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Thomas Pringle's Plantation

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SUMMARY

Thomas Pringle (1789-1834) was perhaps the most famous of the British settlers who landed at the Cape in 1820. He exerted an enormous influence on subsequent poetic and literary representations of Southern Africa. In this article, I investigate how Pringle's early experience as a settler moulded his attitude to the Cape landscape, and how he represented this in his early poetry. In this early poetry we see the germ of various attitudes towards the environment which are expressed later in the works of John Croumbie Brown.

A group of four thousand British settlers, their passage funded by the home government, arrived at the Cape in 1820. As Noël Mostert states: 'the operation was probably the most callous act of mass settlement in the history of empire'. The settlers were 'wholly ignorant in most cases even of how to plant a potato, largely innocent of any real knowledge of the historic background of the region they occupied, and certainly ignorant of how to cope with the natural dangers of their surroundings'.¹ Even though Thomas Pringle was an atypical 1820 settler, in that he was the leader of the only Scottish party and that he expected to gain a government post (whereas most settlers were English farmers and artisans), he shared the difficulties suffered by all prospective settlers in gaining adequate information about the Cape before departure. Before the arrival of the 1820 settlers in the Cape, Southern Africa had occupied very little space in the imagination of either the British public or in the works of British Romantic writers. Poets who regularly directed their poetic gaze eastwards, or, to a lesser extent, westwards, like Byron, Shelley, Keats, Rogers and Southey, rarely glanced towards the tip of the African continent.² Possible explanations for this lacuna include the limited British involvement in the Cape after its re-occupation in 1806. Indeed, Pringle had not shown any indication of interest in South Africa

in his poetry or journalism before his decision to emigrate. Of the travel literature written about the Cape between 1719 and 1819, eight of the ten accounts known to Pringle by 1834 were written by non-British writers, and, where they were translated into English, had a relatively restricted circulation in Britain.³ Of the two Britons, William Paterson, who is described as 'the first to write and publish in English a book entirely devoted to a description of experience at first hand of travel in South Africa' was a Scottish Linnaean 'naturalist'.⁴ His book, *Narrative of four voyages in the land of the Hottentots and Kaffirs* (1789), despite the peoples mentioned in its title, was largely a document of South African 'geography, fauna and flora.'⁵ The book was of more use to naturalists than prospective settlers. Similarly, the career diplomat John Barrow's *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa in the Years 1797 and 1798* (1809) was 'a strange, highly attenuated kind of narrative that seems to do everything possible to minimize the human presence.'⁶ They were of some use to settlers who were anxious to learn about the land they were to settle, but they gave very little information about its peoples. Even missionary involvement there, which could have made Britain more aware of conditions in the sub-continent, had been minimal before 1820. The first missionary in South Africa was the Moravian George Schmidt (1737), and the first member of the London Missionary Society sent out was Dr. Vanderkemp (1798).

When the scheme to settle the Cape was announced in parliament in 1819, therefore, prospective settlers were extremely ill-informed about the territory they were about to claim for themselves.⁷ It is true that Pringle began to read literature on the Cape voraciously before his departure, but he may be regarded as an exception.⁸ The bulk of the settlers set off 'with profound ignorance as to what prospects there were of successfully establishing themselves as agriculturalists in the new home awaiting them.'⁹ Notwithstanding these problems, the settlers were generally optimistic, a view supported by the British press and a rush of positive pamphlets and accounts of the Cape printed in 1818 and 1819,¹⁰ even though 'one or two newspapers sounded notes of warning and a sixteen-page booklet was issued which violently opposed the whole scheme, and although two cartoons ridiculing emigration to the Cape of 'Forlorn' Hope were published by George Cruikshank.'¹¹

The general optimism of the settlers, however, does not imply that they were a culturally coherent group of people, originating as they did from Scotland, Ireland, Wales and England, and having widely divergent backgrounds.¹² Neither was there a coherent ideological approach to the colonies themselves in Britain in 1819, let alone towards Southern Africa. Christian Humanism and the 'civilising mission' were not to become the predominant ideologies of the British Empire until the Victorian period. In 1819, a time which saw the strengthening of social revolution and political reform in Britain, attitudes to colonial government in general had hardly been fixed, as is evidenced by rapidly changing colonial policies towards India ranging from those of minimal influence and

interference within colonial society (Orientalism) to policies of complete assimilation (Anglicisation). But while British poets, philosophers and politicians continued through the first two decades of the nineteenth century to argue the often conflicting policies of Utilitarianism, Evangelism, Anglicisation and 'orientalism'¹³ with regards to the empire in India, the roughly four thousand British emigrants who had landed at the Cape in 1820 were faced directly with the immediate problem of living in the 'contact zone' on the Cape frontier.¹⁴

As with the Pringle party, most groups of settlers, which were comprised largely of fairly uneducated parties in straitened though not desperate circumstances, knew that they had to work hard themselves in order to ensure their own survival.¹⁵ They were led to believe that they were being offered a chance by the English government to re-establish themselves in a new colony solely in order to contribute to the prosperity of the settlement and to make their fortunes. Their contract with the British Government was one of land in return for labour. These men and women, unlike company or government officials who might return with ease to Britain, and who often had no direct interest in land for their own survival, had invested all their capital in the enterprise¹⁶ and were, as Pringle puts it, about 'to draw an irrevocable lot for [them]selves and [their] childrens' children.'¹⁷ In terms of reciprocity, settlers were led to believe that they were being given free land in return for their labour and industry, though this contract was practically 'irrevocable', as the vast majority of settlers did not have sufficient funds to return to Britain in the event of unexpected disaster. The circular issued to prospective settlers from Downing Street in 1819 emphasised the need for work, as well as the agricultural 'reason' for the settlement scheme. It stipulated that the head of each family be 'not infirm or incapable of work', and ended with a cursory 'P.S. In order to ensure the arrival of Settlers at the Cape at the beginning of the planting season, the Transports will not leave this country until the month of November.'¹⁸ The British Parliament presented the settlement scheme to the public at large in exactly the same practical and economic light, government circulars not advancing any reason for settlement besides the promised prosperity of the colonists and the benefit they would be to the colony in terms of agricultural production. What the settlers did not know when they arrived was that the British Parliament's support for the scheme 'was influenced solely by strategic and not by philanthropic or economic considerations.'¹⁹ They were to be allocated land on the Cape frontier just behind the border of the so-called 'Neutral Territory', a strip of land roughly thirty miles long between the Great Fish and Keiskamma rivers which had been cleared of all inhabitants after the fifth Frontier war of 1819, when the local groups were pushed back further out of the colony than ever before. After the 'Neutral Territory', which was closed to all except the military, the settlers were to form the next line of defence. The Cape Government could no longer afford to secure the border of the colony (the Great Fish River), most troops being required in India, and the existing white population of the colony was not large enough to settle the region. The warning

of the Cape Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, to the Secretary for the Colonies, Earl Bathurst, that 'the settlers' property will in some measure be exposed in the first instance to be plundered by their neighbours unless their own vigilance and courage shall considerably aid in protecting it' was not communicated to applicants for the settlement scheme.²⁰

Misled and uninformed, most settlers arrived in the colony prepared to labour for their success, unaware that they were to be settled on the border, or that they faced a potential threat of stock theft and military action from across it. Most desired, and believed that they would be able, to establish themselves and their families as prosperous land owners in a new country. It is not surprising that their primary interest was in the soil itself, in its fertility rather than the beauty of the environment.

However, in October of 1823, a series of devastating floods nearly annihilated all of the English settlers' land, housing and property in Albany. The Pringle party was unaffected owing to their geographical isolation from Albany, but the crisis provoked Pringle, as temporary secretary of the society for the 'Relief of Distressed Settlers' in Cape Town, to publish his first major piece of journalism on South Africa. By 31 October 1822, Pringle had already prepared a narrative description of Albany for publication – Walter Scott had suggested the idea before Pringle had departed – but had not attempted to publish it because of his desire 'to avoid publishing any thing that might clash with the views of the Government'.²¹ The book, which consists of an introduction of fifty pages followed by a selection of letters by settlers who had suffered personally, was specifically designed to raise funds in England and India for the relief fund. Pringle, therefore, converted his account of Albany into a work of propaganda. The final manuscript was written in haste, then posted to Thomas Underwood on 5 January 1824. It was published shortly after it arrived in England as *Some Account of the Present State of the English Settlers in Albany, South Africa*,²² and succeeded in raising an enormous sum of ten thousand pounds for the society.²³ Recognising the gravity of the settlers' predicament, Pringle appears to have written the document on his own initiative, for he mentions in the introduction that it is not an 'official statement' in his capacity as secretary of the society, but that he is 'willing, however, to incur this responsibility, rather than lose time while [his] distressed countrymen are *ready to perish*'.²⁴ Political 'responsibility' could hardly be incurred by the publication of the settlers' letters themselves, for they are straightforward accounts of the actual losses suffered by individuals and blame nothing and nobody, besides the weather, for their misfortunes. Pringle's introduction, however, attempts to give a brief sketch of the general condition of the settlers in Albany. The chief purpose of the sketch is to reassure the British and Indian readership²⁵ that the settlers were not themselves to blame for four years of disaster, indebtedness and crop failure; indeed, that the predominantly English Albany settlers were an industrious group of people who were deserving of charitable treatment.

Pringle's first concern was to point out that the ignorance of the settlers with regard to their location was not their own fault. He provides the reader with a topographical description of Albany, because it will ensure a more correct notion of it than:

can be derived from the too fanciful delineations of some late tourists. These gentlemen, whether scientific, sentimental, or religious in their other views, have almost universally concurred in representing the Zuureveld, as a fair and fertile region of unrivalled beauty and fecundity; – extending in luxuriant plains to invite the plough-share, or swelling into verdant hills, which only wanted flocks and shepherds to be quite Arcadian; – adorned, moreover, with evergreen groves and forests, and with the superb and glowing allurements of euphorbias, strelitzas [sic], chandelier aloes, and scented acacias; – its lawny solitudes enlivened by sportive herds of elegant antelopes; and the whole landscape embellished (as they usually express it) “with all the picturesque scenery of a nobleman’s park in England;” but rather, as transmitted through this “pictured medium,” like a landscape in fairyland (pp. 4-5).²⁶

These writers, says Pringle, have written in the style of Harvey's *Meditations on a Flower Garden*.²⁷ Pringle uses the language of these ‘late tourists’ with its ‘glowing’ adjectives in order to make the point that their descriptions are false to the extent of describing a place which does not exist (‘fairyland’), as well as being of no practical use to the settlers. Fanciful descriptions can, thus, have dire practical consequences. Also of interest is that Pringle is criticising the use of an English model to describe the South African landscape. The English picturesque is of no utility, and can even be dangerous. It would have been better, Pringle continues, ‘if practical information collected from the experience of even boors and Hottentots had been more carefully provided by the Government’.²⁸ Thus Pringle upbraids not only the writers for their rhetoric, but also the home Government for its lack of adequate and careful preparation. His criticism above makes it plain that more practical advantage is to be gained from the information provided by indigenous inhabitants than by the home government.²⁹ The colonists, says Pringle, ‘were mistaken, many of them, doubtless, in giving credit to too flattering accounts of the character and capability of the country; but not more culpably mistaken than the Government, that partly countenanced these accounts, and sent them to colonize it upon an injudicious and ill-concerted plan’ (p. 35). Here, Pringle lays the blame for the initial failure of the settlement scheme squarely at the feet of the British Parliament.

Having accused the British parliament of incompetence, and the Cape Government of not being liberal (in both senses), Pringle gives examples of the settlers’ thriftiness and endeavour, in order to ensure that counter-accusations of laziness might not be directed against them, even though a few examples of ‘the sloven, the sluggard, the drunken, and the improvident’ do exist (p. 17).³⁰ A hardworking body of settlers is constructed in opposition to incompetent or mean spirited governments. Pringle does not proceed to blame the Others in South

African society at the time for any disadvantages the settlers had suffered through pilfering and cattle raids. The Hottentots are ‘trustworthy’, even though they are ‘long-oppressed’ (p. 45). The slaves ‘are (*and must be*) unhappy, debased, and dangerous in all countries’ (p. 47 – Pringle’s italics), but this is the fault of the system of slavery itself and its concomitant ‘clouds of prejudice’ (p. 46). As for the ‘Caffers, even under the least favourable points of view, [they] are certainly an honest, humane, and civilized race, compared with the red or white [Canadian] savages’ (p. 45).³¹ Pringle, therefore, stresses the positive qualities of the Others in South Africa, and omits issues of violence relating to these groups. Pringle’s purpose is to present the settlers as a coherent, hardworking group. As the prospectus of the *South African Journal*, appended to *Albany*, claims:

No longer a disunited, wavering, and temporary assemblage of adventurers, with our ultimate views rooted beyond the ATLANTIC, we are fast acquiring, as a community, self-respect, and home importance, in which the prosperity of every country has its foundation.³²

Pringle’s focus in *Albany* is ultimately on the plight of the colonists themselves, but he also pays some attention to their identity as a group, which makes *Albany* more than just a factual report. The settlers themselves are beginning to take root in the soil of the Cape, a soil which should not be described as England.

The South African Commercial Advertiser (SACA), established by the printer George Greig, was first published on 7 January 1824. From Greig’s ‘Prospectus’ of 20 December 1823, it is clear that the principal aim of the paper was to be a medium for business transactions and advertising, ‘and any information that may tend to the advancement of *Trade and Commerce*, the Improvement of *Agriculture*, or the elucidation of *Science*’.³³

After the second number, however, Greig invited Pringle and his fellow Scot John Fairbairn to take over the editorial side of the paper.³⁴ They duly accepted and assumed control of all editorial writing.³⁵ As editors they frequently expressed their sentiments about the new settlement in agricultural terms:

To establish a flourishing Colony, therefore, in the midst of savage tribes, it is not merely a requisite to transplant thither a few hundred or thousand families of civilized people, and as soon as they have taken root to abandon them to nature and themselves; but the “*Plantation*” (to adopt the obsolete but expressive phraseology of our ancestors) must be fenced and sheltered, and unremittingly watered, and weeded, and pruned, and new-grafted, – and we must “dig about it and dung it,” and watch over it with unsleeping diligence, if we wish to reap any return deserving our regard or worthy of the stock it was derived from. – If we act otherwise, and neglect the duty of good husbandmen, what can we expect but that our “*Plantation*” will either pine away in sickly and dwarfish degeneracy, or, on a soil of greater fertility, shoot up in wild and wasteful luxuriance, undistinguished for any profitable quality from the native thickets around it.³⁶

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In this passage, the editors directly conflate people with plant life. Success of the settlement relies on good husbandry and good gardening. Underpinning this are the (predominantly Scottish) moral precepts of profit and utility. Already we can see the logic of John Croumbie Brown's environmentalism starting to take root. Similar forces are at work in Pringle's sonnet 'Enon' (dated 1821, and presumably written just after Pringle's visit there):

ENON

By Heaven directed – by the World reviled –
 Amidst the Wilderness they sought a home,
 Where beasts of prey, and men of murder roam,
 And untam'd Nature holds her revels wild:
 5 There, on their pious toils their MASTER smil'd,
 And prosper'd them, unknown or scorned of men,
 'Till in the satyr's haunt and dragon's den
 A garden bloom'd, and savage hordes grew mild.

So, in the guilty heart when heavenly Grace
 10 Enters – it ceaseth not till it uproot
 All evil passions from each hidden cell –
 Planting again an Eden in their place –
 Which yields to men and angels pleasant fruit,
 And God himself delighteth there to dwell.³⁷

The missionaries are portrayed as being threatened by an unspecified 'World' as well as savage [untamed] nature which includes the 'men of murder' and 'savage hordes' who live in it. In this way the missionaries' condition is parallel to that of Pringle and other settlers on the frontier who were hoping to make their 'gardens' bloom (achieve financial success) and see the 'savage hordes grow mild' (ensure their personal safety). The missionaries are being held up as ideal examples of how this might be possible. Life in Enon, however, was not as tranquil as it appears in the poem. The mission station had been 'destroyed by the Caffers in the war of 1819' before being re-occupied, as Pringle admits in the notes to *African Sketches* (1834).³⁸ In the same war, the land to be occupied by the settlers had been 'invaded' by the Caffers before being 'retaken' by the government. Pringle, here, is silent about land-rights. 'Enon' suppresses any narrative either of the violence used by the Caffers to destroy the mission station, or of the worse violence of the army used to drive them, in turn, off the land. The Caffers, however, are not blamed in the poem for destroying the mission station, nor is the army blamed for destroying them. Instead the solution of 'pious toil' acceptable to God, which is not always efficacious in the world of politics, is proposed. Indeed, it is already seen to have accomplished the aim of taming Nature in an Eden away from the 'World', just as the settlers desired to do for themselves. In this portrayal, the missionaries have been allowed their autonomy

despite the government (or the secular World), and have succeeded in assimilating the colonial Other (the savage hordes/nature). It would seem that the simple, though arduous, task of planting a garden (which involves a human plantation) is sufficient to civilise 'nature' as well as the people living in it.

Pringle must have been impressed by the seeming tranquillity of Enon when he visited it in 1821, but the suggestion in the poem that 'pious toil' and the grace of God alone would be sufficient to secure the missionaries' respectability in the eyes of the world, and their security against 'savages'/'nature' is clearly idealistic. The mission had been destroyed in 1819 because of its lack of defences, a chance which Pringle was not prepared to take when it came to his own settlement.³⁹ Pringle, however, attempts to efface these unpleasant possibilities in this early work.

In 'Caffer Song' (1824), a poem free of any suggestion of violence besides that of hunting for a living, the persona of the 'hunter' is cast as an idealised, pastoral swain, encircled by peace and rural tranquillity.⁴⁰ The poem is a rendering of a Xhosa song (the original does not survive) but fits neatly into the standard contemporary trope of the 'noble savage' where 'the Negro reveres his parents, loves his wife, and is respected by his children. In the evening he dances.'⁴¹

CAFFER SONG

'Wena umfuhla linyaniza.'

Deep in the wild-wood lies hid a green dell,
Where fresh from the Grey Rock the bright waters swell,
And fast by that fountain a far-spreading tree,
Which shelters the home that is dearest to me.

- 5 Down by the streamlet my heifers are grazing;
Prone o'er the clear pool the herd-boy is gazing;
Under the shade my Ileza is singing –
The shade of the tree where her cradle is swinging.

- When I come from the hill as the day-light is fading,
10 Though spent with the chase, and the game for my lading,
My nerves are new-strung and my light heart is swelling
As I gaze on that Grey Rock which towers o'er my dwelling.⁴²

The language is that of containment and shelter, where gentle nature – as opposed to the savage nature of 'Enon' – encloses the mild and peaceful 'Caffer', certainly far from the settlers' or missionaries' experience of them by 1824. The motivation for the poem, then, is not immediately obvious. A reading which suggests that the poem was written in order to demonstrate to fellow colonists

that the 'Caffer' was, in fact, harmless if left on his own in nature would seem unlikely. More likely is that the poem is an example of hymn-like, pastoral wishful-thinking which effaces the violence and injustices of colonial conflict by placing the 'Caffer' in a natural utopia with no obvious history.⁴³ It also effaces the threat of attack which was uppermost in the minds of most colonists, even though in most cases, as in Pringle's, colonists had not been in direct contact with the Caffers, seeing that the government did not allow them to keep slaves and forbade all trade between colonists and the native tribes settled across the frontier. Certainly, Pringle had had no direct contact with the Caffers by the time he left for Cape Town in 1822. Probably because his party had not been attacked, Pringle could afford to idealise the 'Caffer' unproblematically within the pastoral tradition, to view him as being contained by gentle nature, rather than by the colonists themselves and the military, which was actually the case. It is possible that Pringle had an ulterior motive in portraying 'The Caffer' as mild, isolated, peaceful – essentially concerned with the well-being of his own kin – in order to allay a fear of attack from 'savage hordes'.

Notwithstanding the above, by 1834, Pringle had obviously recognised the extremely idealised nature of the sketch when he changed its title to 'The Brown Hunter's Song'. With this new title, which refers instead to the 'Bushmen', who had already been virtually exterminated by 1824, the poem suddenly performs another function, that of idealising a lost state of innocence. The poem becomes an attack on those who had destroyed the idealised, defenceless, peace-loving 'Brown Hunter', who in the poem, poses no threat to colonial society.

In 'Enon' and 'Caffer Song', then, though the 'savage hordes' are portrayed negatively in the first, and the 'Caffer' positively in the latter, either 'pious' or pastoral toil is responsible for their redemption. There is no mention of military violence, land-rights, injustice, or oppression, themes which came to dominate his later poetry. According to Pringle, the best choice for a settler would be to become prosperous through pious toil, while remaining at peace with the government and with the natives alike.

'Afar in the Desert', Pringle's most widely published poem, was probably written in 1823, during or after his trip overland from the frontier to Cape Town. It was published in the *South African Journal*, 2, pp. 105-107. The narrator at first seeks refuge from the world in nostalgia for childhood and in recollections of his 'Native Land' (line 13), though this vision is swiftly shattered when he recognises that all is forsaken: 'All – all – now forsaken, forgotten, or gone – / And I, a lone Exile – remembered of none – / My high aims abandoned – and good acts – undone! / Awearied of all that is under the sun.'⁴⁴ The narrator who flees to the desert in the first verse is a person who has actually given up hope of being a patriot, who has capitulated to despair. The phrases 'my high aims abandoned – my good acts – undone!' may express Pringle's frustration with the colonial government, but the poem is too general to be certain that this was his intention.

Rather, in the first stanza, the narrator flies into the desert to escape personal failure. In the second stanza, he again flies into the desert, but this time to escape the ‘oppression, corruption, and strife’ of the world. As the poem proceeds, the landscape is generally evacuated of its fauna and flora until the desert itself is described:

80 Where grass, nor herb, nor shrub takes root
 Save poisonous thorns that pierce the foot;
 And the bitter melon, for food and drink,
 Is the Pilgrim’s fare, by the Salt Lake’s brink:
 A region of drought where no river glides,
 Nor rippling brook with ozier’d sides:
 Nor reedy pool, nor mossy fountain,
 Nor rock, nor tree, nor misty mountain,

Are found – to refresh the wearied eye:
 But the barren earth, and the burning sky,

90 And the blank horizon round and round
 Without a living sight or sound,
 Tell to the heart in its pensive mood,
 That this at length – is SOLITUDE!⁴⁵

This is very dissimilar to the effect the desert has on Mungo Park: ‘In other parts the disconsolate wanderer, wherever he turns, sees nothing around him but a vast interminable expanse of sand and sky – a gloomy and barren void, where the eye finds no particular object to rest upon, and the mind is filled with painful apprehensions of perishing with thirst. Surrounded by this dreary solitude, the traveller [...] listens with horror to the voice of the driving blast, the only sound that interrupts the awful repose of the Desert.’⁴⁶ Pringle uses much the same language, suggesting that he was influenced by this passage, but to very different effect. The narrator finds refuge in a high-romantic solitude, which is redeemed by God, and the flight of the exile becomes a pilgrimage:

95 As I sit apart by the desert stone,
 Like Elijah at Sinai’s cave alone,
 And feel like a moth in the Mighty Hand
 That spread the heavens and heaved the land -
 ‘A still small voice’ comes through the wild
 (Like a Father consoling his fretful Child),
 Which banishes bitterness, wrath, and fear, -
 Saying – “MAN IS DISTANT, BUT GOD IS NEAR!”

In the light of Pringle’s ambivalent position and fear of the colonial government when this poem was written, it is not surprising that he does not explicitly investigate the possibility of a political solution to the colony’s

troubles, whether it be revolutionary or not. The voice is God's, not his own. But the potential for dissent is made plain when Pringle identifies himself with Elijah, a prophet in the wilderness to an exiled nation: Elijah, after confronting Jezebel and slaying the priests of Baal (the forces of false religion) flees into the desert for his life, but wishing to die.⁴⁷ God, however, urges him to return to politics⁴⁸ and anoint Jehu as the new king of Israel.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Elijah proceeds to denounce King Ahab for stealing the vineyard of Naboth after Jezebel had had Naboth killed on false grounds, an action specifically involved with rights to land.⁵⁰ Elijah at Sinai's cave is a threatening figure, about to resume an active political career, to reinstate the 'high aims' which have been abandoned. The figure of Elijah represents an alternative path of political action, a figure about to pick up the gauntlet. Pringle eventually did just that. This had a profound impact on his later writings and approach to the South African environment, as I have demonstrated in my dissertation 'The Writings of Thomas Pringle'.⁵¹

But it can be seen here, however, that if – in Pringle's early writings on South Africa – people could be plants (a 'plantation'), and if properly nurtured plants could be moral weapons against degenerate native growths (and 'savage hordes'), and if the desert could be a place which both contains and is redeemed by God, then we can see the roots of the logic of Brown's environmental solution – simply plant trees (and God would see to their irrigation):

Through the desert God is going
 Through the desert waste and wild:
 Where no goodly plant is growing,
 Where no verdure ever smiled;
 But the desert shall be glad;
 And with verdure soon be clad.

Where the thorn and briar flourished
 Trees shall be seen to grow
 Planted by the Lord and nourished
 Stately, fair and fruitful too:
 See! they rise on every side:
 See! they spread their branches wide.

From the hills and lofty mountains
 Rivers shall be seen to flow,
 There the Lord will open fountains;
 Thence supply the plains below.
 As he passes, every land
 Shall confess his powerful hand.⁵²

NOTES

¹ Noël Mostert, *Frontiers, The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People* (London: Pimlico, 1993), p. 533.

² Exceptionally, the figure of the 'Hottentot' occurs frequently in eighteenth and early nineteenth century discourse, most notoriously in terms of the 'Hottentot Venus'.

³ They are Karl Peter Thunberg's *Travels in Europe, Africa and Asia*, 4 vols (London: 1796), Peter Kolb's, *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope*, trans. Mr. Medley (London: Innys, 1731), François Le Vaillant's *New Travels in the Interior Parts of Africa*, 3 vols (London: 1796), Rev. Christian Ignatius Latrobe's *Journal of a visit to South Africa* (London: Seeley and Ackermann, 1818), Olfert Dapper's *Kaffrarie, of Lant der Kaffers, anders Hottentots genaemt* (Amsterdam, 1688), Martin Heinrich Lichtenstein's *Travels in Southern Africa, in the years 1803-1806*, trans. by Anne Plumpre, 2 vols (London, 1812), and Anders Sparrman's *A Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope* (London: G. and J. Robinson: 1785).

⁴ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 50.

⁵ Pratt, p. 51: 'Where, [Pratt asks], is everybody? The landscape is written as uninhabited, unpossessed, unhistoricized, unoccupied even by the travellers themselves.'

⁶ Pratt, p. 59. Pringle does not mention John Campbell's *Travels in South Africa Undertaken at the Request of the Missionary Society* (1815), Robert Semple's *Walks and Sketches* (1815), Capt. Robert Perceval's *An Account of the Cape of Good Hope* (1804), and *Gleanings in Africa*, Anon. (1805).

⁷ The circular issued by the Colonial Office 'made no reference to the part of the country to which the settlers would be sent, nor the particular object which the Government had in mind in aiding them to get there. To all enquiries for information on these points the Government gave evasive answers, going no further than to inform applicants that "the particular part of the Colony selected was the South-East coast of Africa".' Harold Edward Hockly, *The Story of the British Settlers of 1820 in South Africa*, 2nd edn (Cape Town: Juta, repr. 1973), p. 29.

⁸ Even extensive reading could be misleading, though. Pringle states as much in 1824: 'Four years ago the advantages of the Cape Colony were held forth by ignorant and interested pamphleteers to the admiration of the world, in terms equally overstrained and delusive; and 100,000 Emigrants were eager to follow where 5000 have since lamentably failed' *South African Commercial Advertiser*, 4 February, 1824, p. 34.

⁹ Hockly, p. 25. See also Mostert, pp. 520-521.

¹⁰ Some examples are given by Hockly in his bibliography of Settler Africana, Hockly, pp. 254-263.

¹¹ Hockly, p. 25. For an examination of the Cruikshank cartoon 'The proposed Emigration to the Cape of Good Hope' see David Bunn, "'Our Wattled Cot": Mercantile and Domestic Space in Thomas Pringle's African Landscapes,' in *Landscape and Power*, ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University Press of Chicago, 1994), pp. 127-173, (pp. 136-137).

¹² Of the 1455 adult male settlers among the group of 4000, Hockly (p. 31) analyses their professions as such:

Farming and country pursuits	42%
Skilled artisans and mechanics	32%

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Commerce and Trade	12%
Army, Navy and Sea	5%
Professions	4%
Unspecified and miscellaneous	5%

¹³ Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers And The East: Anxieties Of Empire* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), p. 91.

¹⁴ I use the term 'contact zone' in the sense developed by Pratt: 'The space of colonial encounters, the space in which people geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict,' Pratt, p. 6.

¹⁵ 'Specific instructions were [...] issued that no settler should be allowed to own slaves or even hire Native labour, and that all work on the lands allotted was to be performed by free white labour, any contravention of these stipulations rendering the lands liable to instant forfeiture.' Hockly, p. 28.

¹⁶ Hockly, p. 28.

¹⁷ Thomas Pringle, *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa* (1834), with an Introduction, *Biographical and Historical Notes by A.M. Lewin Robinson*, ed. by A. M. Lewin Robinson (Cape Town: Struik, 1966), p. 9.

¹⁸ In Hockly, p. 27.

¹⁹ Hockly, p. 24.

²⁰ Hockly, p. 29.

²¹ Pringle to Scott, National Library of Scotland, 3895.f.201. Pringle was already aware that he had to treat Lord Charles Somerset, the Governor, with caution. In the same letter he writes: 'Some person has informed him (or perhaps he has imagined from seeing my name mentioned much to my own upset in newspapers & magazines) that I am a violent Whig & formerly a supporter of the *democrat press* (as it is called) in Scotland.' He goes on to admit that he is a Whig, but denies any connection with party politics. Scott, of course, was a well known, though at times ambivalent, Tory.

²² *Some Account of the Present State of the English Settlers in Albany, South Africa* (London: Underwood, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1824).

²³ Seven thousand pounds from England and India, and three thousand from the colony itself.

²⁴ *Albany*, p. 2.

²⁵ A relief fund had been set up in India.

²⁶ Pringle is, thus, already aware of three distinct modes of travel writing, i. e., 'scientific, sentimental, or religious'.

²⁷ Pringle excludes Barrow from having written in this style, but says, nevertheless, that he disagrees with many of his sentiments, especially regarding his condemnation of the Boers. *Albany*, p. 5. Pringle is referring to James Hervey's *Reflections on a Flower Garden*, in which the landscape is used as a springboard for sententious religious moralising.

²⁸ *Albany*, p. 5.

²⁹ 'A sort of Utopian delirium was somehow excited at that time in the public mind about South Africa, and the flowery descriptions of superficial observers seem to have intoxicated with their Circean blandishments not merely the gullible herd of uninformed emigrants, but many sober men both in and out of parliament' *Albany*, pp. 6-7.

³⁰ The thriftiest, of course, being the Scotch, who 'keeping profit and utility steadily in

view, [...] allow embellishments and even accommodation to wait their leisure' *Albany*, p. 18.

³¹ Pringle judges the groups according to their moral behaviour, not their skin colour, which makes possible his comparison of white, Canadian settlers with 'Caffers'.

³² *Albany*, p. 117. The *South African Journal* had both commenced publication and already ceased operation, owing to Somerset's opposition, by the time this prospectus was published in *Albany*.

³³ 'Prospectus', *South African Commercial Advertiser* (South African Library: Cape Town, repr. 1978).

³⁴ Pringle says that Greig 'found himself in want of editorial aid, and solicited us to undertake the literary management of the paper' *Narrative*, p. 181.

³⁵ As Pringle and Fairbairn were joint editors and collaborated in writing the editorials, I assume that the opinions expressed in them reflect the attitudes of both editors, or at least were not accepted by one and wholly obnoxious to the other. A few copies of the *SACA* exist in which Pringle has noted the authors by hand. These show that he wrote the second editorials for the numbers of 28 January and 4 February, a note on the painter De Meillon (21 January), and a poem titled 'Speech of His Majesty King Mateebe' (21 January). See H. C. Botha, *John Fairbairn in South Africa* (Cape Town: Historical Publication Society, 1984), p. 18.

³⁶ *SACA*, 4 February 1824, p. 34. It is interesting to note that Pringle's use of the archaic term 'plantation' links it in a new sense to the West Indian plantations which he was to condemn so vociferously in later years as secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society.

³⁷ *SAJ*, p. 25.

³⁸ In *African Poems of Thomas Pringle*, ed. by Ernest Pereira and Michael Chapman, Killie Campbell Africana Library (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1989), p. 114.

³⁹ Pringle's plans to fortify his settlement, as detailed in the letter to Scott above, included building a small fort. He also arranged for a group of armed soldiers to guard his settlement. Certainly, by 1823, his letter to Mackenzie and his statements in *Albany* make it clear that, as a settler at least, military involvement might be necessary to ensure the settlers' survival, however dangerous that involvement might prove. Even though Pringle calls the Caffers 'humane' and 'civilized' in *Albany*, this does not imply that he did not recognise the military threat they posed to the colony in general, and the settlers in particular. He says: 'the Caffers may be effectually checked, and their predatory inroads completely repressed or prevented, by establishing a line of small posts or fortified villages along a well-chosen frontier, and communicating with each other by constant patrols.' The system would be policed by 'a native militia of *free Hottentots* with an interest in the soil', *Albany*, p. 41.

⁴⁰ In later poems, like 'Makanna's Gathering', Pringle characterises the 'Caffer' as a warrior, rather than a hunter.

⁴¹ Hoxie N Fairchild, *The Noble Savage* (New York: Russel and Russel, 1961), pp. 292-293. Pringle rapidly moved away from this sort of portrayal, the only other example being his 'ethnographic' poem 'The Coranna', where all the features in the quotation are evident.

⁴² 'Ileza', according to Pringle's note, is a 'roebuck'. It is interesting to note that this poem contains the kind of celebration of the home which is found in many of Pringle's early works, except that the narrative persona is a 'Caffer'. The only features which identify it as 'African', however, are the title, inscription, and the word 'ileza'. *South African*

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Journal, 1, 1824, p. 25.

⁴³ Compare Leask (1992): 'Sir Walter Scott in his historical novel *Waverley* – significantly subtitled *Sixty Years Since* – evacuated and resolved the ideological divisions of early nineteenth-century Scotland into a romantic past, thereby constructing an image of the present as serene and untroubled' (p. 88).

⁴⁴ *SAJ*, 2, 1824, lines 19-22.

⁴⁵ Pringle deleted the final two lines above in the *African Sketches* version of 1834.

⁴⁶ Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior of Africa*, ed. by John Keay (1799; London, Folio Society, 1984), p. 84.

⁴⁷ I Kings 19. 4.

⁴⁸ 'Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus,' that is, the city. I Kings 19. 15.

⁴⁹ I Kings 19. 16.

⁵⁰ I Kings 21. 18-22.

⁵¹ Damian Shaw, *The Writings of Thomas Pringle* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cambridge University: 1996).

⁵² John Croumbie Brown, *Pastoral Discourses* (1847), p. 108.

