

The Painted, Poetic Landscape: Reading Power in Nineteenth-Century Textual and Visual Representations of the Eastern Cape Frontier

Margot Winer

Poetry, Painting and Gardening, or the science of Landscape, will forever by men of taste be deemed Three Sisters, or the Three New Graces who dress and adorn Nature.

—*Horace Walpole (1717–1797)*¹

The reflexive and symbolic roles of landscape provide rich ground for analysis, particularly in allowing interpretation of multiple levels of meaning in the material culture. Landscape, as a cultural construction, is a way of signifying meaning that is formed by, and itself forms, social, cultural and political issues (Meinig 1979; Cosgrove 1984; Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Mitchell 1994). Like other material expression in the Eastern Cape, one of the levels on which depictions of landscape appear to have functioned particularly well was that of the legitimating of land claims, and thus the justification of colonialism itself. In this paper I will examine how the conscious and structured representation of landscape for this purpose is manifested in four different modes of expression. In turn I will explore the following intertwined documentary sources: the textual (poetry, prose, letters, journals, and travel writing), the artistic (landscape paintings and drawings), the cartographic, and the scientific (natural history, specimen collecting and botanical sketches).

There appear to be conscious choices in the way the landscape was represented that are closely tied to whether the creators or audience of the depictions were emigrants who had made Africa a permanent home, colonial authorities reinforcing political and territorial power, or explorers exploiting the 'wildness' of Africa in playing to their European audience. Regardless of these choices in representation of the landscape it was through the media of letters, ethnohistoric and scientific descriptions, political and social essays, historical writing, art, maps, material culture and the social organization of space, that the British built an argument that centered on the inherent rightness of their ever expanding place on the tip of the African continent.

The Picturesque and the landscape

Painted and written depictions of landscape

Writing about landscapes, painting landscapes, and shaping landscapes were understood as three closely linked pastimes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

A landscape is a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolizing surroundings. This is not to say that landscapes are immaterial. They may be represented in a variety of materials and on many surfaces—in paint on canvas, in writing on paper, in earth, stone, water and vegetation on the ground. A landscape park is more palpable but no more real, not less imaginary, than a landscape painting or poem. Indeed the meanings of verbal, visual and built landscapes have a complex interwoven history (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988).

The growing appreciation of the 'Natural', what was termed the Picturesque, in landscape design in Britain can be told through grand-tour guidebooks, travelogues, poetry and landscape painting. It was landscape painting in particular that shaped the way people thought about natural scenery; it influenced their aesthetic sense and equipped them with a vocabulary and framework within which to articulate their experience of terrain. The word *landscape* as we use it today to refer to both a specific terrain and the general character of that terrain, "enters English in the sixteenth century as a term from the art of painting: landscape were pictures of stretches of countryside" (Coetzee 1988).

The shaping of the physical landscape at this time, characterized as "the peculiar happiness of this age...regularity banished, prospects opened, the country called in, nature rescued and improved, and art decently concealing herself under her own perfections" (Hunt and Willis 1975:21), involved artifice. The placement and even creation of the features, the water, rocks, trees and clearings, to produce a pleasing and 'improved' scene can be seen a manifestation of the desire for human mastery over the natural. Whole landscapes were transformed by the landed gentry as they arranged the movement of massive piles of earth, the diversion of water courses, the felling of avenues of trees, the closure of access and the relocation of villages.

Understood in this context the powerful desire in the eighteenth and nineteenth British colonial mindset to claim and shape the conquered wilderness was clearly both fostered by and influential in shaping the cultural landscape in the mother country. As J. D. Hunt argues, the Picturesque came into prominence as a set of aesthetics to "serve new ideas, attitudes, and adventures of the human spirit" (1992:105). One of the primary factors in the creation of this new way of seeing (Berger 1972) was the influence of *different* topography encountered through the new opportunities to travel. This topography was often "far less susceptible to translation into neoclassical" language than the smoother, tamer landscapes previously preferred (Hunt 1992:122). J. M. Coetzee, drawing on landscape theorists of the period, summarizes the ground rules for this aesthetic (1988:39).

A landscape is picturesque when it composes itself, or is composed by the viewer, in receding plains...: a dark *coulisse* on one side shadowing the foreground; a middle plane with a large central feature such as a clump of trees; a plane of luminous distance; perhaps an intermediate plane too between middle and far distance. Enthusiasm for landscape of this type was a powerful factor in determining the course of English nature poetry...and of English landscape gardening. The picturesque...for a while held in England a position of significance near to that of the beautiful and the sublime as an

aesthetic category. The ideally picturesque view...contained distant mountains, a lake in middle distance and a foreground of rocks, woods, broken ground, cascades, or ruins, this foreground characterized by "force and richness", by "roughness" of texture, in contrast to the "tenderness" of the middle and far ground.

The growing fashion in landscape painting, at this time characterized by the 'tasteful' and 'picturesque' renderings of land in oil paint, provided a way of seeing and expressing the world that was "ultimately determined by new attitudes to property and exchange" (Berger 1972:106). This visual expression was "not so much a framed window onto the world as a safe let into the wall, a safe in which the visible has been deposited" (Berger 1972:109). The depiction of the landed gentry surrounded as far as the eye can see by the landscape of their own powerful creation in a painting like Gainsborough's *Mr. and Ms. Andrews*, as Berger and others have argued for example, illustrates this point well (Berger 1972; Daniels and Cosgrove 1988). The landowners' claims over the land are visible in their stance and expression. The painting is both record and reinforcement of this ownership.

As Britons traveled abroad they carried these constructed notions of landscape with them, viewing and attempting to capture both natural and cultural landscapes through the lens of the Picturesque. Certainly in Africa they were often disappointed. In seeking the depth of tone and variety in color present in a European landscape the visitor was frustrated by the harshness of light and the lack of variety in vegetation. The shimmering effects of light and water so admired in the European Picturesque school were hard to come by in a region where drought is recurrent. Finding a scenic subject arranged within successive, differently textured, receding planes was unlikely on the flat, dry, monotonous, sparsely peopled plains of the interior where the huge horizons dwarf the minute cultural transformations of the landscape. Although "roughness" was a quality of interest, it was only as a contrast to "smoothness" and not as the only texture in a landscape. J. M. Coetzee, in his innovative essay on the Picturesque and the South African landscape, describes painter, botanist, natural scientist and traveler William Burchell's dismay about the aesthetic shortcomings of much Southern African scenery. It is with great relief that Burchell finally finds a scene that at last does not resist the imposition of the familiar Picturesque scheme (Coetzee 1988:38).

The first view to which I happened to turn myself...realized those ideas of elegant and classic scenery, which are created in the minds of poets.... Rapt with pleasing sensations which the scenery inspired, I sat on the bank a long time contemplating the serenity and beauty of the view (Burchell 1822:221-2).

In contrast to the rest of the colony, the Eastern Cape had sufficient variation in topography—hills and valleys, the periodic abundance of streams, the occasional lushness of the grass, and the clumping of trees in copses to appear at least superficially pleasing to an English eye. With skill all these features could be effectively employed to create an evocative, beautiful landscape painting or drawing that adhered closely to the 'tasteful' rules of composition and subject matter of the Picturesque. These representations of the Eastern Cape landscape will be discussed later in this paper.

Artistic representations of the Eastern Cape in Britain

Popular images in Britain

In the months before the prospective emigrants set sail, they were bombarded with hundreds of images of their destination at “The Cape of Good Hope.” Although some of the images sought to discourage emigration and others encourage it, what they accomplished together was the creation of a racist, stereotypical view of the indigenous people that predisposed the settlers to behave in a certain way in later encounters with them, and a construction of the landscape that was based on its utility to the colonial power. Africans, perceived of as more Nature than Man, were seen as a part of the landscape.² It was this twofold creation of meaning that served to justify imperialism and the settlers’ role within it. In the following section I will explore several of pieces of popular culture concerning the Eastern Cape to which both settlers and the general public were exposed in 1819.

Set design

In October of that year, playing up to the flash of popular interest in emigration to the Cape following the official announcements, William Barrymore, actor-playwright-theatrical manager (progenitor of the famous acting family), produced a melodrama entitled *Cape of Good Hope; or, Caffres and Settlers* at Astley’s Amphitheater on Westminster Bridge Road, London.³ The playbill, addressed to “the nobility, the gentry and the public in general”, lists fictional characters, to be played by leading English actors, including Zomai, a “Caffre chief” and Lily Piccaninny, a “Hottentot slave.” Nine elaborate scenes each with backdrops “specially painted from views of the region” are described:

In the course of the Piece the following beautiful Scenery:

Scene 1—Extensive View of the New Settlement on Hottentot Island, or
Cape False Terminated with the distant prospect of THE TABLE
LAND

Scene 2—Cataract near Simmon’s or False Bay

Scene 3—Interior of Settler’s Farm

Scene 4—Caffre Encampment

Scene 5—Dutch Public House on the Vineburg Road

Scene 6—Grand Panorama View of Table Bay, the Cape Town, & The Lion
and Devil’s Mount

Scene 7—Rocky Pass

Scene 8—The Parade and Part of Cape Town by Moonlight

Scene 9—Destruction of a Fortress and Defeat of the Caffres

The use of painterly and set design conventions such as “distant prospects” and decorated wings in the panorama in Scene 1, create several planes within the scene. These planes allow the positioning of features within the landscape and create a Picturesque image that, although debased as the backdrop for low melodrama, appeal to aesthetics of high art of the period. In the same way suitably artistic landscape features such as a cataract and a rocky pass are chosen to create an evocative artistic environment within which the action takes place. That the land chosen for the settlers is more than 500 miles east of the scenes depicted is immaterial. Geography is scrambled, distance constricted and landmarks exploited to create an imagined landscape within which the grand battle between the stereotyped barbarians (the Xhosa caricatured by white actors) and valiant settlers who stand as the vanguard of civilized power is played out (c.f. Greg Denning [1992:285–303] on similar theatrical productions about the South Pacific during this same period). Of course whiteness and power win the day, the “Darker Races” learn their place, and the audience has been much amused. Sandwiched next to an equestrian act, “Haydn’s Minuet by Two Horses”, and a farce, “Drunken Coblery!” (sic) the melodrama was high spectacle, reinforcing cultural stereotypes in the popular mind.

Political cartoons

The political expedience of fostering a misleading perception of the landscape as a lure to encourage emigration by the poor was certainly understood. Soon after the settlement scheme was announced in 1819 London newspapers and presses began to publish Cruikshank’s devastating political cartoons satirizing the emigration scheme. He ruthlessly pokes fun at the ulterior motives of politicians, the fears and expectations of the settlers, their lack of knowledge of the region, and of the imagined ultimate fate of anyone who set foot in the “Cape of Forlorn Hope.” He explores the creation of this mythologized landscape in “A Strong Proof of the Flourishing state of the Country, exemplified in the proposed Emigration to the Cape of (Forlorn scratched out) Good Hope!” a cartoon subtitled “Honey Mouth (the Minister for Foreign Affairs) building Castles in the Air on the New Land of Promise!!” (see Figure 1) . Lord Castlereagh, sitting high on a pile of money bags labeled “The Fat of the Land” addresses a ragged group of prospective emigrants who are distracted from the scene of mayhem at Peterloo to gaze at a fantastic landscape in which cutlery-impaled pigs romp and vegetables spring from the thatch of an enormously fat black family’s house.

As you can’t get any work Johnny you can’t expect any victuals, so we’ll transport (transplant you I mean) to the Cape of Good Hope, where you’ll have no occasion to work and victuals will run into your mouth ready chew’d as I may say, so you’ll have nothing to do but swallow it. Look at this picture Johnny it is made on purpose to give you an idea of what you may expect to be this garden of Eden! this second Paradise!! the Land of promise describ’d by Moses was a mere humbug to it. You’ll be up to your neck in milk & honey & Strong Beer!! The Rocks are all Roast Beef & the hailstones are plum puddings & rain water strong as Gin!!—the land is all Sugar & Brandy & the grass is all lollipops & Barley sugar & the Sticks are all lickerish. The Bread & Milk grows upon trees! what do you think of that Johnny?!! indeed the Milk is all cream & the cream is all Butter, in fact you may live like a Prince grow as fat as a hog, so the sooner you are gone the

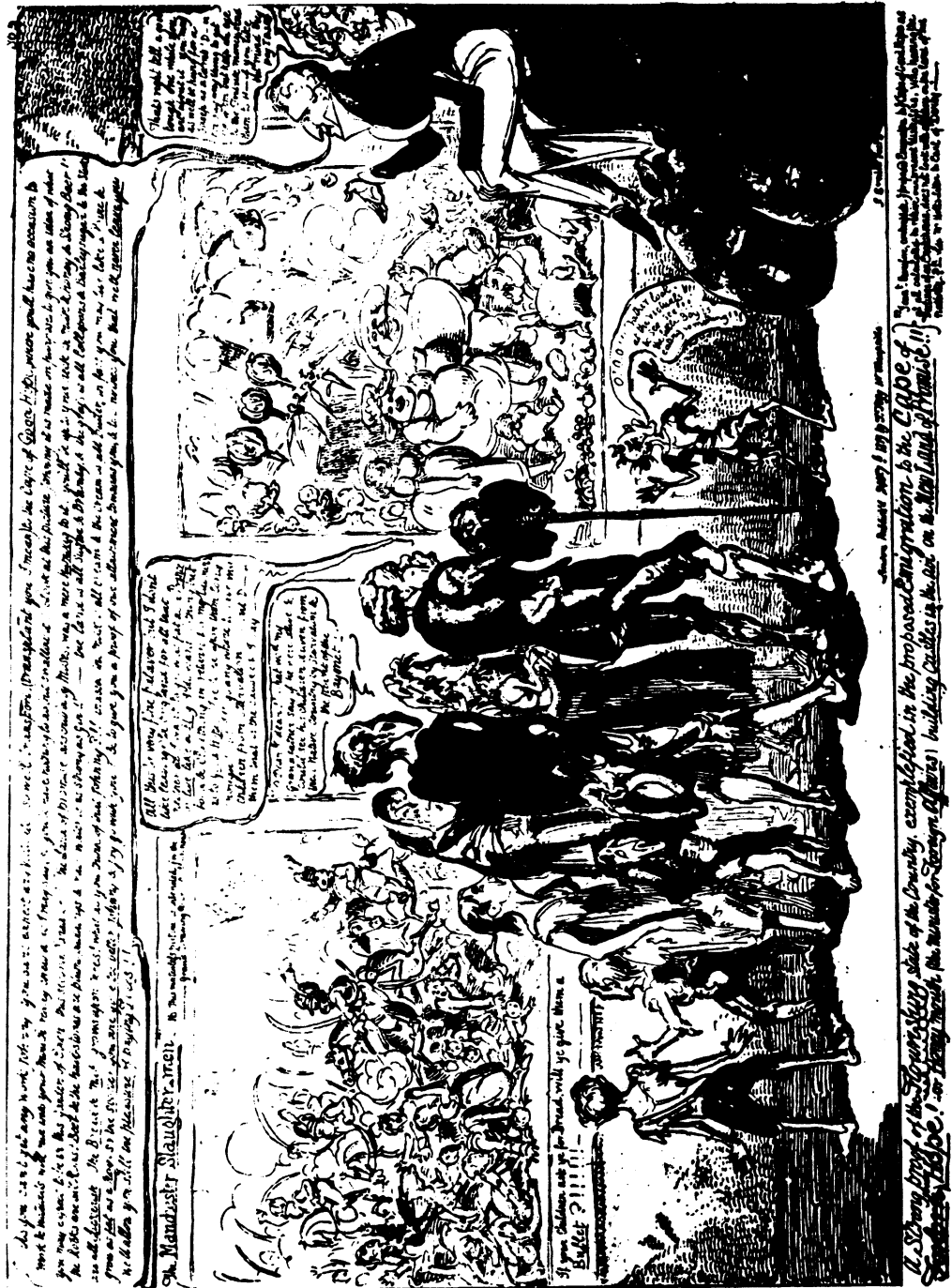


Figure 1. Political cartoon by George Cruikshank. "Emigration to the Cape of (Forlorn) Good Hope" (Cape Archive).



Figure 2. Political cartoon by George Cruikshank. "All among the Hottentots Capering Ashore" (1819). (Cape Archive).

better Johnny & joy go with you & to give you a proof of our attachment towards you & to convince you that we'll never leave you we'll allow you still the pleasure of paying Taxes!!

The dissolute and bloated Prince Regent, hiding behind his appointee urges:

That's right tell a good tough one while you are at it; you may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb! D—n 'em I say anything to get rid of them but keep an eye on the tribute money, send them to H— if you like but mind they pay taxes.

In Cruikshank's companion cartoon "Among the Hottentots Capering Ashore!!", subtitled "The Blessings of Emigration to the Cape of (Forlorn scratched out) Good Hope (i.e.) To be Half roasted by the Sun and Devoured by the Natives!! recommended to the Serious consideration of all whom are about to Emigrate", the newly arrived settlers find themselves in a grotesque and dangerous landscape (see Figure 2). Space in the picture, conforming to and thus satirizing period landscape painting conventions, is divided into a succession of planes through which the viewer's eye travels: from foreground through middle ground to background. A *coulisse*⁴ frames the scene on the left with an enormous serpent, that wrapped around an exotic tree, swallows an infant's head as the unfortunate child's feet are devoured by a ferocious cannibal its own size. The coulisse on the right depicts a white child running into the jaws of a crocodile lurking in a frighteningly lush marsh. In the foreground a white woman struggles to free her derriere from the clamped jaws of a fat cannibal. She is flanked by two ragged settlers, who in a similar predicament, shout:

Oh! L—d! Oh! L—d! I might as well have staid in England to be starved to death as have come to be eaten alive!!!

Oh! D—n the Devil he be going to eat me!!! Rot me if he ain't as Bloody minded as the Manchester Butcher!!!

The eye then travels to the middle ground where a lion gnaws on the fallen body of a settler and a laughing man impales a distraught woman and her baby on an assegai, while a female accomplice sets fire to their house. Consistent with the European fascination with steatopygia and the perceived 'peculiarities' of the genitalia of African women (Gould 1985) the Khoikhoi woman is reduced (Gilman 1985:212; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:104, 123) to an exaggerated pair of buttocks upon which her child is depicted riding freely.⁵ The further recession of space into the picture is created then by the haze from the fires through which one can see distant peaks and circling vultures.

In the first cartoon Cruikshank, a master of satire, demolished the fabricated landscape created by the politicians and warned the public of the political motivations of the powerful in creating such an alluring destination. In the second, still debunking myths, he gives a satirical picture of a possible fate. Although he plays freely with early nineteenth-century fears of the stereotypical African as savage and blood-thirsty cannibal, particularly in contrasting them to the 'fully civilized', Western dressed Africans in the previous cartoon, he deftly makes "bloody-mindedness" universal through the comparison of the attackers to the famed murderer, the Manchester Butcher and death, either by being eaten or not having anything to eat, equally possible at home or abroad.

Clearly from these images we can see that Africans are used as representative devices to stand for the land. Both the land and those upon it are seen as threatening and uncivilized, in want of the control brought by the force and order of colonial rule.

Images from within Albany

Moving away from these popular culture images, I explore a second group of artistic representations of the landscape—those created on the Eastern Cape frontier. Specifically I am concerned with the settler's creation of a cultural landscape through depictions of the unfamiliar, often inhospitable world they found themselves in the Eastern Cape. I contend that ill-suited topography was molded and manipulated in visual representations in order to fit more closely into nineteenth-century English landscape conventions. These representations in turn served colonial ends on two counts. First, to capture a 'likeness of the land' with a brush on canvas or a pencil in a sketchbook was to own that image. Second, these representations went hand-in-hand with the physical 'improvements' of the indigenous cultural landscape, already affected by Boer farmers, that resulted from the mass immigration of British settlers in 1820.

The settlers' expectations of the physical landscape of Africa, and the reality faced on arrival, created tension and uncertainty that is manifest in the visual and textual representations of the period. Scrambling to assert a position of dominance over the indigenous inhabitants and the land that had so recently been appropriated from them, the settlers were prolific in producing images of a tamed, controlled landscape that served to reinforce the 'naturalness' of their desired status. Settlers were recording, manipulating, and transforming their position in the world around them through these creative processes, while simultaneously exploiting and controlling the physical world through the high visibility acts like brush clearing, fencing, large-scale tilling, and damming.

Abraham Wild's wainscoting painting from an early nineteenth-century house outside of Grahamstown for example is a naive and exuberant depiction of a fox hunt within an gentrified Anglo-African landscape. The untrained artist used the nine plank panels to show a chaotic event taking place within several planes as the equestrian procession makes its way over and through a multitude of fences, hedges, gates, walls, roads, fields, gardens and other improvements on the landscape. Several Georgian houses, perfectly symmetrical and blank, stand in the middle ground, while further in the distance two or three towns are visible. The possibility of raising one's status was one of the greatest motivations in emigration from Britain during this period. Settlers' hopes of establishing themselves as the new gentry are clearly expressed in this mural.

A second, and probably more interesting set of landscape paintings and sketches is that of the Picturesque. Artists were prolific in producing representations of the Eastern Cape region that were simultaneously familiarly Picturesque and titillatingly exotic. The combination of the familiar and the exotic was usually accomplished by spiking the contrived and aesthetically recognizable landscape with unfamiliar plant and animal specimens and romanticized depictions of indigenous people. This pattern is not peculiar to South Africa—in Australia and the South Pacific for example, the unfamiliar animals are painted to look like



Figure 3: The town of Bathurst in 1840 by Thomas Baines. The terrain of the village has been manipulated to create a more picturesque composition. (Africana Museum).

familiar ones and the scenery is remade in the same way (Bonyhady 1987 and Smith, 1985 #201 for example) In the Eastern Cape, Thomas Baines produced numerous sketches and oils of scenes that conform strictly to this aesthetic. In his depiction of a small settler village twenty years after its founding, "Bathurst in 1840" (see Figure 3), the physical terrain has been manipulated to better fit the receding vista. A dark *coulisse* of gnarled branches and roots frames the rustic cart in the foreground. The exotic, straining long horned oxen that draw the cart pull the viewer's gaze into the rough middle ground where a semi-clothed African guides the beasts through a gully. Several meandering paths and carefully positioned clumps of thorn brush create a narrowing of perspective that serves to draw the eye in the same way. Contrasting with this wedge of wildness on which our eye first settles, are the fields in which laborers work and the white painted thatched cottages of the village. Using artistic license, Baines positioned the houses on the canvas in such a way that they lead to and emphasize the focal point of the vista, the elevated church of St. John's. An important message is implicit in this depiction. The African landscape is pleasing and familiar, the copses of trees, the gentle vistas, the scenic prospects, the melancholy heaps of rock and the hazy shimmering distances are all 'good' to the English eye. Contrary to expectations it is a landscape in which colonists are 'at home', it is an extension of the motherland and can be transformed, in spite of superficial differences in fauna or flora, into a profitable endeavor. Signs of industry and commitment are everywhere—new construction, cleared brush, tilled fields, the hamlet of cottages and farmsteads—and the church on the hilltop symbolically the last thing we see. Figure 5 is a view of Bathurst from the same vantage point by an unknown artist, while possibly derivative of Baines' depiction, contains strikingly similar elements and is compositionally identical.

The choice of the same southern prospect reinforces my argument that the way the landscape is chosen to be represented is a conscious act that involves censoring those parts of the landscape that do not fit the artist's perception of the Picturesque. Only those scenes deemed pleasing are painted or drawn and thus, the viewer in Britain is left with an impression of only a part of the whole. Visitors to the region who had seen artistic depictions of the landscape themselves sought out those familiar places and then captured the scene in their chosen medium, creating a strange tautological reality.

Frederick I'ons' "Settler Hunting Party Encamped at the Fish River" places a genteel hunting party of men and women in yet another scenic and suitably picturesque environment (see Figure 4). The settlers have transformed the African wilderness into an arena for their own recreation and amusement. The ringletted women, as if in a drawing room, take tea in china cups outside their painted canvas tent, their King James spaniel beside them. The men, relaxed and some even barefoot, arrange the cooking of the day's catch over an open fire against an obsessively correct botanical backdrop of aloes, Euphorbia and other exotic plants. Contrasting with the cozy familiarity of some parts of the scene is the unfamiliar material culture of the frontier: the outspanned wagon, the improvised branch table, the three legged cast iron pots for cooking outside. Yet, in spite of these strange things, the landscape itself is depicted as Picturesque. Playing off the thorny foreground is the gentle plain in the middle ground on which the wagon oxen graze and the men's horses canter, and the glassy sheet of the river. Beyond this are a succession of hills and valleys that disappear into a pale haze. The harsh inhospitability of the African landscape is clouded by the aesthetic convention. Again

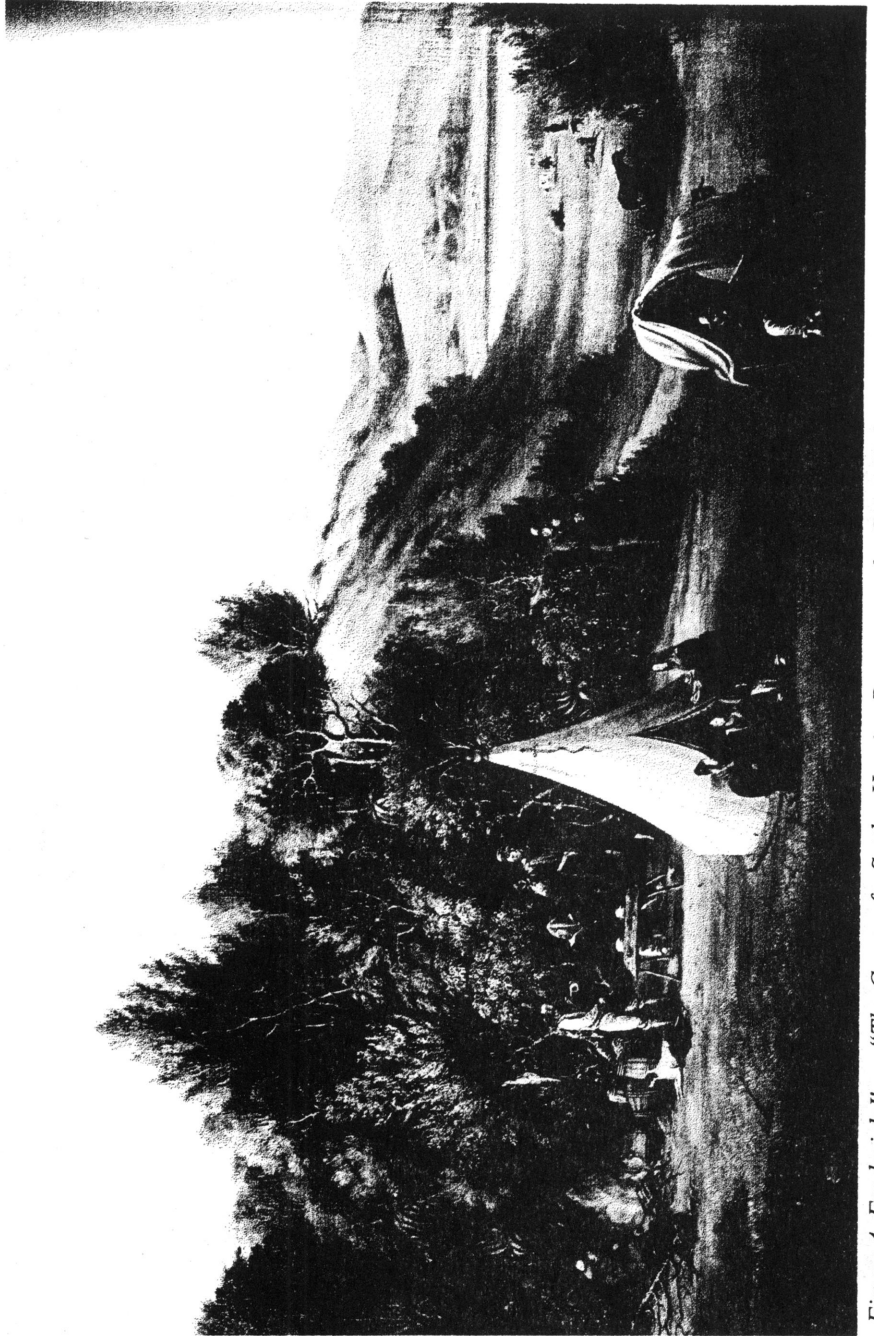


Figure 4. Frederick I'ons "The Camp of a Settler Hunting Party near the Great Fish River" (William Fehr Collection).



Figure 5: Bathurst by an unknown artist. (Albany Museum).

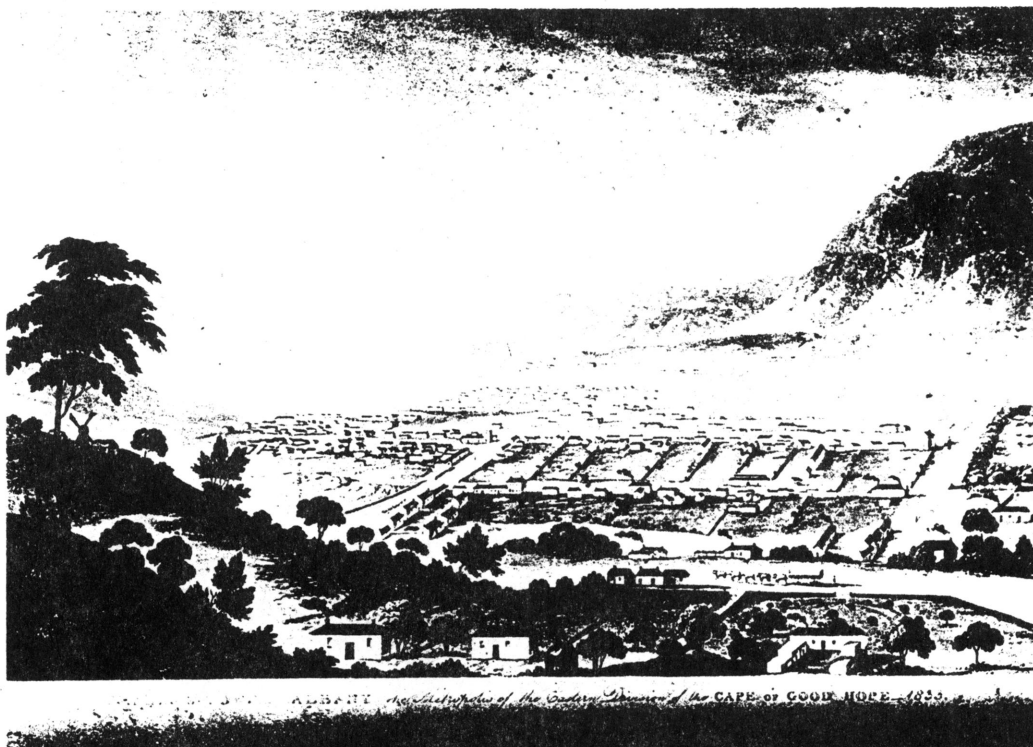


Figure 6. W. J. Huggins "Graham's Town, Albany: The Metropolis of the Eastern Division of the Cape of Good Hope - 1833" This idealized view of the town was probably created from a composite of other sketches as the artist never visited Grahamstown.

the message is one of the inherent familiarity of the landscape despite some superficial differences and the natural place of the British within that landscape, in this case as they use it as the backdrop to their hunting weekend.

The less fanciful and more formal sketches and paintings of colonial accomplishments and townscapes in the Eastern Cape (see Figure 6) were prolifically produced in the early nineteenth century. The majority of these were either done for inclusion in published works destined for European readership, or by military officers as a personal record of their achievements. In either case the audience appears to have been outside Albany. The intention of these well rendered, unimaginatively neat depictions of towns and military buildings is to record British progress in turning an indigenous wilderness into a well-ordered, efficient colonial landscape. Several of these depictions border on the cartographic with their neat labels naming official buildings and landmarks. Many of them, showing views of Grahamstown, of military barracks and trade fairs at Fort Wiltshire, use the rules of the Picturesque to structure space within the scene and by this means make the landscape tame and controlled.

From this discussion is clear that in British written and painted depictions of the 'foreign' landscape, the scene is often filtered through the conventions the Picturesque: with imagination an untamed landscape can be presented as tamed and thus claimed. The "cult of the landscape", as Coetzee terms this widespread sensibility, meant that in effect viewers reconstituted the landscape "in the imagination according to acquired principles of composition" (Coetzee 1988:40). It is this remaking of the physical world, perhaps fleetingly in the eye of the beholder, but more permanently on paper or canvas, that served to reinforce both settler and colonial possession of the African land. Postcards, magazine illustrations, sketchbooks and scrapbooks popularized and reified the 'views', 'vistas' and 'prospects' of the region, and created a commodity to be imagined, transformed and owned.

The transformation of the landscape by artistic representation is a process still at work in the present. An artist working in Salem in the late 1980s paints scenes of village life in a deliberately naive, folk art style that depicts the village and dispersed farmsteads arranged to fit on a tiny two dimensional plane. She reduces space to produce quaint scenes reminiscent of some nineteenth-century American folk art. In the same way that the popularity of the American art depends on its reference to a less complicated, slower, agrarian past that provides relief from the reality of urban America, the representations in South Africa transport Salem into a constructed past that is simpler, safe and innocent. In this vision the pace is slower and everyone has a place—white cricketers play on the green while black servants dig gardens and hang washing. The gritty and unsettling realities of a rapidly changing South African society are momentarily forgotten. Ironically, the artist avoids interruption from Xhosa children in the village by painting landscapes from within her VW van.

Writing landscapes

The notion of the Picturesque in both the 'wild' landscape and in landscape gardening and 'improvement' was sustained not only by the authority of painting, but by the written word as well.

Romantic poet and party leader Thomas Pringle, in reminiscing about his party's reaction to the first landfall at the Cape, recreated the following scene:

The evening had closed in before we reached the anchorage in Simon's Bay, so that our anxiety to survey the features of the country had been but imperfectly granted. So eager was this desire, that some of my young friends did not sleep that night; and the following morning at daybreak I found all our party assembled on the poop, gazing at the bleak hills and sterile sands that surround False Bay, with very grave faces. "Heh, sirs!" said one of them, "but this is an ill-favoured and outlandish-looking country. I wad fain hope, that thae heiland hills and muirs are no fair sample o' our African location?"—"Quite a fair sample," I replied, "as Culloden Muir is of the Carse of Gowrie. But these rugged hills are not the sort of soil you will have to cultivate. Keep up your hearts, my friends, till you see the green savannahs of Albany" (Pringle 1966).⁶

Pringle's poetry and descriptions of the Albany landscape after the settlers arrived in the region conforms to romantic notions of the Picturesque and creates a evocative, but perhaps not accurate, sense of place.

The general aspect of the country...was...fresh, pleasing, and picturesque. The verdant pastures and smooth grassy knolls formed an agreeable contrast with the dark masses of forest which clothed the broken ground near the river courses. The undulating surface of the champaign country was moreover often agreeably diversified with scattered clumps or thickets of evergreens interspersed with groves of large trees, like a nobleman's park.... In the lower bottoms, wherever a brook or fountain had been discovered, we found an emigrant at work in his field or garden, his reed hut or wattled cabin generally placed on the side of some narrow ravine under the shade of a grove or thicket.... These cabins often looked extremely handsome and picturesque, as we came suddenly in sight of them peeping out from the skirts of the ancient forest, or embowered in some romantic wood or evergreen shrubbery (Pringle 1966:105–6).

Reverend Shaw's disillusionment

Reverend William Shaw, the twenty-two-year-old Methodist minister who accompanied the Sephton settlers to Albany, saw the Eastern Cape landscape with increasingly mixed feelings. The immediacy of Shaw's 1820 diary entries (Shaw 1972) contrasts with later published writings such as *The Story of My Mission* (Shaw 1860) to give us an idea of the changes that occurred in the ways the landscape was viewed. Shaw's vacillating emotions

about the landscape provide an interesting reading of settler reaction to the superficially inviting, but deeply inhospitable region.

Shortly after arrival at Algoa Bay Shaw visited the mission at Bethelsdorp and was disheartened by what he saw.

May 27th Saturday. Bethelsdorp has by no means a pleasing appearance to an English eye, but this by no means prevents my saying much has been done here....The spot on which the institution stands is certainly a most miserable one, being stony, mountainous and nearly destitute of water (Shaw 1972:35).

He was momentarily encouraged, however, by the landscape he observed en route to Reed Fountain the land, originally selected for Sephton's party, from which they were summarily moved when it was granted instead to a well connected military officer.

June 10th. Saturday. Arrived safely at the Karekah (Kariega) River—a most romantic spot.... The country through which we have passes is in general mountainous, but not sterile. Excepting in a few places it generally presented the most fruitful appearance. The soil is remarkably good & rich, many of the valleys would certainly be very productive of every kind if cultivated, while adjoining the hills would be well adapted for vineyards and grazing: in short the country appeared to me so beautiful, that I could not help regretting it should have remained so long without population to cultivate it and, by their comforts, conveniences and luxuries, prove its capabilities. O that the Gospel may have such success here, in its present infant state, as to render this so inviting a spot for moral cultivators and spiritual laborers, as it certainly is for those who “labor for the meat that perisheth.” I have two or three opportunities of preaching Christ to about a dozen Hottentots who are with the wagons, by means of one of them who understands English and who acts as an interpreter. I trust and believe this labour has not been in vain (Shaw 1972).

This gushing romanticization of the landscape was not to last for long. The deceptive impressions about the richness of the soil were soon revealed to everyone who attempted to work the land. It is typical of writers of the period that Shaw presents his constructed landscape as having enormous potential and yet empty and unused, in spite of his recent preaching to Khoikhoi pastoralists at the Bethelsdorp mission. He sees the cultivation of the land as a means of civilizing it, of proving its potential, and incorporates this desire to ‘improve’ the land with his mission to ‘civilize’ the Africans.

It is with resignation that Shaw, exhausted by the week long “journey over the rocks & hills of Africa” by ox wagon, describes the allotted land.

June 12th Monday. Reed Fountain is a stream which runs more than two miles from its spring into the sea through a hill of sand. There is a narrow slip of flat ground on each side of the water, and then a range of hills rising almost perpendicularly, & forming a long but deep and narrow valley. The surrounding land is mountainous, especially towards the Kowie River, from

which Reed Fountain is distant 7 miles only. I shall have to live in a tent until my house is thatched, etc. etc. O that I may be a fruitful labourer in my appointed place (Shaw 1972)!

The enthusiasm is gone from the words Shaw uses to describe the landscape. A lack of shelter from the weather colors even his perception of missionary success as he sought cover from the drenching thunderstorms and strong winds.

20th Monday. The rains have commenced. The first night proved the uselessness of a tent in protecting us from the torrents that occasionally fall. Mr. Ullbricht, a London Missionary of Theopolis, six miles distant, sent me a kind invitation to take my family there until my house is finished....Mr. U. has been here many years, and I trust some good has been done, but I wish I could say more respecting the progress of civilization & religion in this place (Shaw 1972).⁷

A full year after arrival, the early disappointment forgotten, Shaw gushes with pride at the transformation of the wilderness:

Praise the Lord O my soul. This is the anniversary of the day of our landing at Algoa Bay. What a year it has been. The review astonishes the mind. Within one year, desert places have been taken possession of by a multitude of men, the beasts of the field have very generally retreated to make room for them, houses have arisen, & villages spring into existence as if by magic; & what is better than all, many hills & dales have resounded with the praises of the Saviour... (Shaw 1972).

Unlike his diary, *The Story of My Mission* was written for public readership and published in 1860 to provide British readers with an account of Shaw's mission work. In the early chapters on the first few years of settlement, Shaw describes the physical landscape of the region. His initial reactions of incomprehension and disappointment at what he saw had been mellowed by forty years of growing familiarity during this time he had become accustomed to picking out details and vistas that conformed to his notion of the Picturesque in landscape. In his descriptions he mitigates the unfamiliar characteristics of the terrain by drawing out details pleasing to the English eye.

A high range of mountains forming the eastern termination of the Zuurbergen, which run for a great distance parallel with the coast, gives rise to the Bushman's River, the Assegaay Bosch River, the Karekah, the Kowie, and the Kap Rivers, which with some smaller intermediate streams taking their rise nearer the sea in a secondary range of hills, at once supply sufficient water, and serve to diversify the general surface of the district. These streams, however in most cases, only flow during a part of the year; but the general elevation of the country being much above the level of the sea, periodical floods have scooped out immense v rains and deep beds by which they flow into the ocean. The result of this conformation is a generally romantic and rugged country in the vicinity of these streams, while the intervals consist of extensive grassy plains or prairies....It is always a

work of difficulty to travel from east to west, in consequence of the rocky precipices and widely extended bush or jungle which in some parts fringe the hills that slope down from the plains to the river valleys below.

The General appearance of the district is picturesque and pleasing. Excepting during severe droughts the country is covered by a coarse grass, and usually has a verdant aspect. The mimosa studs the plains and slopes of the hills. In many parts a thick shrubbery grows in patches as if planted for ornament, and gives the country a park-like appearance; while in other places, favoured by shelter from the high winds, trees of much larger growth shoot up to a considerable height; among which are most conspicuous the straight and tall Euphorbia, with their naked and melancholy branches... (Shaw 1860).

Dry riverbeds, parched hills and rough, rocky area; floods, droughts and high winds; untraversable regions and impassable scrub; coarse sour grass and monstrous thorny plants: this is the harsh, unwelcoming landscape in which the emigrants settled. In Shaw's apparently neutral description he diffuses the grotesqueness of these features. Their unfamiliarity to a British reader is lost when he uses the terms "romantic and rugged," "picturesque and pleasing." Even as Shaw lifts whole passages and descriptions from his diary in writing his reminiscences his initial heartfelt disappointment about the landscape has no place in his account of the successes of the settlers in Albany. That the region is "good land" and "good looking land" is the basis of his tale of colonial and missionary success, and in Shaw's perceptions, the land has, in hindsight, become good, because it has been understood. One of the ways Shaw very effectively makes the landscape accessible to the reader is by stressing its patchwork, park-like appearance in which "extensive grassy plains" appear bounded by seemingly ornamental shrubbery.

The British settlers were a remarkably self-reflexive and literate group. In this section I have only been able to draw on a few examples from their rich legacy of textual material to provide insights into how the landscape was perceived.

Making maps

Maps of the Eastern Cape frontier region are another eloquent and enlightening source for understanding the processes of colonialism. As J. B. Harley suggests in his discussion of maps, knowledge, and political power, it is rewarding to go beyond a reading at face value, beyond the immediate discussion of whether the map is 'accurate/inaccurate', 'objective/subjective', 'based on scientific integrity/ideological distortion' or so on, and view the map instead as value-laden text:

maps are never value-free images.... Both in the selectivity of their content and in their signs and styles of representation maps are a way of conceiving, articulating and structuring the human world that is biased towards, promoted by, and exerts influence upon particular sets of social relations (Harley 1988:278).

By recognizing the validity of viewing maps in this critical way it is easy to see how well-suited they are to the manipulation by the powerful in society (Wood and Fels 1992). In a variety of disciplines the links between maps and power, particularly in colonial situations, are increasingly being explored (Bowen 1981; Stoddard 1981; Wood and Fels 1992; Turnbull 1993).

Content, conventions and decoration

Drawing inspiration from the work of J. B. Harley and others (Harley 1988), I will explore three recurring sets of decisions made by cartographers producing maps of the Eastern Cape region in the early nineteenth century. These are choices made about 1) the selection of content, that is what to put in or leave out; 2) about what cartographic conventions are to be used to present the topography and other information; and finally, 3) in what way the map itself is to be augmented by decoration.

In the process of map making the selection of content, for instance the naming and locating a feature on a map, has political significance. What is considered worthy or important for inclusion shapes the meaning of the map, and allows the critical historian to see what is politically valued. What is left out of the map, the silences or omissions on the page, affect the message in a parallel way. Points of tension are recognized when one can identify what was left out and then begin to explore possible reasons for this. For instance many maps of colonial territories across the world omit indigenous place names, settlements, or land not held by colonial authority, as if indigenous people had no claim to the land they lived on (see Carter [1988] for comparative Australian examples). Similarly by replacing indigenous toponyms with English eponyms and descriptive names, colonists claim those places on maps. With understandable names the places become familiar.

How a map looks strongly influences how the land is perceived. The production of any map involves a series of decisions about how the selected data will be presented. Cartographers can alternately de-emphasize or over-emphasize features by the choice and size of symbol or label. They can make feature "more real" by unequivocal depiction on the page, and less real or less permanent by the use of dotted lines or lower contrast. They can make the vague solid by the use of forceful or persuasive graphics.

The preoccupying subject in Eastern Cape in the late eighteenth to mid nineteenth centuries was repetitively that of borders, frontiers, boundaries, and delimitation of territory. Consequently, period maps of the region show the extent of the colony by means bold lines or solid blocks of color. The border is represented as hard and fixed, rather than the soft and permeable boundary it actually was (Thompson and Lamar 1981; Beck 1987).

So Geographers in *Afric*-Maps
With Savage-Pictures fill their Gaps;
And o'er uninhabitable Downs
Place Elephants for Wont of Towns

—Jonathan Swift, *On Poetry*⁸

The use of decorative elements to embellish maps is a long-standing convention that helps to reinforce and focus the political meaning of the map and should not be dismissed as incidental to the message of the map.

The filling of what is perceived as blank space or empty landscape with “Savage-Pictures” of the exotic fauna and flora is not merely the production of decorative marginalia, but rather shows a strongly entrenched conception of what constitutes a subject worthy of mapping. There may be in Swift’s words a “wont of Towns” on the early colonial African landscape, but that is only if one is looking for the familiar European concentration of permanent dwellings, public architecture and roads. This is not to say that it is a vacant landscape. The numerous villages and chiefs’ places of the Eastern Cape for example, permanent concentrations of large numbers of people, were well-known to colonial explorers. It was a useful fiction, however, to present the region as uninhabited, even while the military was simultaneously removing indigenous inhabitants from the region west of the Fish River in expanding the eastern borders (Crais 1991).

From this discussion we can see how these decisions affect a great deal more than just how the map looks: they are crucial in how it communicates its message. On a superficial level the map literally provides geographic information, but it is at a deeper, figurative level that its power lies. Decoration, silences and style create a symbolically meaningful text. As Harley notes, “It is often on this symbolic level that political power is most effectively reproduced, communicated, and experienced through maps” (Harley 1988:279). The cartographer very seldom worked alone, instead theirs was a role, within the much larger colonial and political endeavor, to produce an “intricate controlled fiction”⁹ in keeping with the dominant ideology.

The Only Real Map of the Cape

Popular knowledge about the Eastern Cape was severely limited at the time the settlement scheme was publicized in Britain. Some Europeans did however know the region: John Barrow’s 1806 *Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa* provided the first quality maps of the Cape Colony (Barrow 1802). The military were stationed in the numerous forts along the frontier. The pastoralist trekboers who were leaving the region had spent years grazing cattle and sheep there. Ivory hunters and explorers disobeyed colonial law to travel beyond the boundaries of the Cape. In spite of this, detailed maps and information were not easily available to prospective settlers. The printed circulars that the Colonial Office had resorted to for corresponding with the estimated 90,000 applicants gave the minimum of information about their ultimate destination: “The Settlers will be located in the interior of the colony, not far from the coast”.

Into this vacuum came a flurry of hastily produced pamphlets giving advice to emigrants. Much of the information in these was speculative or secondhand, culled from newspapers, travelers’ accounts and rumor. While some of the content was irrelevant and some was wholly incorrect, this meant little to the audience for whom, as Dugmore wrote in his later semi-autobiographical account of a settler,

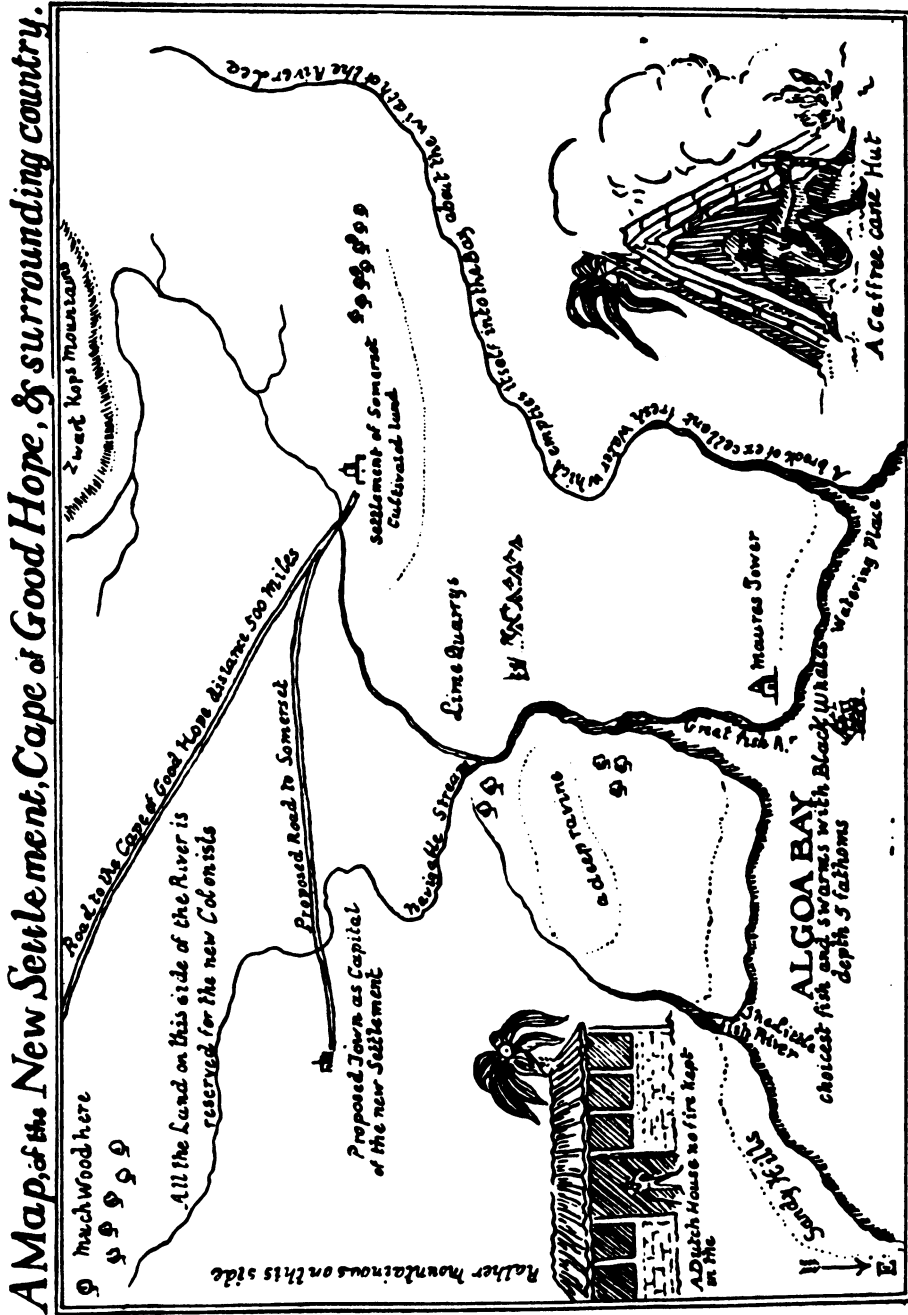


Figure 7. James Griffin "Guide to the Cape" by from his inflammatory and ill-informed pamphlet offering advice to those considering emigration. Knowledge of the Eastern Cape interior prior to the emigration of the British settlers was sketchy and often inaccurate (1819).

the word “Africa” was suggestive of very little but waterless wilds, burning suns, the death-wind of the desert, and the slave trade. In some minds the distinctions of South, East, and West Coasts were little recognized and their differences—physical, climatic or social—hardly known (Dugmore 1958).

Political commentator and Tory critic James Griffin’s vociferous pamphlet, *The Real Facts Disclosed, or the Only Real Guide to the Cape: A Correct Statement of the Advantages and Disadvantages Attendant on Immigration to the New Colony*, warned the public that they were being enticed to the Eastern Cape to form a human hedge between the Colony and the “warlike nations of Africa” (Griffin 1819). Yet in spite of this warning he proceeded to provide what he believed to be accurate information on soils, climate, resources, equipment needed for farming, and peculiar to his pamphlet, a “Specimen of the Language of the Caffres, and English Annexed,” all intended to facilitate successful migration.

Of particular note is the included “Map of the New Settlement, Cape of Good Hope, & surrounding country” (see Figure 7), a loosely executed, illustrated sketch map of the Zuurveld region as Griffin perceived it. It is interesting how closely even the radical pamphleteer’s map serves the purposes of the government scheme: the terrain is presented as good, containing useful resources, and already peopled by both Dutch and English colonists, and non-threatening indigenous people. The map’s visual presentation is so crammed with irrelevant information that the reader may not immediately realize there is only one town shown in the region. The place marked with a large rectangular building and the label “Proposed Town as Capital of the new Settlement” created a landscape of the imagination that didn’t really exist. Informative labels surround the town—“settlement of Somerset” is boldly marked, cartographic shorthand signifies an imposing building and tower, there is an indication of cultivated land and a nearby wooded area. In reality the “town” was a government farm operated by the military with cheap Khoikhoi labor to provide troops with fresh food and their horses with fodder. Somerset Farm (depicted on the wrong side of the river), was owned and run by and for the military. When I recognized how it was recast in innocuous terms as a merely a town, the meaning of an ominous silence in the map became clear.

In the strange absence of any cartographic notation of colonial military installations Griffin’s map shows an interesting case of content selection. Silences on maps exert a “social influence through their omissions as much by the features they depict and emphasize” (Harley 1988). Explorer and naturalist William Burchell, who gave testimony on the suitability of eastern frontier for settlement before a parliamentary committee, published a well informed pamphlet *Hints on Emigration to the Cape of Good Hope* (Burchell 1819). He believed that the military presence in the region was important to the success of the settlement for two reasons. First, he argued that the military had succeeded in creating “an extremely Anglicized zone” in which settlement could occur with little resistance. Second, until the settlers were well established on their land, the military would be there to keep the Xhosa to the east of the territory they had been forced to cede in 1819. By now the first line of defense on the frontier consisted of fifteen “pickets” or forts running along the western banks of the Fish River from the coast to the confluence of the Baviaans River, with a second line consisting entirely of military posts further to the west (Bergh and Visagie 1985). Visagie and Bergh’s 1985 map “Eastern Frontier, 1813–1819” draws on contemporary maps to show the heavy military

presence on the frontier and yet Griffin chose to elide the physical manifestations of security and power characteristic of colonial expansion (1985).¹⁰ Instead of making the region of new settlement more appealing to prospective immigrants, a strong military presence would alert them to the instability of the frontier and the unsuitability of the region for general settlement. "Why so many soldiers?" is an excellent question and one perhaps better not asked of the colonial authorities. Griffin read his audience well, many of whom were grumbling, unemployed soldiers recently returned from the glorious Waterloo, and discontented workers who had seen protesters killed by the soldiers at the satirically named Massacre of Peterloo. The forts, military post and pickets are hidden, and a tiny mysterious tower also oddly on the wrong side of the frontier at the mouth of the Fish River is the only hint of what is left out.

By naming and locating features on the landscape a map maker draws attention to these features and gives them an emphasis at the expense of those features not depicted. No Xhosa land is marked, as if the British had always owned the land or had, as some suggested, colonized empty land (Crais 1991). The area labeled "All the Land on this side of the River is reserved for the new Colonists" is greatly exaggerated and hints only obliquely at its position right *on* the frontier. The violent methods by which the land was obtained on this frontier zone is diffused by the choice of the polite word *reserved*.

With so much left out, there is little to put in. As a consequence much of the map is specious and of little value. The courses and characteristics of rivers in the region bear no relation to topographic reality. A deep, but nonexistent harbor is depicted at the mouth of the Fish River that inexplicably runs into Algoa Bay instead of a hundred kilometers further northeast. Inland, the size of the river is greatly exaggerated, bearing the notation "navigable stream." The western boundary of the district, the Bushmans River, slices through the south eastern quarter of the region "reserved for New Colonists" and is labeled the Little Fish River, a label that really belongs to a tributary of the Fish seventy kilometers inland.

The "Road to the Cape of Good Hope distance 500 miles," although it might merely mean route, is depicted as a straight, wide highway. This is an impossibility in the rocky, twisted terrain where even the best route was a rough wagon trail that forded rivers and followed circuitous contours.¹¹ The notion of a direct road leading due west through the interior to the seat of Colonial Government in Cape Town was a powerful one, belying the physical and political isolation the settlers were to experience on the frontier. Few prospective immigrants understood the degree to which they would be cut off not only from Britain, but even from the more established region of the colony to the west. Ships visiting Algoa Bay might take two weeks to reach Cape Town, letters to Britain took four or five months after being passed from hand to hand, all the way from the colony to the mother country. Building on this desire to link the periphery to the center Griffin goes so far as to add an equally straight thick road to his map with the notation "Proposed Road to Somerset" from the nonexistent "Proposed Town as Capital of the New Settlement." Even in the first years of the settlement the paucity of road building projects and other public services needed for the growing economy in the region, notoriously poorly funded and far from being a government priority, were to become a point of contention with the Eastern Cape Separatist Movement (Le Cordeur 1981). By the 1830's some settlers who had grown increasingly wealthy through sheep farming, trading and military contracts, became resigned to the inability of the Colonial

Government to pay for roadwork and contracted privately to improve roads and river crossings to allow for easier transportation of their goods.

As Griffin creates an African landscape on his page he takes strange care to make it *like* rather than *unlike* a familiar English landscape. The huge shifting sand dunes and thick thorny bush at Algoa Bay are described as “Sandy Hills” and the inhospitable Suurberg to the west bear the tag “Rather mountainous on this side.” The Kieskamma River, although initially ambiguously understood by colonial officials, although certainly a place entirely out of bounds for settlers, is nameless, bearing the innocuous description of “a brook of excellent fresh water that empties itself into the Bay about the width of the River Lea.” Also out of reach are choice resources like fresh water places, lime quarries and wooded areas.

In Griffin’s map this appeal to the familiar landscape of Britain is simultaneously merged with crude stereotyped drawings of a Xhosa and a Dutch man that, by their unfavorable contrast to Britons, served to attach a predisposition to prejudice by the settlers toward indigenous people and other colonists already on the land. In examining maps of other European empires striking examples of this ideological reinforcement are visible. It is common for example for nineteenth-century British maps of African territories to be decorated in such a way as to attach a series of ethnic stereotypes and prejudices to the area mapped.¹²

In no way tied to the land by place names or other designators of ownership, the Dutch and Xhosa inhabitants of the region, disenfranchised to varying degrees, are symbolically represented by two floating vignettes that reinforce the political content of the map. To the west of the river a “Dutch House” is drawn, the increasing marginalization of Boers in the British colony reinforced by the cramped placement of the drawing on the edge of the page. To the east, properly positioned across the Kieskamma River, past the ceded territory is “A Caffre cane hut.” The Xhosa hut is foregrounded and shown three times larger than the Dutch house whose political unimportance is reinforced by the incomplete notation “no fire kept in the.”

In spite of the racial stereotyping there are striking equivalencies in the representations of the people. Both of the men are depicted holding walking sticks in the entrances of their respective dwellings. The clothed Dutch man leans on his stick while the naked Xhosa man sits holding the upraised stick between his legs. The representation is loaded with hierarchical symbolism, ethnic stereotyping and British colonial political agendas, yet is easily read by any nineteenth-century viewer.¹³ Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow’s *The Africa that Never Was* bears out this familiarity with stereotypical depictions by an exegesis of British perceptions of Africa and Africans through a content analysis of more than 500 fiction and non-fiction sources (Hammond and Jablow 1992).

This map, perhaps innocuous at first reading, carries a powerful message that serves to reinforce the ‘rightness’ of the colonial authority exercised by the current rulers of the Cape. Seen through British eyes, Britain and Africa represent “two poles of a single system of values” (Hammond and Jablow 1992:183). These are variously conceived of as light opposed to darkness, civilization to savagery, good to evil, and rational order to natural chaos. By contrasting these values, or imposing one set upon the other as in this map, “demonstrates the nature of these values, and...confirms their worth” (Hammond and Jablow 1992:183).

Recording land ownership

The act of surveying and then recording previously unmapped land on a sheet of paper adds strength to claims over that territory. As Harley points out these maps “once made permanent in the image...more than often acquired the force of law in the landscape” (1988:292). Although on a much smaller scale than global or regional empire building, the recording of ownership of individual land rights functions in the same ideological manner and demonstrates the effectiveness of cartography as a part of the mechanism of power.

From the moment land was granted settlers began to sketch maps of their locations, their improvements, and landmarks to record that which was theirs.¹⁴ In an official capacity Knobel surveyed Albany in 1820, 21 and 22 for his map, *The District of Albany, formerly the Zuurveld*, that recorded the placement of the parties in the region. In 1829 several Salem residents, wary of the legal ambiguity of owning land without recorded deeds, commissioned surveys of their allotments showing the extent, landmarks, neighboring properties on all borders and previous owners.¹⁵ It was only in 1847 that title deeds to many of 1820 land were finally made. In June of that year, for example, it was reported that the settlers of Salem had been “endeavoring for 27 years to obtain title to their locations” (Le Cordeur 1981:195). With those titles came a diagram or plat map of the land and therein lay power.

In the early 1840's Knobel's *Plan of Farms in the Eastern Province* was published. The map, a clean, ordered depiction of the region, had a messy history. It was based on an updated and heavily annotated version of Knobel's original map of the 1820 land grants. For more than twenty years after these first grants note was made of changes. As additional land was granted, parties disintegrated, ambiguous boundaries were contested, and the powerful used their connections to get more land, the information was *added* to the map, but no information was *removed*. For instance John Parkins' land east of Salem was ceded to Benjamin Leech in 1822, but the original name still appears on the map. Although many changes were made, no further surveying after the original work in 1820's was done. Colonial offices in the Eastern Cape were notoriously isolated, underfunded and floundering under masses of work. As discussed, it took until well into the 1840's for most of the original land deeds to be officially recorded and for this “accurate” map to be made of the region. The map shows a regional bureaucrat's dream of a controlled, neatly packaged world—the inconsistencies are beneath notice and in no way detract from the larger message of colonial order.

The *Divisional Map of Albany*, although drawn in 1890 and published in 1899, is closely based on Knobel's 1842 map and thus inherited much of the outdated information on which newer district divisions were superimposed. The map is an excellent example of the political control and power manifest in a depiction of land ownership. The map shows *British* colonial land grants and district divisions as fixed, long-standing entities not open to negotiation. The South African War (the Boer War as the British called their “flagrant outburst of... Imperialism” [Thompson 1990:141]) had just begun. In the context of growing economic and military competition from European rivals powerful British interests were concerned to prevent the region of great, newly discovered material resources like gold and diamonds from escaping Britain's century-old hegemony (Thompson 1990:141). Although they hoped brute force would solve the problem, the use of maps to reinforce their message was an important

and effective part of the effort. The *Divisional Map of Albany* was one of many regional and larger scale maps that highlighted and reinforced the time-depth of British presence at the Cape (M 3/2009 1890).

Other maps

Moving on from this minute examination of Griffin's and other maps I want to look briefly at a few other representations of the landscape in maps through which the colonial scramble for land was systematized and made acceptable.

The notions of motherland, empire and power communicated in the geography lessons of formal schooling were reinforced in the pastimes of colonial children. A carefully stitched sampler shows an embroidered map of the counties of England and Wales. A jigsaw puzzle, "A New Dissected Map of England and Wales for Teaching Youth Geography," came in a box decorated with an allegorical scene representing the extent and riches of the British Empire.¹⁶ Victoria stands, her outstretched arms encompassing her realm, allowing her gaze to fall benevolently on stereotyped images of an African, an Asian, and a Native American symbolizing the colonized continents. The Royal Navy that made such expansion possible is denoted by a majestic ship floating in the background and a sailor unpacking a trunk of treasures and manufactured goods at Victoria's feet. To the left, Britannia, sheltered by an olive branch and dressed in customary classical garb replete with symbols of war, rests her feet on an African lion. The meaning of these symbols would have been widely understood, and disclosed the geographic scope and ideological content of the enclosed map (Corbett and Lightbrown 1979; Harley 1988:279).

Silences or omissions on maps point to areas of tension. The maps of missionaries such as the Reverend John Campbell, whose *Travels in South Africa at the Request of the London Missionary Society, Being a Narrative of a Second Journey into the Interior of that Country* (Campbell 1822) provide an interesting study of these silences. Campbell's work took him to mission stations in the Eastern Cape in 1819, from where he headed north into present-day Botswana. His professional interest in converting the indigenous people is reflected in the manner in which the kraals and villages that are usually left off most maps are shown the size of cities on his map of his travels. In contrast to the majority of colonial maps, here the reader is left with an image of a peopled interior in place of the blankness usually shown. He fills the landscape with ethnographic markers: "Bushmen Tribes possessing cattle," "Wandering Bushmen," and "Only wandering Bushmen thinly scattered." Highlighting Campbell's interest in the representation of an indigenous landscape is his almost total lack of interest in naming anything other than mission stations within the colonial border. His work was outside of those borders in "civilizing" the African. This stresses the role of missionaries in the forefront of colonial expansion by opening up the hinterland and incorporating the indigenous people into the larger world system.¹⁷

Taking a more recent series of maps, the political agenda active in the choice of certain cartographic conventions becomes clear in the following discussion. *The Eastern Cape Frontier Zone 1660–1980: A Cartographic Guide for Historical Research* (Bergh and Visagie 1985) is an atlas based on extensive research with historic maps and documents and has become a much used if somewhat politically biased resource in South African historiography.

The Afrikaans authors have been criticized for reinforcing a central political and historical myth that gives justification to European claims to a “right” to South Africa. According to the myth Europeans and the Southern Nguni “settled” the region simultaneously in the seventeenth century, one group in the north, the other in the south. Although archaeology has debunked the myth (Hall 1990; Hall 1990) by showing Nguni settlement much earlier in the region, it still pervades and colors the way different groups are represented cartographically. In the map showing the relative movement of people on the land by 1750 (Bergh and Visagie 1985:5) Trekboers are represented with a series of several detailed, dated, *solid* arrows while the Southern Nguni speakers are shown with a single, undated *dotted* arrow. The result is that not only do the two groups appear to have arrived in southern Africa simultaneously, but the Dutch colonists’ presence on the land appears hard fact while the Southern Nguni’s is only tentative speculation. Clifton Crais makes a similar assertion in “The Vacant Land: The Mythology of British Expansion in the Eastern Cape, South Africa”:

In “The Black/White Frontier: 1785,” two thick black arrows descending from the east represent the expansion, and in the words of the authors, the “incursion” of Bantu-speakers on the sub-continent. The “white” side of the frontier is devoid of such bold lines. Instead the early European colonization of the region is presented as a series of “District Boundaries,” farms and towns. The message seems clear, if rather implicit. The “incursion” of Africans—“a running in...when undesired....a sudden, brief invasion or raid”—is met with the opposing forces of a systematic and desirable settlement on the seemingly neutral space of the page (Crais 1991:257).

From these examples it is obvious that the symbolic meaning of maps in the Republic of South Africa still functions to reinforce power: they are no more ‘neutral’ or ‘objective’ than they were in the colonial past.

Past and present, these cartographic depictions of the landscape are a part of the whole suite of interlinked processes through which Europeans assembled and communicated critical social intelligence on the land they had claimed and the people with whom they competed for that land.

Naming, order, and the natural

Hand in hand with the soldiers, settlers, missionaries and bureaucrats of any colonial expansion were the natural scientists whose role it was to name, record and collect exotic specimens in the new land. South Africa, with its fascinating variability in the natural world, had a long history of scientific exploration (Barrow 1802 etc.). In the inherently biased nineteenth-century European world view, indigenous people, as if not fully human, were as often as not included in these descriptions of the natural world.

Those Europeans who traveled into the South African interior in this period and who wrote about it were men of outstanding intellect, wholly committed to the Enlightenment’s spirit of inquiry and to the social and intellectual advancement of humankind....They were often scientists, botanists and naturalists, but in practice simply as wide as their interests in any situation

allowed; absorbed, too, in metallurgy, geology, climate, map-making and the face of unknown humankind: 'everything curious and worth attention' (Mostert 1992:177).

Through this process of cataloguing and representing of the natural world, and of sending specimens to museums and scientists in Europe, the unfamiliar animals, birds and plants of the Cape became familiar and the wild was tamed. The effect that this gathering of critical intelligence had on the natural and cultural landscape was far reaching. It was crucial to the successful colonial expansion into the hinterland, in planning strategy for resource exploitation, and for facilitating contact with indigenous people; and providing knowledge, for knowledge is power (Foucault 1972).

The intertwined flourishing of colonialism and the rise in natural scientific exploration led to a massive popular interest in Britain about discoveries of the natural world. The 'curiosity cabinets', those eclectic collections of minerals, flora, insects and artifacts, so typical of nineteenth-century intellectual sensibility (Hunt 1982) were not the sole province of serious scholars, but of amateurs, the self-taught natural scientists, as well. The notebooks, sketches and paintings made by British settlers in the early years of the settlement in Albany demonstrate this desire to explore and understand the exotic and unfamiliar natural world in which they found themselves. The doctor and politician William Guybon Atherstone for example, a boy when he arrived, filled his notebooks with annotated sketches and observations on subjects such as conchology and entomology (Atherstone n.d.).

Charlotte Philipps, the well educated wife of party leader Thomas Philipps, who had a properly elevating interest in natural science, sketched and painted the wealth of fauna and flora she saw around her new home (Philipps n.d.). In her rather flat but meticulously detailed watercolor depictions of birds, animals and exotic plants the emulation of the established style of scientific illustration is obvious. The subject, be it "Maned Jackall", "Leopard" or "Paradise Flycatcher", is represented, devoid of context, on a blank page, with the animal positioned to show characteristic features.

The Bowkers, with their breadth of interests, observed and depicted the natural world with detail and dedication (Bowker n.d.). Standing out from the rest of the family and from other amateurs was the meticulous and sophisticated Mary Elizabeth Barber (nee Bowker), a self-taught natural scientist (Barber n.d.; Barber n.d.). She had numerous international correspondences with such theorists as Charles Darwin and became a well-respected authority on Southern African fauna and flora. Interestingly, Barber was fully cognizant of the destruction caused by the settlers' total transformation of the landscape. In the eighteenth-seventies in *Wanderings in South Africashe* muses on the sacrifice of the "ancient natural order" (n.d./a).

Whatever their the level of their proficiency, it was through the act of close examination and identification of the subject, painting it, and then showing the images to others, that the specimen was made familiar. Piece by piece the different parts, that together made a landscape, were mulled over, dissected, examined and depicted until the whole was understood and thus encompassed.

Repositories in the Eastern Cape for catalogued collections and drawings of fossils, fauna and flora were proposed as early as 1825 in a conversation between Richard Plaskett, the Cape Colonial Secretary and Thomas Philipps: "He talked of Museums, Botanical gardens, Menageries, confessed he was only an amateur, but said in such a country they ought to have been long considered" (Philipps 1960:239). The Albany Museum, formally proposed in 1845, was established in 1855 in Grahamstown.

In keeping with the need to control and order the natural landscape, and in this case to transform as well, the Grahamstown Botanical Gardens were established in 1853 (Scott 1991:26). The founders of the garden were leading Grahamstown residents, including Faulkner Slater, the wealthy George Wood, and the Reverend William Shaw, all of whom had been members of Sephton's Party. The primary role proposed for the garden was to

render the inhabitants independent of importation of plants, seeds, etc. from England and other countries....to procure a collection of the best description of fruits and other trees and seeds; the trees and seeds to be planted in a suitable place to ensure a succession of graftings, cuttings, etc., the grafted and young trees to be distributed....¹⁸

The garden's success went far beyond supplying the exotic plants with which to transform the Albany region. By exchanging plants and seeds with botanists and botanical societies in England, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Mauritius, and throughout South Africa (Scott 1991:30) indigenous South African plants were naturalized the world over. This dissemination of geraniums, watsonia and other plants allowed a growing familiarity with the region that further reinforced British claims to the Eastern Cape and the rest of Southern Africa. The exotic became the commonplace. More than a hundred years later, when the much expanded Botanical Garden came under Provincial authority in 1974, an forceful policy change was made to replace all exotic plants and to cultivate instead only plants indigenous to the Eastern Cape. Missing the point as to what a scientific botanical garden really was, all non-native plants were systematically removed. As a 'token gesture' in the face of fierce protest, a small English period garden was left on the site of the original orchard (Scott 1991:32).

This new focus, in keeping with most botanical gardens in South Africa, can be read as a symbolic throwing off of the burden of colonialism, and of reinforcing the strength of the South African nation state. Angry at the erasure of local history, the Grahamstown Historical Society, many of whose members are descendants of the 1820 Settlers, petitioned and were granted National Monument Status for the remaining portion of the original garden a few years later. Proposals have been made to recreate this garden as a part of the British Settler Memorial complex of museums, galleries, theaters and meeting places celebrating the contributions of English speaking settlers in South Africa. Plans show it laid out with exotic *and* indigenous ornamental trees and shrubs, "an example of the breadth of Britain's botanical contribution to South Africa, and of Grahamstown's to horticulture in South Africa and elsewhere in the world" (Scott 1991:33).

Conclusions

In this paper I have explored the power of visual and textual sources that rests in their ability to both reflect how the world is perceived and in turn to shape the way the world is viewed. The enormously rich sources, whether they are paintings, maps or notebooks, are well-preserved, readily available and provide an imaginative way to understand colonial power, world view, and social experience. When read in this way, these sources, the so-called *written*, are not so much a complement to our material culture analyses as historical archaeologists as they are a *part* of all that is *wrought*. It is by using these multiple lines of evidence, and recognizing that they are all cultural constructions, that we come to a closer understanding of the past. The prolific production by settlers and their contemporaries of images of their cultural landscape provides fertile ground for a more extensive discussion of this type.

Notes

- 1 Manuscript annotation in an edition of William Mason's *Satirical Poems* (1926:43), quoted in Hunt (1975 :11).
- 2 Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European representations of Africans provide fruitful material for critical analysis and deserve further attention.
- 3 P.R. Kirby briefly discussed this performance in "A Farewell Performance, or, The Settlers in the Circus." (1957:162-170). See Bryer (1987:20) for a published copy of the playbill.
- 4 A term, which literally refers to the wings on a theater set, shows the conventionalized nature of period landscape painting. Barrymore's set designs would have produced the same spatial quality of receding space by the use of painted wings.
- 5 Often couched in scientific terms, the erotic fixation Europeans have shown for the "anatomical curiosities" of both male and female KhoiSan genitalia has been a constant in the description of the continent since the sixteenth century. One extreme example of this fascination is the case of the "Hottentot Venus," a Khoikhoi woman who was taken to Europe as a traveling exhibit. The development of her "organ of generation" was perceived as justification to set her apart from humans. When she died in 1815 in the care of a French animal trainer she was dissected by the noted Swiss comparative anatomist George Cuvier. Her embalmed body parts are still housed in Le Musee de L'Homme.
- 6 Culloden Muir is a rugged sandstone ridge near Inverness while Carse of Gowrie is a flat alluvial plain of rich arable land.
- 7 As Hammond-Tooke notes in Shaw's edited diary, settler Thomas Philipps was also not impressed by Theopolis Mission where "700 Beings were...in a state of nature, eating

only when they could kill game, tilling not even a garden, and existing only as they used to on the curdles milk of their numerous cattle." Ullbricht saw no need to make the converts "English" in dress or subsistence, considering that he had no more "to do with them than take care of their *Spiritual* concerns."

- 8 J. B. Harley (1988:310, note 97) cites this verse, noting that a stereotype of African maps was already in existence at this time.
- 9 Phillip Muehrcke's phrase from *Map Use: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation* (Muehrcke, 1978:295) used by Harley in his discussion on map content in the transaction of power.
- 10 This map is based on several politically motivated maps which stress military strength on the frontier. Sources included the spatially distorted map of the pickets "Military Sketch of that Part of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, Bordering on the Caffres and Most Exposed to their Depredations with the Different Military Posts, Farms, Roads, Rivers etc., by Lieut. Wiley in the year 1816," "Military Chart and Sketch of the South-Eastern Frontier...Showing the Country Ceded by the Kaffer Chiefs to the British Crown...on the 14th October 1819, by Lieut. Ives Stocker," "A Sketch of the Public Roads from Uitenhage to Beaufort..." and J. Knobel's "General Plan of the Country between Grahamstown and the Mouth of the Great Fish River" (MP 124, 1818; MP 125, 1819; M 2/460, 1827; M 2/152, 1837).
- 11 Thomas Baine's diaries and vivid portrayals depict the difficulty of movement in the Eastern Cape even in the late 1840's. *The Descent of Mackay's Nek, Wagon Overturned Between Chumie Hoek and Elands River, Elands Post, Kat River—Wagon Broken Down, and Crossing a Drift* are but a few examples on this subject (1852 and n.d.).
- 12 J. B. Harley (1988:299) discusses the images of these early maps of Africa.
- 13 See J. M. Coetzee's essay on "Idleness in South Africa" (1988:12-35).
- 14 See for example the 1820 sketch map by Irish settlers whose original location in the Western Cape near Clanwilliam on in a steep river valley with poor rocky soil and no grazing land was so bad they were transported to new land in the Eastern Cape; Cape Archives, reproduced in Butler (1974:108).
- 15 The survey recorded, among others, the following land transactions which had recently taken place: George Howe to C. Stone, John Jones to William Trotter, James Howse to John Short, John Short to James Hayward, Samuel Painter to Benjamin Rudman, Samuel Cyrus to W.H. Matthews, George Jenkinson to William Gravett, William Sargeant to George Gravett, Thomas Filmer to John Filmer. William Watson's original grant, still in his possession, was surveyed too.
- 16 See Bryer and Hunt (1987) for an illustration of the sampler, now in Albany Museum, Grahamstown, and Butler (1974:298) for an illustration of the puzzle box.

- 17 See for example Roger Beck's discussion of their role in "Bibles and Beads: Missionaries as Traders in Southern Africa in the Early Nineteenth Century" (1989).
- 18 From a speech by Mr. Jarvis, Chairman of the first Botanical Garden Committee, quoted by Patricia Scott (1991). I am indebted to Patricia Scott for this reference and for our discussion on natural sciences and specimen collecting in the Eastern Cape.

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