially in Cape Town, perhaps such concerns are too idealistic. Maybe in such a pressurised climate, Table Mountain can no longer support the spectrum of cultural landscapes that varying groups perceive in it without an element of compromise. One is inclined to think back to the park manager's dam analogy, in that these capetonians, in cherishing the Mountain's pristine form and resisting it's commercial development and all the corruption they believe such a process entails, are perhaps failing to take into account the wider realities that the SANP and those who govern the city simply cannot ignore.

⁴⁰⁵ Kloot, L., 1999: Rooms with a view. *Cape Style Magazine*, Dec/Jan 99, Cape Town.

⁴⁰⁶ Photograph called Garden and Table Mountain, Bloubergstrand and Cape Town, Cape. In Goldblatt, D., 1998: *South Africa: the structure of things then*. Oxford University Press. Cape Town.

⁴⁰⁷ This analysis is based on views expressed by Vergunst, N., 1999: Interview, who is responsible for South Africa National Gallery's forthcoming Table Mountain project.

Conclusion

Attempting to describe, to textualise, just what Table Mountain means and represents as a cultural landscape to Capetonians in the 1990's is a challenging task. In highlighting the many views, issues and conflicts the Mountain generates, some sense of the Mountain's mass appeal has become apparent. Certainly the fact that any issue concerning Table Mountain, any new path or sign, any development or management plan, from a much needed upgrade to a millennium laser show, is invariably debated, often heatedly, and inevitably brings a conflict of interests, is testament to the Mountain's significance to the city and beyond. The overriding sense in many of these conflicts is that they often owe more to personal rivalries, politics and power struggles than to concern for the Mountain's best interests. What is absolutely clear is that Capetonians, particularly those with influence, appreciate that Table Mountain in the 1990's is a vital and unique asset. Apartheid, through its much-maligned social policies and all its inherent inequalities, left the Cape Peninsula as a landscape of great natural beauty; its imposed isolation bequeathed Cape Town a natural and scenic magnificence. Capetonians subsequently feel blessed that Table Mountain and its unique environment belongs to them. For the communities forcibly removed from its slopes under apartheid, the Mountain is again part of their lives, no longer an unreachable, distant backdrop and a symbol of what they had lost, but a landscape offering a brighter future of what they can have again.

The Table Mountain landscape in the 1990's may still be physically dominating, but it is not so culturally. Contrasts with the frequent personification of the Mountain in section two as something omnipotent, unconquerable, often malevolent, sometimes benign and always intriguing, and what this cultural landscape has become in the 1990's, could not be more acute. Today instead of the Mountain being their protective natural fortress, Capetonians feel the need to be its guardians. Humans are deemed to be all-powerful and granted the ability to save or destroy Table Mountain. As different interest groups vie for their construct of the Mountain landscape to become the dominant one, conflict is inevitable. Unlike in centuries past, the Mountain cannot stand alien and impervious to the cultures below, it cannot stand alone against, or divorced from, the pressures of the twentieth century. Hence the Mountain needs management, it needs a champion and sadly it needs to justify its existence to the city

below if it is to resist its advances. Table Mountain as a cultural landscape in the 1990's is fragmented, the Mountain as an icon, as an everyday lived in reality, and as a mental construct, means something different to everyone who views it. Whether this polyvocality exists in years to come, or whether many peoples worst fears come about; that Table Mountain become a park landscape characterised by uniformity and global commercialism, can only be speculated upon. In light of such views, the conflict and tension that dominate Table Mountain in the 1990's, are signs that such uniformity, and subsequently cultural hegemony, is being contested and that the Mountain landscape is still very much a polyvocal one.

Concluding remarks

It is impossible for any text to do Table Mountain justice. One must experience its aura and behold its towering presence first hand in order to appreciate the true splendour of the Mountain. A text based study of Table Mountain's cultural landscape must be wary of such limitations whilst accepting that written and artistic records and representations of the Mountain, for all their cultural conditioning and authorial and reader bias, undoubtedly remain the only real means for uncovering the depth of feeling that Table Mountain has evoked in Capetonians past and present.

The sheer variety of cultures at the Cape over the centuries and their conditioned perceptions of the Mountain landscape ensures that no one geographic approach to landscape can adequately define or represent the intricacies of Table Mountain's cultural landscape. The highly individual and subjective effect Table Mountain has on its viewers essentially means that the Mountain could not fit into any one specific landscape framework, be it South African or international. As a landscape reflective of a spectrum of cultures, Table Mountain in the 1990's is a truly eclectic cultural landscape. Nevertheless certain theories and ideologies within the landscape discipline in geography clearly lend themselves to viewing and interpreting the Mountain. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Table Mountain was the subject of an overpowering, imperial materialist doctrine that tainted and prejudiced the Mountain's perception, interpretation and representation both at the Cape and back in Europe. In the 1990's Table Mountain's cultural landscape has become more varied in its construction, reflecting the increasingly cosmopolitan composition of Cape Town's populace. Hence the Mountain in the 1990's can simultaneously be viewed as the perfect embodiment of a post-modern, polyvocal cultural landscape, one of many and varied meanings as well as an increasingly controlled and structured modernist National Park. The tension between these two ideological interpretations of the Mountain has arguably become the defining characteristic of its contemporary cultural landscape.

Meanwhile the few traces of human artifice upon the Mountain ensure that any new construction or development upon Table Mountain is fiercely contested and, in true Sauerian style, can reveal much of the cultural forces that define and shape

perceptions of the Mountain. That said, perhaps the greatest layering of meaning regarding Table Mountain is revealed through deconstructing the iconography of its landscape. Certainly in the early centuries of the Cape colony, Table Mountain was reproduced artistically in a grossly distorted fashion seeking to highlight its role as a feature of the bizarre, wild, and yet unique and intriguing, 'Dark Continent'. In the 1990's Table Mountain is no longer an eurocentric icon, but one for Cape Town and the nation of South Africa, a symbol of hope, unity and a brighter future. Perhaps the best way to conclude a study of what Table Mountain means as a cultural landscape to people, past and present, is to outline which facets and characteristics of its seventeenth and eighteenth century meanings have endured and which have evolved, been distorted or replaced by society in the 1990's.

The Mountain's power as a cultural landscape derives from the fact that it is an inherently natural, relatively unaltered landscape, immediately adjacent to what is now an intensely urban territory. This juxtaposition of man and nature over the centuries has consistently encouraged a peculiarly over-determined form of imaginary projection of ideas and values onto the Mountain landscape. What has changed between the early colonial years and the 1990's is the nature of these projections. In the imperial, eurocentric gaze of the Cape's early visitors and settlers, interpretations of the Mountain's landscape were polarised between visions of paradise or purgatory. Contemporary culture has overcome these imperial prejudices, yet the view of the Mountain is still somewhat polarised between local capetonians and conservationists who wish to preserve the Mountain's spiritual, ecological and iconographical integrity against those who seek to realise its economic potential and utilise the Mountain as an asset. Just as European colonists were polarised in their perceptions of the Mountain, capetonians in the 1990's are seemingly equally divided, between those who see usage of the Mountain as ultimately corrupting and destroying its meaning and integrity, and those who view such utilisation as Table Mountain's best chance of survival in the capitalist pressured modern world.

The most acute difference between the early sailors and colonists, and modern capetonians is in their relationship with the Mountain. Table Mountain's power, influence and even its gender have all been transformed and ultimately eroded. Now, in the 1990's the once all-powerful titan of the seas needs people to protect it and

ensure its survival. Table Mountain was an awesome guarding force at the Cape, be it as an imprisoned titan, one of the Earth's four guardians or simply as the gateway to Africa; the Mountain was a landscape of mystery, power and intrigue. Now every inch of it is mapped and allocated a use whereby the Mountain may serve the people either as a recreational site or as a bank for selected precious plants. Gone is the sense of mystery that was attached to the dramatic reproductions of Table Mountain in imperial artwork to be replaced with the increasingly ubiquitous usage of the Mountain icon as a means to sell anything from cars to groceries. The fear and intrigue associated with Table Mountain is lost, perhaps an inevitable result of the growing spread of civilisation, which means even the most elderly and infirm can catch a cablecar to explore the Mountain's once unfathomable summit.

However there are also clear themes within Table Mountain's history as a cultural landscape that remain constant. Perhaps the most important of which is that though the fear of the Mountain may have dissipated, the sense of respect its unique profile creates is as tangible now as in the seventeenth century. Table Mountain still evokes a passionate response in all who view it. Modern capetonians, just like Van Riebeck centuries earlier, still look up at the Mountain's heights to wonder at its presence and speculate on what weather it might bring forth. The breathtaking nature of the ocean, Mountain and cloud formation is still dramatically depicted (if now realistically) in numerous postcards, which, as in previous centuries, often find their way back to Europe and beyond, whilst portraying the Mountain as a unique and spectacular African landscape. Modern South African tourist literature readily utilises the Mountain to sell an image of Africa, though this time not as the embodiment of the imperial construct of the 'Dark Continent', but instead as a unique, beautiful and welcoming landscape with something to offer travellers the world over. In effect Table Mountain is still the gateway to Africa. Cape Town is the first port of call for many tourists new to Africa and offers a cosmopolitan, and subsequently gentle, introduction to the unfamiliar continent.

Furthermore, despite attempts to open up the new Mountain park and make it more accessible and useable for locals and tourists alike, Table Mountain still exists as a backdrop to Cape Town. The Mountain is still a landscape and not a place. Table Mountain is not urbanised and holds little infrastructure, hence the contrast between

its green and rugged slopes and the sprawling city that encircles it ensures that the Mountain remains a distinctly different, and identifiable, natural landscape, divorced from the cityscape below. Similarly some trace of the Mountain's mischievous and unpredictable personality remain, the south-easter still rips over its slopes and the Tablecloth swirls mysteriously whilst sporadic fires ignite the Mountain slopes lending them an eerie glow at night. Past or present, people never grow complacent with the Mountain's presence, it is as ever a geographical landmark – a point of reference, a source of inspiration and wonder, and above all else it is what makes Cape Town special.

Finally it is time to consider what this study has added to the discourse of landscape within geography. Despite utilising a broad temporal perspective and a varied spectrum of theories and ideologies, this contemplation of Table Mountain is by no means the definitive guide to the Mountain's cultural landscape. Indeed, the paths to interpreting and understanding the Mountain's complex cultural values and meanings are many and varied.

To the South African landscape tradition contemplating Table Mountain as a cultural landscape has added a much-needed human, experiential focus to the study of inherently natural landscapes. It is bizarre that an appreciation of Table Mountain's cultural landscape has not been undertaken previously, yet this is perhaps a legacy of the nation's geographic tradition whereby natural landscapes are the realm of the physical, positivist geographer and urban, manmade landscape are the exclusive domain of human geographers. The Table Mountain landscape is a bridge between these human and physical ideologies, exclusive to neither; valuable and insightful to both. Furthermore it is apparent that previously overlooked, broader, temporal frameworks of study are both viable and insightful to South African geography. Such a claim is highlighted by the parallels and notable divergences in the manifestations of Table Mountain's cultural landscape over the centuries. In particular, the eras of colonialism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and apartheid in the twentieth, traditionally viewed in individually exclusive terms, hold clear linkages in the ideals and prejudices that framed their approach to both the physical and human elements of Table Mountain.

Cultural landscape studies offer an invaluable insight into South Africa's complex and often contentious cultural history. Table Mountain provides a medium for analysing controversial cultural forces, such as colonialism and apartheid, and their impact on both man and nature. Cultural landscape studies offer the South African geographer a means for uncovering much of the nation's immense, but often overlooked, cultural wealth and diversity. Furthermore, especially in the case of Table Mountain, landscapes can be a mechanism for uniting the nation's spectrum of cultural values around one universal icon. In effect, in supporting and tolerating a plethora of cultural interpretations, evaluations and usages, Table Mountain has achieved the multicultural harmony the whole nation is striving for. Ultimately cultural landscape studies, of Table Mountain and beyond, in supporting a broadly temporal, multicultural, human and physical conceptual framework, provide the South African geographer a flexible, politically and culturally sensitive approach to the nation's historic and contemporary social ecology.

In analysing the cultural landscape of Table Mountain it is very apparent that the traditionally Northern Hemisphere dominated landscape tradition in geography has much to learn and appreciate in the less well documented landscapes of developing nations and the Southern Hemisphere in general. That is not to say that landscape approaches developed in North America and Europe are irrelevant in contemplating these 'new' landscapes. Indeed, studying Table Mountain proved that increasingly neglected methodologies, such as that of Sauer, are still valuable to contemporary geography. Crucially this study has illustrated that landscape is a very individual and contextual concept, both in its perception and interpretation. Subsequently there can be no dominant landscape doctrine; it is not possible to approach a cultural landscape as rich and meaningful as Table Mountain with a rigid set of ideological and theoretical frameworks. Indeed, as global cultures proliferate in number and diversity, the concept of a flexible, open-minded approach to cultural landscapes is likely to become increasingly vital.

This text on Table Mountain, in realising the deep layers of meaning the Mountain has evoked in capetonians over the centuries, has had to be open and flexible in its approach. Hence the study has been sensitive to local traditions of landscape study, appreciating the sense of place and identity the Mountain affords capetonians.

Equally, it has simultaneously been informed by the wider frameworks and ideologies of landscape study within international geography. Perhaps above all else, this work has demonstrated the utility and flexibility of geographic landscape theory. If one can study Table Mountain, over a temporal framework spanning centuries and through a variety of diverse and evolving cultures, and find universal meanings and shared values, then surely no landscape, natural or urban, is beyond the scope of geographic understanding.

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Gubb, A., Regional manager WESA: WC. 27/9/99, Cape Town.

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