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Guidebooks provide a fascinating insight into the presentation of landscape to a general public in the nineteenth century. The decade of the 1830s marked the origins of modern-style guidebooks, notably issued by the publisher Karl Baedeker in Germany and John Murray in Britain. These were representative of the beginnings of bourgeois travel in the era, as well as, in some cases, the continuation of older aristocratic forms. With the development of new technologies of transportation in steam trains and maritime engines, such middle-class travel – as well as migration involving other social classes – grew phenomenally as the century advanced. So far as the Cape and southern Africa are concerned, although there were many travel accounts – including best-sellers like the two-volume work of Anthony Trollope – guidebooks arrived later in the century. In 1888, Donald Currie of the Castle Line of steamers issued a *Handbook and emigrants' guide to South Africa*. Soon he heard of an extraordinary enterprise, inaugurated by two brothers called Brown, to issue guidebooks to South Africa booming the country for emigrants and investors, and sold from hawkers' barrows in the City of London. Currie bought them out and the book became the Castle Line Guide, later (after the amalgamation of the two lines in 1900) the Union-Castle Guide, significantly titled for *the use of Tourists, Sportsmen, Invalids & Settlers*.

These four categories are highly significant, and each of them, of course, had considerable interests in landscape, topography and climate. The Guide of 1899 issued on the eve of the Anglo-Boer War contained ten pages of recommendations by doctors as to the benefits of the southern African climate for various forms of illness. There were also lavish landscape descriptions to entice tourists into the various routes laid out in the Guide. One short description offers something of the flavour. In Natal, 'The ground rises rapidly from the sea-board in a confused succession of hills and ridges, forming many beautiful valleys, in which the cultivation of tea, sugar and other tropical produce is successfully carried on'. In the Cape, the wine growing regions of the interior were given especially favourable mention for the glories of their landscape. The war was to disrupt tourism and settlement, as well as the travels of sportsmen and invalids, but paradoxically it was to make southern Africa better known and with reconstruction the people at whom the guides were directed were soon returning in large numbers.

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There is a sense in which this guidebook use of prose descriptions of landscape marks the climax of the phenomena analysed so effectively by John McAleer in this book. Empire was supremely a matter of imagining geographical space and that space was made up of examples of topography and its aestheticised relative landscape, often illuminated by the strong sunlight largely unknown in the northern latitudes of British imperialists. If the light was stronger, the landscapes were different, more exotic, often more extreme. These characteristics, in the case of southern Africa, had excited interest from the seventeenth century, but, as McAleer shows, there was a remarkable growth in publications in the early nineteenth century, reflecting the great extension of a print culture and a literate readership. In such material, landscapes were conveyed not just in illustrations, but also in prose. Landscape description, as opposed to visual depiction, was possibly more extensive and more influential. Landscape was conveyed into readers' imaginations as well as into viewers' perceptions. By the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, this was also happening in novels, such as those of Henry Rider Haggard and John Buchan.

Moreover, an ability to convey the elements of landscape, evaluating culturally defined qualities as well as demerits came to be seen as a marker of Western culture, a sign of superiority to add to the many others distinguished by the nineteenth-century categorisers of cultures. Thus, landscape description came to have significance at a number of levels. It represented political and strategic, economic and aesthetic considerations, as well as offering a form of cultural definition. Such extended notions of landscape came to suffuse so many other activities, including exploration, hunting, surveying, road and rail building, agriculture, botanical collecting, military campaigning, geological discoveries, town planning, missionary endeavour and much else. In the pursuit of such prolific concerns, representations of landscape passed through various stages. At one level, there was an urge to render the unfamiliar familiar, to engross it within a known world which could be controlled and dominated. But at another, there was a desire to emphasise the exotic, the different, the wild, the so-called savage so that the supposedly idyllic character of the newly 'planted' frontier town, with its straight lines of roads, its houses, gardens, trees, church and other local institutions could be seen as pulling the landscape – as with the indigenous inhabitants – into the frame of civilisation. The mission station, its layout, its buildings (dominated by the church) and its gardens were seen as introducing the landscape to a state of grace, analogous to the spread of Christianity itself.

In all these ways, John McAleer demonstrates the significance of landscape description (together with related paintings) in the

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transformation of the Cape, and more widely southern Africa, into forms of colonial space supposedly pulled into the orbit of European civilisation. This is a book which offers important new dimensions for an understanding of the centrality of landscape in the imperial imagination.

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