Many of the significant descriptions of an "indigenous," "vernacular," or "traditional" architecture in South Africa were published in the period from the 1930s to 50s. Books and articles such as *African Village* and *Native Architecture* were appearing for the first time during this period of the formal elaboration of apartheid in which the "native" population was being selectively uprooted from rural lands and denied access to cities. Urban settlement by Africans was curbed through legislation, and influx control was beginning to be systematically enforced to remove "surplus" Africans. This conflict over the distribution of land and labour made the associated notions of migration, tradition and the vernacular more than a simple issue of local village and folk building in architecture.

Dichotomies in general use, such as those between modernity and tradition and the civilised and primitive, were core justifications for segregation and the racist assumptions of apartheid. "Tradition" was becoming an essential validating principle of difference in the absence of clear cultural distinctions. Governance under apartheid required the codification and promulgation of previously flexible customs as prescribed "traditions". Distinct traditions were being constructed at a time when social bonds were being torn apart and a unified black resistance was being organised in the country. This apparent "respect for other cultures" involved efforts by the state and others to reinforce the cultural hierarchy and divide of the modern from the traditional.

Romantic linkages of language, race and nation were as essential to this construction of an aberrant and exotic other "vernacular" as was a rationalistic, universal standard to the International Style or norm then current in architecture. Rex Martienssen – a disciple of Le Corbusier – described this "International Tendency" as the corresponding approach in architectural styles to the conforming economic conditions of different countries.[1] This was for him distinct from the national (or romantic) spirit it was replacing. The ease of comprehension of the particular romantic, and not general, solution was superfluous to the architectural revolution represented by the new International Style.

Indigenous building practices are today most interesting as a repressed 'other' in so far as an international order was in that period rapidly supplanting the entire built environment of South Africa. On the one hand, there was the technical and advanced structures of the white professional elite, and on the other, the local – seen as backward – huts that were being subsumed into an unchanging vernacular. These "native" buildings, drawn and photographed by James Walton for example,[2] could not simply remain alongside the transplanted modern "white" structures without placing in question these modernists rights to regional authenticity or locality. The exoticism that is desired from such false models

of colonial codified "traditions" could hardly be contained. The need to link back to an authentic and singular origin was the trait usually distinguishing the traditional from the modern. This simplification clearly allowed no cultural confrontation. An exotic encapsulated culture with plenty of characteristics and curiosities was set against a modern culture with sufficient dynamism and depth to make it perpetually renewable. Yet even today this notion of a fixed and unchanging traditional architecture continues to be used in describing, and promoting, this other "vernacular" architecture. Nameless people out there did not simply build in response to an indigenous and instinctive sense of what was necessary and right. What was built was equally in response and often as resistance to the "invented traditions" being established as control and divisive mechanisms by the white authorities. In the construction of 'tradition' there was a separation from resistance and innovation by more than academic negligence or narrow conceptions of the notion. There were deliberate policies to bend tradition to authoritarian control and enforce racist differences. "Native" traditions were key elements in propagating a culture of subjugation and dominance. Often all that was left to explain a tradition in building were simplistic notions of style and other formal differences, and gestures to techniques of building construction and material deployment. Building precedents that could no more serve as reflections of a particular tradition than they could encourage its development, were carefully drawn and analysed merely as forms or structures to be reiterated, or from which elements could be borrowed. Modernity and tradition, however, were never just in opposition but rather sustained each other. They existed in the same colonial spaces, without any real stability, and in areas that were contaminated by the other rather than serving as mutual replacements. Why then were boundaries being drawn in that period around these particular notions and regions? Why now are these cultural differences (exacerbated though disarmed through globalisation) left to us in South Africa an no more than styles for consumption or as ethnic tourist venues? What alternatives and modifications to existing architectural scenarios do an unvarying tradition, and the continuing disjuncture between the traditional and the modern, in fact limit. Privileging one notion over another, fixing definitions and the continuing domination of certain categories still dictates in architecture the direction pursued in technological and cultural innovation. The construction of "tradition" in architecture in South Africa is examined here: as authority and discipline in planning; as the modernist split of the romantic and rational; as differences and circuits in global mass culture; as taxonomy and paternalism in the vernacular; and as the continuing dilemma of white settlement.

1 | *James Walton*

2 | *Chris Ledochowski*

"Native Dormitory Suburb"

Building traditions were not just established in pristine isolation and then left to be developed by individuals with the gradual introduction of new materials and influences. They were subject to all manner of interference, disruption, eradication and contamination by complex forces (in this case colonialism and apartheid) that they were used to counteract. They adapted, modified and appropriated elements from such intrusions to not only broaden techniques of building but in response to emergencies and threats. So migrations set off by labour recruitment, influx control, land tenure directives and tribal legislation affected buildings by disrupting social networks organised around building. People were forced off land, and new building materials were brought in as products and symbols that were bound to be in conflict with existing social arrangements. Tradition was finally to be dealt with by officials in two opposing manners: on the one hand, it would be broken down to impose a new order and, on the other hand, it would be built up and reinforced by drawing on established structures of authority and stability.

In the first instance, housing built in the townships that were being erected as satellites to white urban areas was to be used simultaneously in the distribution and estrangement of African labourers. The architect Roy Kantorowich spoke at a town planning congress in Cape Town in 1938 of this important first process of adjustment:

"It might be argued that the Natives, to accept a new order of housing, would require a tremendous amount of time in order to adjust themselves to the change, and that such an effort would be difficult and possibly fatal to the Natives themselves. This change which is necessary to make any population accept a new order of things, to my mind, involves two processes. It involves firstly the breaking down of previous habits and customs, and secondly the setting up of new habits. In regard to our Native population at the present moment, I think we can safely say that the first portion of this process has already been accomplished. The breaking down of the previous habits is complete. We thus have a fluid medium which only requires casting into a suitable mould."[3] The malleable 'native' was to be recast in the role of a modern and conforming urban labourer.

The other manner of dealing with tradition was as a supplementary adjustment for stability developed in the 1950s by A. J. Cutten, a town planning consultant and Johannesburg City councillor. In introducing a device for achieving an efficient plan for his dormitory suburb he made reference to a system used by "the Native himself in his original rural kraal, namely that of arranging a group of huts or houses around some central point of interest."[4]

The importance of this focal feature, with surrounding huts grouped around it in the form of a horseshoe, was not simply as an organisational device for a plan; it was also a device for control and discipline. He wrote in the *South African Architectural Record* in 1952: "In my plan, therefore, I have tried to maintain this horseshoe and central feature pattern, replacing the cattle kraal with some other feature of interest such as a clinic, a crèche, a school or a church, in a conveniently designed open space surrounded by houses. Within the framework of the courtyard or 'close', as I have called my group of houses, some link is thus established with the Native's past traditions, and opportunity is provided for the fostering of the social and communal impetus that in so important in preventing the disintegration of these people."[5]

For scientific authority Cutten is compelled to make reference to *The Social Survey of the Zulus* by E. J. Krige in which the anthropologist describes the spatial discipline that was bound to be necessary for "natives" being brought up in the city: "The village is the basis and pattern of the political organisation and is a social organism of great importance. The disciplinary and guiding effect of this social organism was so great that it took precedence even over individual parental guidance. ... When, therefore, the Native is abruptly thrust into conditions foreign to his traditions, can we be surprised if the youth is unruly and ill-disciplined, and the parents lacking in control."[6] This paternal authority was being invoked in relation to the organisational structure of the environment at a time when workers were unable to bring their families with them to the city. The split also reinforced the stark divide between a "civilised" urban and a "primitive" rural, which was already a deep polarisation inherited along with romantic notions of both rural as lacking culture and culture as limited to a group. Differences between generations, and social pressures of uprooted communities were to be used again in the mid-1980s as violent mechanisms of division by city officials and apartheid authorities.

The vernacular had an order and arrangement that was suitable if fixed, and especially useful for organising Africans perceived as threatening or unruly once placed together in a changing and increasingly concentrated urban environment. Cutten made this clear: "Lastly, I would like to emphasise again the sociological basis of the 'close' pattern, in which in made an attempt to give the Native some link with his past customs and traditions, and establish some stabilizing and unifying factor in his rapidly urbanising life."[7] The city fragmented and threatened the order that was being established, an experience he recognised as common to many countries that had already modernised. Cutten had in the beginning of the lecture been careful to emphasise the need to draw on parallel cases from older and more experienced countries (such as England) :

"In evaluating the problems of housing the Native labourer who has to-day collected in such

large numbers in and around the cities and larger towns of South Africa, it is useful and advantageous to examine how similar problems have been tackled and met in other countries of the world."[8]

What these countries once had in common with South Africa was the attraction of peasants to towns by the wages of industry but also a corresponding lack of housing for workers. What had followed in Europe was the union and subsequent rebellion of workers against the oppression of factory owners. Planning and providing housing was a way of avoiding the chaos that followed industrialisation, a warning of this stage that was sure to be exacerbated by the difference in colour of "masters and servants" in South Africa.

Modernity in architecture experienced as industrialisation, political upheavals, and urbanisation was generally seen as in conflict with tradition.[9] In South Africa, however, tradition was a necessary component in introducing and enforcing modernisation, of keeping Africans in their place with certain practices in operation. The break with tradition was not to be fully experienced by Africans moving to the city. Theirs was meant to be only a temporary move in which tradition would continue to bind them to their past and rural lands. The social developments associated with modernisation would not take place for them, and modernity was left to architecture in South Africa as an aesthetic concept drained of any positive socioeconomic potential.

"The International Tendency in Contemporary Architecture"

Most of the ideas of modernity in South Africa were imported from abroad. In his writings after his first trips to Europe in 1925 and 1930 (but before his meeting with Le Corbusier) Rex Martienssen expressed a concern with the aesthetics of some of the new architecture he was seeing. This was as opposed to the technologies or possibilities that were also there in terms of standardisation, prefabrication and types – what he understood as both a "fitness for purpose and beauty of form." Not at ease in the landscape, instead as a deliberate confrontation of man with nature, these strange white cubes would be isolated and distinct from their surroundings. With Martienssen there was dramatically in his early explorations the polarisation of a sensuous romantic from a logical rational approach.

Martienssen wrote in a *Commentary* in 1931 in the *South African Architectural Record* before becoming editor: "We must realise the infinite combinations of forms which are to hand to produce the results we seek. Every problem on its own merits – and no backward glances at obsolete methods. There is no need to-day to employ clichés; in the smallest thing, a cupboard, a lighting fitting, a cottage or a kitchen; we should solve the problem intellectually

and not by rule of thumb. The method of the ancient craftsman, who says 'my grandfather did thus and thus, I will collapse as soon as a new condition is introduced. We must work outwards from an idea – a germ – not inwards from an encyclopaedia; certainly we should bring all our knowledge of beauty, structure and material to bear on the question but the question alone must dictate the ultimate form."[10]

The question was for him whether the modern movement would remain a development in style or become a new set of principles and a system of construction. Whether it would remain bound to local and exceedingly personalised expressions rather than open to an internationally acceptable range of elements, a vocabulary and a universally understood language. How were ideal notions such as these to be imported into a local environment and undergo metamorphosis? How would they be taken up by *economic forces and utilised? In colonial situations* such as South Africa at that time there were of course few educational structures and organisations to absorb and interpret these notions. But still there were some professionals like him able to deploy them. As part of the universalising tendencies of the modern movement, mass production and the International Style seemed to work against localised differences. Universalism, rationalism and identity against particularism, intuition, nominalism and difference. Intellect as opposed to feeling. There was some semantic slippage between prescribed definitions of place as either internationalist or regionalist. Regionalism here simply reinforced the notion of a central or core modernism up against its regional components. Without the critical cultural infrastructure in South Africa that was so much a part of the discourse of modern architecture in Europe, the ideas being developed by Martienssen were limited in their engagement with local social and economic issues. Few concepts would become truly situated *and engaged in the country.*

For Martienssen, then, there was a national as opposed to an international tendency. A romantic – found in the buildings of Berlage, Mendelsohn and Ostberg – as opposed to an intellectual or rational – found in Oud, Gropius and Asplund. He described national architecture as an architecture of affluence with features as an index of superfluous money; whereas the exigencies of economy produced a logical architecture through the demands of efficiency that allowed little personal, or again national, idiosyncrasy. He noted the extent to which an enforced economy affected architectural form, as technical processes were the direct outcome of economic necessity. This for him was the basis for internationalism in architecture: a corresponding approach in architectural style that followed an approach in the economic conditions of different countries.

This left an essentially personal approach to problems of the romantic. Without laws and premis-

es of his own choosing, his work could only be judged through individual opinion. Intellectual problems were another thing as they were capable of *general solutions*. For Martienssen "it is impossible to judge intellectual architecture on the same bases as those used for romantic work. Taste in intellectual work is defined in scientific and logical terms, the forms of buildings must have a significance other than literary-historical. Taste in romantic work has its roots in the accumulated standards of individual traditional examples. The bases are essentially arbitrary and not susceptible of a rational interpretation."[11]

How was Martienssen then able to interpret buildings in South Africa? Some logic had to be found in order that these local buildings were not simply without order and subject to whim and fancy as in the case of the romantic. Martienssen was able to overcome his suppression of the vernacular during his travels to the Mediterranean in 1938. What he understood was that the simple cubist forms of rural buildings and their climatic responses were logical and obvious to someone from Southern Africa such as himself: "The southerner whose temperament mirrors the sea and the sky has plastically an enormous advantage over the more active but slightly frozen Nordic. He lives close to nature and not in conflict with her. Under the sun his surroundings take on a vividness that demands a counterbalancing repose – a withdrawing from play of form which stimulates and exhausts. His dwelling stands deliberate and separate from the tumultuous pattern of nature."[12] In the final instance for Martienssen architecture had to withdraw from nature and its distinct but true repose establish an order apart from the surrounding chaos.

Here though the southerner was "white" with all the conflicting relations to land and culture in Africa that this implied. However was architecture to be rooted and made meaningful without a deeper and more "authentic" relationship to the land? It was in the 1950s and 60s that white South African architects were sufficiently emboldened to speak as did other artists and writers of their right to draw from the land inspiration and precedent and metaphor. All of these for them were bound in the blood and longing by which Afrikaners were tied to the landscape. The profession made few gestures to vernacular African architecture in *The South African Architectural Record*. How was Africa to be brought into the picture of the South African architects place? How could the hut, the circle, the earth, and the decorative patterns of the 'native' be constructed as a suitable local vernacular? What of the related but strange social arrangements around which the vernacular was constructed? Not only patterns of community but also colonial and apartheid structures of separation, control and difference.

In his introduction to *White Writing* J. M. Coetzee addressed this question of conscience and consciousness: "This landscape remains alien, impenetrable, until a language is found in which to win it, speak it, represent it. It is no oversimplification to say that landscape art and landscape writing in South Africa from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth revolve around the question of finding a language to fit Africa, a language that will be authentically African. Of course there exist plenty of authentically African languages, languages indigenous to the subcontinent. But their authenticity is not necessarily the right authenticity. The quest for an authentic language is pursued within a framework in which language, consciousness, and landscape are interrelated. For the European to learn an African language 'from the outside' will therefore not be enough: he must know the language 'from the inside' as well, that is, know it 'like a native', sharing the mode of consciousness of the people born to it, and to that oxtont giving up hin Europoin identity. So, quite aside from the question of whether it is practical for a European to enter African culture in sufficient depth, quite aside from European doubts about whether the black man anyhow 'appreciates' the landscape into which he was born any better than an animal does, the question has to be rephrased: Is there a language in which people of European identity, or if not of European identity then a highly problematic South African-colonial identity, can speak to Africa and be spoken to by Africa?"[13]

This was not only a problem of representation. And the language in question not only kept some groups out, but also confined others within. The problem of the romantic notions of national groups who had a language, community and blood in common was tied into these resulting differences. It was easily translated into notions of discrete societies defined by the possession of a unique culture. Disparate and bounded cultures were understandable in terms of this romantic versus rational split, the tradition versus modernity of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Traditional societies with common fixed social beliefs were among the "invented traditions" that were carried across from anthropological worldviews into architecture and the "vernacular".[14] It was a narrow distance from these notions of essential cultural differences and styles to the evolutionist thinking regarding distinct societies in different stages of development and advancement. Climate and culture in architecture were the precursors here to regional distinctions.

Circuits, routes and breaks

"Tradition" in some of the senses being used here can be understood as the thing that links us to our origins in culture and place. This is a transmission in a single direction that is only able to lead us back to where we belong. But with a more open conception

– imperative in an era of global mass culture – culture moves through different circuits. It moves by means of overlapping and interconnected routings. And it is not seen as an original or authentic site from which each subsequent transmission is a loss or divergence from some foundational root. Connections between one part and another depend on tradition not remaining the same, a complex combination of continuities and breaks, similarities and differences – the "changing same" of Paul Gilroy.[15]

Tradition in architecture in South Africa cannot of course be divested of the implications of colonialism and apartheid. For that reason other terms of reference than those already established need to be utilised. It is necessary to recuperate the traditional at the same time as contesting the narrow identities and cultural spaces bound to it. The vernacular in this context is never without conscious style or unrelated to an official architecture to which it is contrasted rather than categorised.

Vernacular traditions in South Africa were seen as constitutive of cultural differences, and were constructed around notions of race, ethnicity, and authenticity. These notions were once maintained for the use of white officialdom and were later easily adapted for cultural consumption. There was always a need and market for the curio – especially one that could be classified as authentic, exotic, and original. At the same time the social and spatial distortions of apartheid – the rural over the urban, the homogenous, the intuitive, the superstitious, and the communal – made such distinctions problematic.

Comparisons can hardly be made on the basis of differences alone against a general grouping that would then have to be held in common (as if equally shared by all these groups). Wide disparities and uneven distributions make such assumptions not only ridiculous but also implicate them in the continuing hold of such simplistic notions. Vernacular architecture is still defined today in terms of a professional bias that distinguishes it from more advanced, progressive, and hence sophisticated ways of doing things. Officially sanctioned descriptions of the international, the regional, and the traditional are currently set up to serve as stylistic and formal descriptions to be taken up or denied, often without comprehension of the political and economic forces by which they were established and in which they still operate. Criteria and standards especially are required for urban and architectural production as the models to emulate or precedents to follow.

Traditional building was understood as restricted to materials, structures and forms without bearing the associated social relations of property ownership, land legislation, primogeniture, labour constraints and resource allocation. Also that which was built was never seen as related to and dependent upon that which was not built. Towns were constructed at the expense of rural areas by the removal of local labour and skills. Materials were supplied at the cost of local ways of doing things. Relations that existed between forms and an environment were seen as uni-directional and unconditional. The specific historical conditions of architectural production and reception were as flawed as the inadequate general historical lessons being drawn upon.

Globalisation, structured along colonial trade and resource routes, pits the existing advanced production centres against the marginal markets and manufacturing peripheries. The inherent inequalities and imbalances of power within globalisation are reflected as well in the location and concentration of global institutions and network hubs. Still there are various overlapping global cultures rather than a single one, and individuals are able to identify with and participate in more than one culture in addition to their own. Caution is important, as the pressure is there to absorb these cultural differences within a larger concentration of culture and other forms of capital. Stuart Hall argues that the homogenisation of global mass culture "is now a form of capital which recognises that it can only, to use a metaphor, rule through other local capitals, rule alongside and in partnership with other economic and political elites. It does not attempt to obliterate them; it operates through them. It has to hold the whole framework of globalisation in place and simultaneously police that system: it stage manages independence within it ..."[16]

For South Africans, like others in newly emerging and developing nations, this converging culture is governed by tastes and desires that have developed out of opportunities and constraints available to them in as much as they are members of this international class. Mass produced and branded foods, goods and services are circulating internationally, altering and engaging tastes, habits, practices and values. Each cultural contact situation, however, still enables the production of alternatives depending of course on the attributes of the parties, their compatibility, and the degree of exploitation involved.

Individuals that are concentrated in the urban centres of South Africa have access to this culture by means of everything from education and skills to their social positions and personal contacts. Some have more in common with their global counterparts than rural inhabitants or squatters in their own city. It is a combination of continuity and innovation in flux rather than just vicinity that makes up a community and their buildings. This means tradition is constantly being constructed out of the complex sociopolitical realm in which it had seemingly long since been established.

Distribution of bee-hive hut types and rondavel intrusion

The problem is one of what tradition is being brought forward. For the very definitions of much of

these traditions were established under certain anthropological and architectural hierarchies that are so clearly questionable today. Ideas of tradition were being developed at the same time as ideas of a community's identity and character. Subversive or dissenting strands to these traditions were never apparent. Opposition and defiance were not identifiable or easily carried out in terms of buildings and visible structures. The record was geared to certain types and preconceived notions of an authentic "vernacular". What was not built, and sometimes what was destroyed, was left out of any official or empirical record.

Preserving traditions and their associated hierarchies served to support the tribal order being imposed within the country. Traditions that relied on symbolic expressions of the tribal order were encouraged. But these forms no longer held the meanings they once evoked. Competing traditions were avoided or subsumed under categories that channelled these distinctions through stylistic variations, formal trees, or structured evolutionary developments. A survival of the fittest forms was transferred in part from much of the evolutionary discourse still prevalent during this period of imperialism in anthropological discussions of "savages" and "natives". As Valentin Mudimbe has noted in The Invention of Africa: "Evolution, conquest, and difference become signs of a theological, biological, and anthropological destiny, and assign to things and beings both their natural slots and social mission."[17]

James Walton, the later founder of the Vernacular Society of South Africa, recognised types and changes of evolving building techniques in architecture. But he was never able to bring to his extensive and detailed research into the vernacular the colonial and legislative forces that had long since penetrated the rural areas he was exploring. Description was formally precise but socially vague. Some of these social processes were drawn directly from colonial anthropological texts of the 1900s and 1930s. In an article on South African Peasant Architecture he wrote: "The subsequent development of the ngqu-pantol followed similar trends among all the Cape Nguni tribes but whether this was a normal evolutionary process sponsored by a desire for increased living space or whether the penetration of the 'rondavel' type resulted in an attempted emulation it is impossible to determine. All the essentials of a progressive evolution can be traced, however, even in districts where the 'rondavel' is not found."[18]

Running through the essay was the attraction and nostalgia surrounding the vernacular. There was an expressed admiration for the simplicity and directness of rural buildings, the inevitability of their setting in the landscape, and their dependence on the natural materials of the immediate locality. For Walton they seemed to have been shaped by the hand rather than the mind. He never addressed any

of the political and economic dimensions to African life: the dearth of economic opportunities, rural poverty, lack of resources, restrictions on movement, enforcement of tribal relations, absence of men, and the general subjugation of population.

For Walton the movement and contact among people was by means of waves outside of specific historical circumstance. Dwelling types were accepted and adopted, or forcefully penetrated through invasions. He wrote: "The later Bantu invaders had already accepted the 'rondavel' from the Eastern Hamitic and Sudanic Negro tribes before setting out on their migrations to the south and these various Bantu waves wore apparently responsible for the gradual diffusion of the 'rondavel'. This penetration by the 'rondavel' is not yet complete; it still continues among the Nguni tribes on the southeast coast and only the widespread adoption of the European type of rectangular dwelling will halt this penetration. Today it in common for a people to change direct from the beehive hut to the rectangular without passing through the intervening 'rondavel' stage."[19]

The formulation by him of this intrusion of the rondavel into areas formerly occupied by beehive hut types exactly mimics the description maintained by the white authorities of the movement into South Africa of Bantu tribes from the North. In its lack of political causes and racist assumptions, such a description was no different from many other scientific papers of the time. Formal and structural aspects of building were being used to distinguish people as much as building types, only people were differentiated in terms of tribes and an ethnicity already given; there was little room for contrary evidence in such a tight methodological framework. Events of the time that were traumatic and interfering of the neat characteristics of each grouping were missing.

Both the mining industry and white commercial farmers had since the turn of the century pushed for laws forcing Africans into wage employment. White farmers sought to limit the access of Africans to land that forced many Africans to work for meagre wages on farms. The mining industry, in open competition with farmers, lobbied for the preservation of the reserve system in order to maintain cheap migrant labour. After the Nationalists came to power in 1948, these policies were extended under apartheid to include absolute racial segregation in towns, restricted African urbanisation, a more controlled and expanded system of migrant labour, and a stronger emphasis on tribalism and traditionalism in African administration than had yet been used. The mass relocation taking place across the country continued to produce terrible insecurity, vast social disruption, and high settlement densities in rural areas. It was far from the picturesque rural landscape being described in his treatises or elaborate photographic record.

Walton was mapping distributions of beehive hut forms as uniform architectural groups. They were seen as analogous in the sense that their framework consisted of a circle of stakes bent over to form a beehive shape. Formal differences alone were being utilised to classify these beehive hut types. Although types were often well defined there were instances where features, such as a porch and sewn thatch, overlapped. For Walton, [slight] "regional variations of this nature will naturally result from cultural contacts over a long period."[20] The vernacular for him was the result of an inevitable process of movement and interchange amongst people without conscious decisions or imposed conditions. While some change was acknowledged, appropriation, borrowing and availability were limited to doors and other building elements.

The simplicity of these buildings was what was important. It allowed Walton to mark a way of doing things that would soon change beyond recognition. This was a way that was about to disappear and in which it would become increasingly difficult to separate the inherent from the attached. As Mudimbe has emphasised: "What makes nineteenth and twentieth century discourses on tradition pertinent is not their sophistication and so-called capacity for discriminating cultural features and organising taxonomies, but the epistemological significance of their models and the system of values these models imply and manifest."[21] What were perhaps unconsciously recognised by Walton were the enormous social changes that were tearing African society apart, making it impossible for them to continue the very ways of doing things that he was observing. It was a record of a society broken and threatened, whose traditions could only be preserved by photographs, classifications, and written records. For it were not just the influences of industrialisation that were appearing all around but the malevolent impositions of apartheid policy. There was never though a description of the actual condition present, the built landscape that stood before Walton.

For H. F. Verwoerd, tradition and paternal authority were essential to the problem, as he understood it of the 'urban Bantu'. As Minister of Native Affairs he was concerned about the necessity of Africans maintaining ties to their people, past and land in order to prevent their permanent establishment in urban areas. For him traditional leadership should have extended beyond the designated Bantu areas. In Separate Development (The positive side) he argued: "Another major problem about which Bantu Authorities should think does not concern their ability to aid those who remain in their own territories. There are namely children of theirs who leave their own territories. They go, for instance, to East London, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town. ... [These] Bantu Authorities must remain in continual contact with their children at a distance. Those chil-

dren must not forget that in the long run their homes are here in the Bantu Areas, that their fathers and chiefs are here, that this is the place where their family is to be found. They should remain connected with their homelands by strong bonds. They should realise that when they grow old, they may return to the towns which are being established, and that when they grow too old to care for themselves the Bantu Authorities will look after them. The children must not lose their love for their own people and their own land."[22] Paternal authority rooted to the rural and the traditional, and set against a resistant youth, was for Verwoerd one of the cornerstones of the system of subjugation and control being constructed as urban apartheid.

It was in 1959 that the policy of separate development was formally launched with the passing of the *Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act*. The transformation of reserves into bantustans was underway. The system of tribal and territorial authority was made clear in the preamble to the *Act*: "Whereas the Bantu peoples of the Union of South Africa do not constitute a homogeneous people, but form separate national units on the basis of language and culture: And whereas it is desirable for the welfare and progress of the said peoples to afford recognition to the various national units and to provide for their gradual development within their own areas to self-governing units on the basis of Bantu systems of government ..."[23] Pure traditions were being constructed at a time when social bonds were otherwise being severed and a growing and unified resistance was being organised by blacks across the country.

This apparent "respect for other cultures" involved the effort to reinforce the cultural hierarchy and divide already in place through modernisation, and at the same time to build a limited local vocabulary. An official description from 1975 of *White South Africa's policy for the development of the homelands* read as follows: "Any nation state of which the population comprises various peoples and historical groups is confronted by certain problems that are common to most multinational and plural societies. This is especially true in cases where (a) each of the groups concerned manifesto a clear cohesion and awareness of their own identity as a result of the group-centric and ethno-national attitudes, and (b) where these groups are mutually distinguished by meaningful and clearly identifiable differences, particularly in respect of sociocultural and physical characteristics and the general level of political and economic development. The government of the RSA is acutely aware of the unique problems which are caused by a confluence of historical factors which has placed the White nation in the position of guardian to several underdeveloped Black nations. This unique multinational structure inevitably leads to a situation where the groups develop both diverging and common interests and aspira-

tions."[24] A damaged and traumatised social fabric was one outcome of this wrenching political ploy of multi-cultural manipulation. While the loss of certainty from the breaking of communal ties associated with modernity was present in most changing societies, the enforcement of social authority by the apartheid regime was more disconcerting. Connection and meaning usually attached to culture and community were not being offered in the urban areas. Yet at the same time it was being taken out of the rural.

Building practices had to be located within their political and economic contexts, as well as in everyday situations in which the parts did not complete a picture but instead referred to changing circumstances. It was important to consider how people adapted building structures and processes in response to imposed institutions, such as those of migrancy and tenuous land relations. Already, in the 1950s wattle-and-daub and sapling frameworks were found in-between and on the outskirts of urban areas as increasing numbers of Africans were forced to squat in these areas. Not all were recent arrivals from rural areas, and many had been moving around the city unable secure accommodation or were forcibly removed before they could settle. To really examine the 'vernacular' it is necessary to move away from stylistic and formal descriptions of building traditions and look at how building ideas are transmitted, adapted, restricted, shared, stolen, found, formed. How authorities – legislative and academic – promoted certain constructions and discouraged others as inpractical or inauthentic. What contradictions are implied and how they are resolved within a social realm. How traditions are transformed by this actual social change to the environment. Areas annexed from chiefdoms had already been divided by colonial authorities into districts and locations that were then administered by white magistrates and headmen. In addition, rights over the distribution of land were manipulated and finally brought under the control of the white bureaucracies. How could a sense of continuity with the local landscape and heritage ever have been evoked? How could a response have been made to a tradition that was given as "native" and "other", different from the civilised and authentic? It was exotic and unfamiliar, but to whom?

"four walls and a roofs"

To what then could architects attach the architecture? Local landscapes, diverse cultures, an Africa newly discovered, fragments of imported cultures? Could we even tell these cultures apart, this border between what was ours and what was theirs? Where in our past did we diverge and to where were we proceeding? Here was a reversed sentimental and nostalgic rendering of the traditional. Acknowledg-

ing instead the relativity of modes of spatial and cultural perception, and requiring the active role of people in making decisions. Distinct notions not understood as opposed but constructed within each other: the traditional that makes the modern, the local within the international, the informal that was constitutive of the urban rather than some aberration. All these seen as combinations in particular historical circumstances.

The romanticism suppressed by Martienssen was more clearly to be expressed in the work of the architect Norman Eaton. His buildings were heavy with whitewashed stock- and sharp face-brick, rough textures, low-pitched corrugated roofs, luscious planting, and abstract patterning. An extensive exploration of the rustic. For many critics at the time it was a return of man and building to the landscape. A move away from modern abstraction to natural ornamentation. No longer symbolic forms reflective of future technologies.[25] Eaton had written to Martienssen in 1931 in response to his Commentary: "That a new attitude of mind is necessary; that future problems must be worked out on their own merits and with reason rather than with rule of thumb: that we must rid ourselves entirely of the past "styles" as such, and only employ embellishment (which after all is style) which evolves naturally out of the particular problem itself – are all facts which I have long felt to be essential to future development. Our emancipation, and consequently that of Architecture, from the sheer downright slavery of tradition depends on them."[26] What Eaton had recognised were the possibilities of a more direct response to the local environment rather than the solution propagated by Martienssen of a logical style that had resulted in such a limited range of "modern" architectural elements.

Was the tradition being held here the building that gradually evolved into forms and styles that could be linked back in time? Or was tradition the process of cooperation, consensus, conflict and construction by which the building was produced? Eaton wrote in 1933 in an early lecture four walls and a roof: "Once, and once only (with the exception, perhaps, of those branches of indigenous native art which might come very clone to being called architecture), has architecture been a real living thing in this country. The old Dutch settlers at the Cape, almost completely isolated from the rest of white civilisation, wore forced to consider problems of building in an almost completely 'local' and detached manner. In this way they evolved something which was so fine a bland of all the natural organic conditions latent in their materials, as to be worthy of rank amongst the highest architectural achievements of man. Their period was short, however. Communications became easier. Foreign importations flooded the fair fields they had cultivated.Their lesson was hardly taught before it was forgotten, and

architecture, overcome, lay back in the sun to sleep. Today this question of communications has so far advanced as to link us with practically every corner of the world. In consequence the 'international' aspect has been slowly brought to bear upon architecture. Influences are transmitted from one place to another with great rapidity, and local products have to fight for their place on the economic markets of the world. This tends to weaken the influence of 'locality' upon the work so far as the means are concerned, the end, however, will always be subject to the old fundamental laws. The essentials can only change as natural man changes, and the laws of nature controlling him."[27] Aspects of the local – the sun again making its appearance – and the expanding world order were for architects like Eaton noticeably at work in defining the specific conditions and tensions with which the architect was grappling in South Africa.

Architecture was an important component in reinforcing white settlement and their historical ties to the land. These buildings which had a deep and essential relation to the land were something to which architects could legitimately turn for support and precedent, and which gave them cultural rights specific to the region. Their ties to Europe allowed them to draw on that distant culture but they had to develop their own distinct versions that related to the land. State information from the 1970s clarified these relations: "The Whites are a permanent, settled nation of Africa in a geopolitical homeland that is historically clearly defined. ... Historically and biologically there are close ties between the local Whites and various nations of Western Europe, particularly the Netherlands, Britain, Germany and France. Many contemporary customs and norms of White South Africa are historically based in the cultural contributions of these European nations. The customs and norms which were brought to South Africa by a continuous stream of immigrants have gradually been adapted to the specific needs and conditions of the new homeland."[28]

Traditions were not being developed to give legitimacy to regimes under threat, requiring a direct relation being drawn from the current regime back in time to some earlier legitimate and powerful ancestors. In the case of a settler society this could only be done back to European ancestors from other lands overseas. Having broken from the colonial centres and the Commonwealth, white South Africa had to create new traditions and myths for itself. Traditions in which different societies would have to have their distinct places. Those Africans being moved from their land would acquire the authenticity of the "native" and a "vernacular" clearly out of synch with the modern changing world. In the absence of clear distinctions that allowed for a separation of races and cultures, whites feared they would be overwhelmed, assimilated and forced to give up their

claim to the local. What was necessary was to build parts of Europe into the African landscape. Another Europe was being constructed in South Africa as more and more segments of the built landscape were made familiar to the European settlers. The very tools, building methods and tasks, urban legislation, and materials employed in the construction and transposition of this new landscape, were a way of importing Europe and distinguishing themselves in the landscape. Architects were working with a language and formal vocabulary that was borrowed from abroad. The Cape Dutch was a farming vernacular adapted to limited resources (even though some were brought from abroad) and the neo-Georgian was adopted as a variation to types given in Standard English architectural pattern books.

As perfectly as they were set in the growing country and town landscapes, these buildings were little more than reflections of European styles and norms with some considerate concessions to local conditions. Just as it is now, it was then as much construction systems, technologies and catalogue parts as topography, climate and craft techniques that generated building traditions. Buildings never just fitted in the landscape: they were pounded, disguised, hidden and squeezed onto the land to which they had been exported. And these buildings, in turn constructed the very landscapes in which they were placed.

For Eaton there was much to reject even at that time about the disharmony and chaotic way in which this landscape was anyway developing. He turned to what he understood as the simple living visible in Bantu villages. In an essay *Native Art and Architecture* of 1953 he rejected the false values of the city for the fitness and wholeness of "Native" areas, what he reckoned travellers would note as "imposed" on the landscape rather than harmoniously "of" the landscape. He too, in a manner that recalls Cutten, hoped that housing could be achieved utilising the innate capacities of these "Natives".

"In his creative behaviour the Native is uncritical, he acts instinctively according to the laws of nature; he is the momentary vehicle for subjective expression of the spirit which flows from a source largely beyond his control. He records little upon which others, beyond direct experience of his activity, can build. The concrete evidence of his Art and Architecture is, by its nature transitory dissolving back into its original source as easily and as quickly as it first flowed out. This transitoriness is its special quality and a very apt and beautiful one in the natural cycle of things, though frustrating, perhaps, to us whose monuments of past achievement, good and bad, remain everywhere about us."[29]

To find in the "Native" a humility and receptive attention to great natural truths was possible only if limited to the formal differences of the urban and rural, the modern and traditional. But in both the

farmhouses of the previous centuries and the villages of the present, tradition was seen by architects as simple and fixed. Simple life-styles in pristine isolation were the notion of the tradition around which this "vernacular" continued to be promulgated. As if it could have been uncovered, recovered, and represented. As if it was reflective of or could bring about a relationship to the land and to others that was not possible by any other means. It was an image of the past being specifically employed to present a critique of an uncomfortable present. Yet it was also doing more than just this. It was ultimately legitimising a hierarchy and dichotomy which Eaton himself was to eventually draw upon in offering his own significant "regional" architectural responses.

For Franz Fanon (in distinction to the sad nostalgia of Walton and Eaton) the clash of cultures in the colonial encounter was part of a sustained death agony of a culture rather than its complete disappearance. He wrote in *Racism and Culture*, an address given at the Second Congress of Negro Writers and Artists in 1956: "The constantly reiterated anxiety to 'respect the culture of the autochthonous population' does not therefore mean that weight will be given to the values borne by the culture, and incarnated in the men. Par more frequently we divine in this approach the determination to objectivate, encapsulate, imprison and encyst. Phrases such as 'I know them', 'they are like that,' translate this objectivation when it has succeeded to the utmost. In this man I know the gestures and thoughts which define these men. Exoticism is one form of this simplification. From that moment no cultural confrontation can exist. On one side there is a culture which is recognised as having qualities of dynamism, expansion, depth. A culture in movement, perpetually renewed. On the other side we find characteristics, curiosities, things, but never a structure."[30] From the development of a cultural hierarchy to the establishment of standards of reference, the destruction of cultural values was finally most effective through fixing, the fossilisation and closing down of once living cultures. What was recognised perhaps by these architects, in their bad conscience and their concern to preserve, was in fact the collapse of a community, the dwindling remnants of people made surplus.

Confronting the market

In which directions does the architect in South Africa turn? Not prospectively towards a future, as utopia or vision, but retrospectively to a past present only in nostalgic or thematic terms. The architect disengages from the temporal and spatial trajectories surrounding this position. The struggle remains over symbols and their meanings, including forms, structures and arrangements within the built environment. Where exactly are these regions and communities? Rural villages without the associated farm economies? Where are the landscapes and daily concerns? Temporary shacks in long-established squatting settlements? What ties to other countries strings together these persistent anthropological notions with current economic imperatives?

The brutal relationships constructed by the state between race, culture, land and tradition were integral to the development of apartheid ideology. There were few long established communities in South Africa by the 1950s, who had been left to their land and not subjected to forced removals and migrations. The movement and settlement of Africans had long been controlled and constrained by colonial and later apartheid legislation. A "vernacular" was being imposed and promoted along with fixed tribal identities – even if many of these schisms were already "out there" – as devices to manipulate land and social boundaries, along with peoples senses of belonging and difference.

The devices of segregation, such as petty apartheid labels, influx control mechanisms, township developments, population registration and all the associated bureaucratisation and organisation that these entailed, also operated as devices of spatial heterogeneity, disrupting and often confusing pure planning procedures. There were high levels of urban and rural interaction and dependencies. There were informal or petty commodity sector economies and spontaneous transportation networks that sprung up. There were plastic and mass production items available alongside meat and handicrafts. Inherited structures persisted along with inappropriate urban models, splintered technologies and over-reaching institutional arrangements, all of which were forced together by the multiple contradictions of industrialisation and urbanisation in South Africa.[31] Some traditions were there adapting or developing, others were being re-imposed. Others still were there generated as thinly disguised resistances as much as conformities to the cultural necessities of modernisation. In these states of emergency any presence was under considerable constructive pressure.

"Tradition" was it is significant to note still around to be employed through state organised and assisted vigilantes – witdoeke – who were co-opted in the early 1980s to force squatters out of the rapidly growing settlements around Cape Town. When first under threat of removals the leadership of the settlement of Old Crossroads could state: "This dream will never materialise. We will resist the removal. We will die in Crossroads ... If the government says black people should go to the homelands, then why don't they go back to Holland? It is only the black man who has no place to live. This is our country where we were not only born but also created. The government's dream is a false dream if they think we will leave the Western Cape. We will not

leave. We will die here."[32] Within three years such areas saw the apartheid state invoke this older 'traditional' leadership in an attempt to bring under control the growing resistance of others not co-opted, particularly activists and youths – the comrades aligned with the African National Congress. One of the "fathers" interviewed by the press after mobilising vigilante groups stated (in a manner reminiscent of Cutten): "We must get our revenge, we cannot leave our children to play with us, we are seriously injured already. The children are being very disrespectful to the fathers ... we are trying to get discipline into the township."[33] Some of the last vestiges of tribal authority still haunt the urban landscape, only now carefully hidden within the contradictory tensions of communal order and enterprise. The racist discourses that were descriptions of tribal and ethnic differences have become an official description of first and third worlds in one country. In line with much international terminology in use, this distinction serves to separate out the many former colonies of Europe into the backward and developmental opportunities they are thought to remain; caught in the open market and ripe for exploration and exploitation by ever more sophisticated monopolies. Emerging markets with development aid as adventure capital. Backwardness can only be dealt with by a sustainable programme of structural adjustment.

But development has never been an inevitable outcome of the growth and expansion of the market. Inequalities not addressed or hierarchies left unchallenged will simply exaggerate conditions of deprivation and glut that have stagnated or accumulated in the familiar divisions of the world. So the classification of societies and countries – by civilisation, codes, bond ratings, indexes, stock markets – gives weight to the relative strengths and weaknesses of productive systems in an era of mass communication and forced competition. While these arrangements do not congeal into a single route to be followed, the financial hierarchies and cultural directions to advancement have an extremely seductive and unforgiving gravity. And the rest cannot obviously easily repeat opportunities that existed in advanced economies. Technologies once established are extremely difficult to dislodge. Although there are gaps to be filled, certain criteria and concerns continue to shape even these apparent openings in the market.

Building technologies, cultural forms, and spatially mediated desires however all flow in ways that encompass and embrace difference, particularly if it is exotic or new or the "next big thing." Turned on its head, yet still referring to the transmission of culture, tradition can be understood as the constant confrontation with ideas, conventions and practices. Not as a simple handing down from one generation to another in unchanged form, or confined to a particular social group. Neither as a gradual evolution,

nor as a basis for legitimacy. Traditional practices in South Africa are still visible as rational responses to wider political and social constraints. They are therefore important templates for resistances as much as they are cultural remnants. Evidence in many cases is visible in them of the survival and generation of lives and identities under threat. Emerging here no longer implies a hierarchical movement from a lower order into a higher order; an undeveloped into a developed culture; or a simple into a complex form. Neither as a most advanced version.

Customs, ways of doing things and buildings in South Africa are realised symbols and practices to which value is attached and cultivated. Yet they are continuously transformed, adapted, translated or appropriated from a mixture of diverse and imported technologies and languages. It is not so simple to turn to the marginal. Unmediated notions can never alone define a local. For the local draws on complex characteristics such as fear, anguish, humour, and trauma as much as on the usual formal clichés and colours. And these sources and multiple and complex. What is important is how different societies respond to the same global economic imperatives.

People in South Africa have seldom belonged to single isolated communities that did not mix. They are part of larger communities, sometimes forged in resistance as the oppressed or in the market as consumers. They have changing identities depending upon the context or situation. They are at work in many places, from rural villages to suburban malls to warehouses sliced up for accommodation. Architecture in this country is not consistent or always evident. Many of the ways people deal with space are present in what has not been built but rather activated through use. Spaces that are sometimes added to. Spaces that are not fixed. Spaces that are momentary or only temporarily secured by continual or periodic use. These are meeting spaces for church groups in vacant lots, trading sites under motorways, crowded hotel corridors, rocks as pilgrimage sites, television soap operas, magazine articles, rapid site invasions, abandoned community centres. Tradition was always that resource in South Africa for dealing with difficult situations and it was filled with contradictions. There were many traditions in play, none of which were fixed in a particular manner, and all of which had developed out of specific historical circumstances.[34] It was not a past to which any of us could have specific access or to which we could simply turn when required. In its particular manifestations it had forms with implications and strings attached that made its employment a continually contradictory matter. It did not allow for simple opposites or contrasts to operate and had to therefore be re-placed into its changing contexts. Tradition was not there to turn to for guidance or as model or set of forms to simply draw upon. It was continuously being formed yet always partially present.

Traditions could be used to contest imposed definitions and forms and in the process alter the very constitution of these practices. Not then as a process of preservation. Instead as a constant transformation without acceptance of a previously packaged transmission. A "vernacular" was reinforced to give particular emphasis to elements with the deepest roots and broadest relations to the land. This "vernacular", could also be understood however as another element in the social patterning set up in the environment, one in which there was a complex interweaving of past and present, society and authority, materials and practices, local aspirations and globally mediated desires.

There have always been different temporalities in which tradition could be assessed. While it is never possible to return to some original or authentic cultural context, we are able to understand our present condition in ways that are traditionally meaningful and also new. Contexts change and histories are still in contestation. This is constitutive of the transitional status of cultures. The interests and concerns of a particular moment still influence the construction of traditions to a great extent. Traditions are obviously made useful in this manner, and complicating aspects that are in conflict are suitably adjusted or excluded.

The built landscape – almost entirely one of separation and control in South Africa – is currently undergoing rehabilitation to accommodate and be made accessible to the whole population. It is however still unable to be offered as a vision or space in which we will be able to confront our senses of ourselves as a nation thrust together in an era of dissolving national cultural boundaries. Flooded with images and products from a mass global culture, our local cultural forms continue to be generated as emergency shelters, products for urgent consumption, and environments seeking security. Global inequalities and distortions could be understood through an extreme example such as that presented by the culture of apartheid. As a concentrated version of the colonial and racist experiences of the past, we have here a demonstration of the abuse of cultural differences and the "vernacular" in a context of globalisation.

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