

## Article

# Culture and nature in the Valley of a Thousand Hills – a tough guide to ‘other’ spaces

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### **One small spot of theory for the road**

With the promise of a comfortable airconditioned ride encompassing breathtaking views, Zulu culture, nature reserves, crocodiles and snakes, commercial guides offer visitors half-day tours to the Valley of a Thousand Hills in South Africa. Through providing an unsettling alternative narrative to the same route, this guide bypasses bare-breasted Zulu maidens, warriors, diviners and lethal reptiles on display. Instead, it briefly dwells on other places offering less packaged insight into the relationship between culture and nature in post-colonial, post-apartheid South Africa. To appreciate the significance of the traffic on the margin between sites of alternate social ordering, as well as between nature and culture, the road is adhered to closely as a conduit shown to have shaped views of the landscape called the Valley of a Thousand Hills. This is all seen through the windows of a conceptual vehicle test-driven for African conditions – Michel Foucault's increasingly popular heterotopia. By taking it on the Old Main Road between Pietermaritzburg and Durban, whilst keeping an eye on the past, the complex globally interwoven heterotopology of South Africa is revealed, and a view that subverts the popular tourist perspective of the landscape is provided.

This paper is a culmination of a personal oral tradition of taking journalists and visiting academics for a drive whilst discussing the local situation during the last decade. The focus has varied with the interests of the guided, and the guide has always made fresh discoveries along the route. The invariable goal, however, is to subvert the usual gloss which welcomes us as follows:

Wending inland from the outskirts of Durban, to Cato Ridge, this fascinating tourist route is all about rolling hills, valleys, gorges,

forests, rivers and rock pools. This is where rural Africa links arms gently with urban living, where nature reserves fringe on vibrant villages and towns with modern freeways and shopping centres.<sup>1</sup>

A virtual visit yielded some potted history with a question to ponder: 'Was it the American writer Mark Twain, on a visit to South Africa towards the end of the 19th century, who named the magnificent Valley of a Thousand Hills? Some people believe it was'.<sup>2</sup> When idly puzzling over the origins of names given to landscapes by settlers in KwaZulu-Natal, one reaches first for Robert Russell's *Natal: the land and its story* (1911). He does not use the name 'Valley of a Thousand Hills', but does say that travelling up Botha's Hill on the main road inland, 'A vista of hills and valleys, like a mountainous sea congealed, stretches to the right far away into the wild Inanda country' (1911:59). Turning to the popular history of TV Bulpin we are told that the origin of the name is unknown but that it came into popular parlance after the Anglo-Boer war: 'Before that the valley passed under a variety of names and, although its present title seems so aptly obvious, it nevertheless needed a touch of genius to devise it' (1966:205).

If the landscape has an equivalent in indigenous language, then it is the same as that of Benedict Vilakazi's romantic Zulu poem *KwaDedangendlale*, a compound noun consisting of the following elements: the locative prefix *kwa* 'place of' + *deda* 'move aside' + *ngendlale* 'that I may spread out' and by poetic connotation of the undulating landscape, 'my blankets'. Adrian Koopman has shown how, through the naming of various topographical points from the vantage point of the top of Natal's Table Mountain (Emkhambathini), Vilakazi maps the landscape (1999). In everyday use however, 'KwaDedangendlale' is not limited to the Valley of a Thousand Hills, but can also refer to an ocean view and quite commonly to rolling hills of sugar cane fields.

Bulpin's storytelling testifies to the multitudinous individual valleys and places etched with Nguni history and names within the overall landscape. Nonetheless his chapter titled 'The Valley of a Thousand Hills' tells stories, in the main, of the road. The Valley is defined as a panorama to be seen from the road as one goes beyond Hillcrest up Botha's Hill, 'exciting the appreciative traveller with superb views of this vast scene' which was one of the reasons passers-by paused and put down roots along the way:

Along the southern edge of the valley European man settled and developed his civilization, like an exotic tree imported from overseas, flourishing in the African setting only with constant care and reinforcement.

First it was the road leading from Durban to Pietermaritzburg which brought man to the edge of the valley. Then the grandeur of the scenery, the healthiness of the heights, combined with accessibility which the road provided, induced man to settle along the wayside in homesteads and villages. (1966:205)

According to geological definition of the Valley, the plateau of Table Mountain sandstone ends at a fault line, which crosses the road just before the Botha's Hill railway bridge (King 1982:109). Though the plateau has a natural end point, the landscape in question does not end abruptly there, but the road continues to provide a defining line thereafter. The road facilitated not only a landscape to come into existence as a defined locale through bringing it into settler language, but also set a course for culture to define nature and, as we shall see, it also facilitated an engagement between the different cultures of KwaZulu and Natal – today the integrated province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Taking up these themes as a way of seeing, this contemporary guide explores the politics of such relationships through examining a selection of sites along the road and seeks to provide unsettling insight into 'other spaces', as Michel Foucault has termed them. To emphasise the dislocating motive, the direction taken is opposite to that of conventional tours and goes from north to south – from inland to the coast – but ends in Hillcrest before Durban, in a place that is no place because it is not really the Valley, although it is possible to point at it as one goes by. The integrating concept employed in looking at a diverse range of places is Foucault's notion of 'heterotopia', as previously mentioned. Originally a medical term referring to extra or alien parts of the anatomy, and in cases pathologically so, heterotopia has animated architectural discussions for more than a decade and is beginning to gain currency in other fields. Foucault used it to describe 'other' real spaces as an alternative to the conceptual device of the utopia which represents society in a perfected form and, as such, is a site with no real place:

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different to the sites they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. (1986:24)

By pointing out that heterotopic sites are a cultural universal with functions varying in relation to social and historical context, Foucault invites us to try it out as a device which can help us discover 'other spaces' wherever we look. David Harvey points out a limitation of Foucault's notion of heterotopia as confined to metaphorical and idealist allusions which require embedding in the materialities of place, space, and environment and draws it into theories of the social process with attention to practical politics (1996:45,46). As Kevin Hetherington (1997) has argued, we should be interested in alternate spaces since heterotopia exists in blurred social margins of such spatial ordering, rather than on a clear edge of an order. In my article the concept is turned to views of culture and nature down in the Valley from selected panoramic sites on the Old Main Road.

### **Quicksilver rising – the mirage of a rainbow nation over the Valley**

The first stop is Thor Chemicals on the left soon after one leaves the N3 at Cato Ridge and joins the R103 south. Changed circumstances have stripped the name once boldly emblazoned on the gateway where a 'To Let' sign now hangs, but one cannot miss the blue facade of mirror glass of the building overlooking the Valley. In 1989 a struggle began against the company's importation of toxic waste from which it reclaimed, amongst other things, mercury. The dangerous metal had seriously contaminated the external environment of the Valley and also, it later transpired, some of Thor's manual workers whose nervous systems began to collapse. Workers who became ill were laid off and sent home to die in the Valley from whence many came.

The struggle against Thor became a focal point for hope in a novel 'rainbow alliance' of a heterogeneous grouping of people including black peasants, white farmers, ecologists, green activists, students, unionised workers and a traditional Zulu chief (Cock and Koch 1991:10,25). While the alliance has not ultimately managed to rise above its populist limitations pointed out by Tim Quinlan (1992), at the time it widened the local embrace of environmental concern to include the workplace. As Alec Erwin and Rod Crompton wrote in their capacities as unionists at the time, the separation of notions of 'environment' and the 'work environment' is 'extraordinary'. If it is removed, then a 'whole new way of looking at the environment becomes possible' (Cock and Koch 1991:80).<sup>3</sup> The alliance also included global greens in the form of Greenpeace and managed to close the tap on Thor's source of toxic waste (American Cyanamid) and shut down part of the plant. Sixteen poisoned workers secured a landmark

nine and a half million rand out-of-court settlement from British company Thor Chemicals Holdings in 1997, and 20 other survivors currently look set to follow suit in the London High Court. In mid 2000 the case took an interesting twist as the multinational reshuffled its assets in what was suspected to be an attempt to make the accused company become insolvent during the course of the trial.

Five thousand corroding barrels remain, and an even greater quantity is abandoned in settling ponds and continues to contaminate the stream nearby. They are visible to the traveller who turns and drives a short distance along the Harrison Flats road. This industrial area is a white elephant of apartheid's 'inward industrialisation' strategy which sought to stem African urbanisation while stimulating economic growth. Without the perks of the old order, the location is of doubtful economic viability. Down the road from Thor the Cato Ridge abattoir, the biggest in the province, slaughtered around 800 head of cattle, 7000 sheep and 400 pigs per day. Its turnover is down drastically and it has recently changed hands for a fraction of the cost of building such a plant. It still spews treated but foul smelling water off the cliff top which runs down the forested face into the valley and joins the Mngweni River, which eventually empties into the Umgeni River which is a major source of Durban's water. It was this same stream which contained the toxic samples that stirred Washington when the *St Louis Post-Dispatch* sent a journalist, Bill Lambrecht, to investigate Thor in November 1989. In June 2000 the US Environmental Protection Agency visited the site to advise on dealing with the waste, but no action has been taken.

As we go past we can acknowledge Thor's architecture as a monumental shining eyesore, symbolising the incongruity between the culture of modern industrialism and the culture and nature of the Valley from where it drew its labour, and poured back wages and poison in return. The stockpile of imported waste, for which no party has accepted responsibility, reminds us of how the apartheid government and elements of global capital wrapped around one another in mutually gratifying positions, hoping that nobody was watching. When Lambrecht was here prising open the bedcovers and collecting samples of the products of the liaison, Bill Richards of the Umgeni Water Board gave him the following official comment: 'If the United States is worried about those poor Black people at Cato Ridge, then your president should lift sanctions and help improve their standard of living' (*St Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 26, 1989). Chief Mangosuthu

Buthlezi's KwaZulu government also argued that it did no good for the world to make South Africa a closed space and maintained that within apartheid South Africa, KwaZulu was a 'liberated zone' (Maré 1988/89).

Around the mid and late 1980s the definition of a liberated zone had begun to be violently contested within KwaZulu. Many of the people living downstream from Thor at Fredville and 'Tin Town' were refugees from violence in other regions such as Nshongweni. I worked with Lambrecht exploring the terrain in the Valley below Thor, including dipping bottles into muddy river beds, as well as helping him hear of people's tragedies at the hands of warlords. Since the *St Louis Post-Dispatch* has circulation amongst American political circles, I had hoped the Thor story might have carried a political message to the heart of Washington. The story I had naively wished to piggy back on the toxic one was that of the tragically divisive consequences when an ethnic culture and identity is mobilised to consolidate regional power – especially when done so with the blessing of the apartheid state.

Instead, the headline read: *'Zulus Get Exported Poison: U.S. Mercury Waste Pollutes Drinking Water in S. Africa'*. The picture painted was one of innocent rural Zulu life in the Valley of a Thousand Hills being debased by American effluent. Lambrecht did not, however, paint a picture of Zulu Arcadia, but referred to the people downstream in Fredville as poor, almost landless refugees. However, beyond apartheid, he did not look into causes. The situation had become critical in such places as a result of Zulu cultural identity becoming politicised in order to draw boundaries and shore up the Inkatha Freedom Party's (IFP) power in other places in KwaZulu. In retrospect, however, it should have come as no surprise that an American journalist would portray the Valley as anything but an adulterated 'other' place. He saw and photographed 'Jamina Ndlovu, 12, fetching water from the stream'. He was exposed to culture shock induced from strong drink and goat's meat consumed in a new homestead full of relatives seeking the blessing of the ancestors for the site. He saw Jerome Kanyesi, 15, 'leading his family's cows down a nearby hill to drink from the stream' who told him that they are used for milk and beef. His concluding point that the area is 'rich in wildlife' which is 'hunted for food', was based on a single sighting of an antelope which 'bolted up the hill 50 yards from the [Thor Chemicals] plant' (*St Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 26, 1989). As Foucault notes, 'utopias permit fables and discourse: they run with the very grain of language and are part of the fundamental dimension of the *fabula*' (1970:vi).

The Valley may have been rich in wildlife when nature and culture meshed in such a way that this could be so. Whether or not this past of sylvan harmony is more mythical than real, the western eye is still wont to project it eastwards over the Valley from the road. Such a longing gaze makes for a heterotopic place, but to write of it as such is far more difficult since, according to Foucault, 'heterotopias ... dessicate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences'. (1970:xviii).

Perhaps the unresolvable toxic legacy of Thor represents the capitalist mode of production having run its logical global course, leaving no evidence of having improved the majority of lives, nor any convincing sign of viable alternatives on the horizon. I imagine that it is in the spirit of Foucault's point about the challenge of such a writing task, that I name this tour narrative a 'tough guide'.

### **Natural antidotes to modernity's poison**

Soon after we leave Thor, we pass Nansindlela Farm on the right hand side. It is a satellite project of the Institute of Natural Resources (INR) which, in 1996, gained independence from the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of Natal where it was established in 1980 by ecologist John Hanks. Nansindlela has been transformed into a funding operation with the status of 'company' which also has an associated INR Trust. It has been an important actor in the management of natural resources and rural development in South Africa as well as in countries to the north of our borders. It has also played a formative role within the University, particularly in the establishment of the Schools of Rural Community Development and of Environment and Development. The INR's work is aimed at establishing leadership in four fields: natural resource management, integrated development process, agriculture and agribusiness and rural enterprise.

Nansindlela, which means 'there is the path, or road', claims to be 'a unique research, demonstration and training farm for small-scale farmers' (INR 1999). The name is somewhat paternalistic and out of step with the current swing to participatory rural development. Rather than direct people, development agencies now purport to facilitate the joint discovery of desirable change. In some ways Nansindlela did set out to offer technical solutions to natural resource management, however there was an attempt to bring together and cultivate the best of indigenous and colonial agriculture. Their hardy dual purpose Nguni-Jersey cross symbolises an appropriate

hybridised bovine breed. However, the chickens are of the industrial broiler and battery variety, not even deserving of the name *inkukhu*. Instead, speakers of most Nguni dialects refer to such fowl as *ulamthuthu* and, if asked to elaborate, will list a string of adjectives describing artificiality, including 'plastic'. A person can be called this if they are unable to take care of themselves or seem to be somehow alien – in other words the opposite of street-wise. The story of the chicken is a favoured parable told by those advocating 'permaculture' as opposed to agriculture. This difference is explored further on, for our language and practice is not challenged and undermined by Nansindlela, which is why it is a weakly constituted heterotopic site thus only of passing interest. Inside its fences which have frequently been violated by armed intruders, the debate has in the past swung around questions of how best to recreate the conditions in the outside world, so that small-scale farmers living in the Valley might imitate their agricultural success – whether, for example, the irrigation of agroforestry trials is the right thing to do, or should women who work the land be paid below the poverty line or not. The path of expedient economic efficiency pursued by the INR and Nansindlela is the same one onto which universities are almost universally being pushed. It is this road which is unintentionally reinforced with the following passage from T S Eliot which opens the INR's prospectus:

It is not necessarily those lands which are the most fertile and most favoured in climate that seem to me the happiest, but those in which a long struggle of adaptation between man and his environment has bought (sic) out the best qualities of both. (INR 1999)

After some kilometres the road bends past the turn off to the The Valley Trust, an NGO based in the Valley of a Thousand Hills near Botha's Hill which offers training courses, consultation and resources in the field of comprehensive primary health care and sustainable development. Although cost-recovery training programmes have lately been emphasised, the Trust relies mainly on donor funding to meet the budget requirements of close on R10 million per annum. In 1950 a medical practitioner, Dr Halley Stott, built a Health Centre in the Valley near Botha's Hill where he lived near his friend, the late Alan Paton. In 1951 the Centre began providing a medical service, and included a vegetable garden and soil conservation demonstration project. This provided opportunities for greater contact with the surrounding communities and an understanding of their problems. The Valley Trust was formed in 1953, and served to run a complementary holistic primary health programme.

From 1956 to 1973, the agricultural organiser and demonstrator at The Valley Trust was the late Robert Mazibuko (1904-1994) who in his life achieved the status of a prophet of the soil in environmental circles and won many prestigious awards. The method he was famous for was trench gardening, an organic method which eschews the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. In his words, this 'way of farming works very well because it copies a valley in nature. Valleys are always green, even in a winter or a dry season'. He maintained that 'commercial agriculture and the use of chemicals have destroyed the soil' (1996:13,25). Having an alma mater and mentor in common with Benedict Vilakazi, Mazibuko was introduced to methods of 'natural' gardening by Father Bernard Huss at St Francis Teacher's Training College at Marianhill Monastery where he went to study in 1928. The trench method he learned later in the Rift Valley of Central Africa (1990). While preliminary evidence indicates a 'missionary' common denominator underlying the work of Huss, Mazibuko and The Valley Trust, this cannot be characterised as pure proselytism. One of Mazibuko's favourite sayings was that '[s]oil erosion leads to soul erosion and vice versa', yet it is this very process following 'geologically recent uplift' which has shaped and continues to transform the Valley of a Thousand Hills. Essentially, Huss and Mazibuko's teachings were aimed at equipping African people for a sustainable sedentary lifestyle.

Although there are differences in approach, similar elements are shared by Permaculture, a word coined by Australian Bill Mollison in the mid 1970s from 'Perm'-anent agri-culture and 'Perm'-anent 'culture'; to denote a sustainable design system stressing the harmonious interrelationship of humans, plants, animals and the earth and which assumes that western development paths are anything but sustainable. The official documentation of The Valley Trust denotes its work as 'eco-agriculture', rather than 'Permaculture' which designates a largely counter-cultural, green global movement and lifestyle. Nevertheless, it does inspire and inform some key workers on the staff behind the 'Social Plant Use Programme' which accommodates the wide spiritual and medicinal role plants play in indigenous culture. One can certainly count this as a place where the word 'agriculture' cannot enter the gate or slip through the multiple strand electric fence without confronting some resistance, thereby satisfying Foucault's linguistic criterion:

Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that,

because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy syntax which causes words and things (next to but also opposite to one another) to 'hang together'. (1970:viii)

The mission of The Valley Trust development work can be seen as possibly resistant to modernism. *The Homeless Mind* by Peter Berger et al (1973) confronted modernity's comparative global effects, and warned of the limits of counter-modernisation. The following passage is critical of attempts at separate development of any kind, arguing that contemporary ideas about liberation from modernity are illusory, since counter-cultural economic activities such as 'artistic endeavours', or 'amateur farming', depend on the other, 'serious' economy:

As soon as this relationship is recognized, however, some of the self-definitions of the youth culture and counterculture as autonomous 'liberated' zones within society lose credibility ... the 'autonomy' of these zones resembles that of Indian reservations – or, to use a more timely Third World illustration, of 'Bantustans'. Indeed, the political logic may not be too dissimilar. The 'savages' are allowed to perform their dances without disturbance, may even be subsidised in this performance (perhaps as a tourist attraction) and permitted a great measure of self-administration in their designated locations. They are ipso facto controlled politically... (1973:198-99)

Without endorsing conservative Bergerian sociology, the point can serve to draw the parallels between the spatial politics of countercultures which preoccupies Hetherington's work on heterotopias (1997, 1998) and that of reserves. This is one of the crowning ironies of our age: while some are striving for modernity, others actively resist it. Today, both 'native' and nature reserves are under great pressure to integrate into the mainstream economy with complex consequences. See, for example, Shirley Brooks's essay in this issue for an appreciation of the space of nature in Zululand which makes abundantly clear Foucault's point that heterotopias 'have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles': a space of 'illusion' and a space of 'compensation'. KwaZulu's notion of itself as a 'liberated zone' and the rose-tinted tourist gaze mark it as a heterotopia of illusion. Liberal ideas pouring into the location from the old Natal side identify The Valley Trust as a heterotopia of compensation which creates 'a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed and jumbled' (1986:27).

### Quest for Camelot: (Un)Real Estate

After leaving The Valley Trust and travelling down Botha's Hill, a turn left down to the end of the anomalously named Mkhize Road is rewarded with an astonishing sight: the abrupt boundary and contrast between old Natal and the Valley together with a realisation that the difference between the two is only a matter of perspective. A stroll over the barrier and railway line along the old apartheid divide reveals a greater population density on the side once targeted for 'rural development' than the other where affluent white suburbia sprouted concrete walls topped with razor wire around swimming pools. On the side which had been bypassed by urban infrastructure in the apartheid past, electric overhead cables, television antennae, street lights and some tarred roads indicate that modernisation has run its course across the divide and that social transformation is underway but is far from eliminating all the squalor. Across the valley to the old Natal side, there is more of a bucolic landscape to be seen than on the side referred to by local whites as 'the Valley'. Going down Botha's Hill, the housing complex called Falcon Crest on the left is a mild sign of what is to come down the road.

If the Valley of a Thousand Hills is a heterotopia of illusion, then much more so is Camelot, a private estate and lived in theme park built around a golf course where the aim, according to the sign staked in the rose bed outside the main castle, is to 'create in one place the means to a happy life'. Camelot's creator, Richard Gaylord, moved his medieval restaurant, Greensleeves, from Johannesburg to this valley in the early 1980s and extended the theme to an unkempt farm in his quest for the loving and peaceful kingdom of Camelot. Originally he envisaged park land with fallow deer roaming, but market forces soon made a golf course more pragmatic. Marketing began in earnest in the 1990s as South Africa began to make the transition from apartheid to democracy. Camelot provided a space both inside but outside such a changing country:

Enchanting fairytale Castles (yes *real* lived-in Castles!) rub shoulders with superb Manor Houses and adorable little Cottages ... Camelot follows *old Europe* themes – shades not only of Shakespeare and Olde England but also old France (Normandy), Germany, Austria, indeed all of Europe! (Camelot 1994)

As Foucault notes, heterotopias are most often linked to slices of time and begin 'to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time'. Accessing such phenomena requires

overcoming what is figuratively known as the 'gatekeeping' problem in social research:

Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have certain permission and make certain gestures. (Foucault 1986:26)

In this case, a confident middle-class self-presentation suffices to gain instant but temporary access. The barriers are primarily economic. Prices start at around half a million rand for the more modest cottages, and range to five million for a castle. The promotional material also emphasises proximity to Durban, Pietermaritzburg and the international airport. While none of the brochures mention it, surprisingly the promotional video did briefly touch on the Valley of a Thousand Hills as heritage which is not far away. Not surprisingly, it portrayed inhabitants as they are presented in the tourist Zulu villages up the road, living in timeless tradition, rather than in relative modern poverty one kilometre away. If Camelot claimed to be part of the Valley of a Thousand Hills, it would lose economic value. Property in Westriding – the suburb of which it is a part, but separates itself from – has lower value to the rest of Hillcrest because of this location. Domestic and other labour is drawn from the Valley into Camelot and strict security identification procedures are followed.

The sales brochure quotes Gaylord's listing of the four kinds of paramount protection and security: 1. Physical, 2. Financial, 3. Lifestyle ('freedom from the incursions of people who don't know how to behave and do things like hanging washing over their balconies') and 4. Health ('protection is safeguarded by the climate, the surroundings, the rich array of recreational, social and sporting facilities and the Club's abiding interest in stress management ... today's public enemy No. 1 and a bigger killer than AIDS!'). They claim that *National Geographic* once listed Hillcrest's climate among the healthiest in the world (Camelot 1994), reminding one of Dr Seuss's *You're Only Old Once!*:

One day you will read  
in the *National Geographic*  
of a faraway land with no smelly bad traffic.  
In those green pastured mountains  
of Fotta-fa-Zee

everybody feels fine  
at a hundred and three  
'cause the air that they breathe is potassium-free. (1986:1)

Like The Valley Trust, behind Camelot's high electrified fences a holistic approach to health is the goal. Apart from the inevitable hazards of high velocity golf balls, safe country living is the aim. Since this heterotopia has a different clientele, health is accordingly approached differently than it is at The Valley Trust. Homeowners are not encouraged to become self-sufficient though organic gardening. Instead, they can breathe fresh air, go to the estate's 'health spa' for 'wide-ranging sport, recreation, attitude therapy, natural health facilities' which 'eliminate stress'. Failing this, residents can turn to the planned 'wellness centre ... an astonishing holistic way to superb health whatever your age. An in-depth approach to curative, preventative and alternative medical disciplines'.

Camelot cannot be seen simply as a collective response of closure to the opening up of the South African state. The anxieties the place is designed to soothe are also those of modernity and the much older problem of mortality. While the elderly are well represented amongst inhabitants, it is not by any means an old age home. From the outset, Camelot sought to be distinguished from such developments such as Augusta Golfing Estate which sprang up down the road soon after and alternatively calls itself a 'country' or 'leisure' estate. Foucault maintains that retirement homes are 'on the borderline between the heterotopia of crisis and the heterotopia of deviation since, after all, old age is a crisis, but is also a deviation since, in our society where leisure is the rule, idleness is a sort of deviation' (1986: 25). His position explains the growth of the golf course housing estate which in the United States sprawl around and compromise the character of wilderness areas which are seldom fenced. In South Africa where fences have been much more fundamental to boundary definition, the idea of such a protected area has taken hold as a post-colonialism of a special type.

Given the soaring crime rates in South Africa, analogies of a laager or last outpost are, however, unavoidable. Settler society worked hard to tame, control, suppress and incarcerate wild culture and nature. In the interests of their own security, colonisers here (and elsewhere), put all people and animals which they could not, or chose not to, fully integrate into their vision of modernity, into places separate from themselves. In other words, there were native reserves created for the indigenous black people and nature reserves created for animals. Apart from having the

function of sanitising the landscape in accordance with the settler's taste, the reserves had other manifest and latent functions in the crude anatomy of colonial society. Native reserves were obviously first and foremost labour reserves, and later became perceived as cultural reserves as the apartheid government attempted to balkanise the country with its homeland policy. Game or nature reserves were created first for the sporting recreation of the elite then later the conservation of biodiversity. The most significant feature of capitalist modernity – private ownership of land – was deliberately withheld from reserves as other spaces, but was unleashed on the rest of the country. In Camelot we find the tamed solution to white middle class tensions with nature and 'natives'. Elements of either, which are undesirable or unnecessary for labour or leisure, are simply excluded through collective living in which a new post-suburban sense of community is found.

In Camelot, a few hundred people on less than two hundred acres, negotiate a strange amalgam of the private-public dichotomy. This is not merely a response to the growing economy of crime. It follows a pattern similar to other developments around the world such as Huis Ten Bosch in Japan or Celebration in Florida, USA, designed as theme-park-towns, to be inhabited by tens of thousands of permanent residents where surveillance is a crucial aspect of the design. As Andrew Ross found on his sabbatical living in such an American dream-park, such a quest for community and old small-town lifestyle is not altogether in vain (1999). The 'Disneyfication' phenomenon proposes a redefinition of private and public space, forming privately-owned-public-access-spaces owned by the company and designated for controlled public access. Driven by economic imperatives, such an opening of the private countryside has taken place in recent years as developments such as the Midlands Meander shows. Camelot's golf course, medieval restaurant, 'Tudor Rose real old English pub', chapel and other facilities are similar in status. In other words, all is not closure, but an opening to trade. The problem here is maintaining total control of the environment without undermining the sense that leisure pursuit takes one into a realm of freedom. Harvey narrowly interprets Foucault's idea of a heterotopia as 'a space of liberty outside of social control' or, 'a space beyond and outside of the instrumentalities of surveillance' (1996:230,263). Surely such an understanding must underestimate the capacity of consumers of such lifestyles to co-operate and conspire with one another and their keepers in maintaining an illusory, but no doubt real (or hyper-real) experience that satisfies their desires? In other words, surveillance is under

some circumstances desirable in a chronic heterotopia such as Camelot – an ideal type of spatial adaptation to the new, open South Africa.<sup>4</sup>

### Lessons from the road

It seems fairly certain that, as a place, the Valley of a Thousand Hills exists as a construct of the imagination. As Kenneth Olwig has shown, the word 'landscape' has shifted in meaning from 'a painting, to a way of painting, to the material subject matter of painting. Thus, as in the case of nature, the meaning of the word landscape is reified and is transferred from an artistic symbol, to the concrete world depicted in that symbol' (1993:343). With the broad brush strokes depicting that distant 'other space', rural 'Zulu' community was similarly reified as the natural antidote to unnatural imperial urbanism, and a strategy for charitable liberal engagement with the Valley emerged. As a crucial conduit, the Old Main Road paved the way for both the imagination and development interventions between the separate residential spaces of apartheid.

Running through Foucault's abstracted concept of heterotopia is a functionalism which can both serve to change or uphold structures of power. I hope to have shown that it has wide application in understanding spatial relations and practices in South African society. Having attempted to embed the notion in the materialities of space, place and environment, as Harvey urges us to do, how might this be translated into 'practical politics' and heterotopia into a 'field for radical action' (1996:45)? We started at Thor Chemicals where environmental justice politics seemed at least possible for a heartening historical moment when the 'rainbow nation' rallied against Thor with a clear message that this land wishes to close itself to the poisons of modernity. While the north remains closed to the repatriation of, in campaigner Chris Albertyn's phrase (1993), the 'effluent of its affluence', encouragingly the Thor case has recently opened the door for workers around the world to sue multinationals. Down the road in search of alternative livelihoods to industrialism, we went deeper into more complex relationships between culture and nature which shattered our language into a complex set of ambiguities. Our arrival in Camelot makes this guide wonder where to turn to next. A few years ago in Tepoztlan, Mexico, a similar but bigger development proposal resulted in a 'golf war' where angry villagers took up arms resulting in many injuries, the loss of life and a halt to the scheme (Wheat 1996). Short of a war how do we construct a vision that links, more convincingly than a road, the

otherness of alternate social ordering between Benjamin Disraeli's, and now Thabo Mbeki's, two worlds?

This tour promised to be tough for it has no ready answers. Apart from taking occasional iconoclastic tours, scholars can contribute with closer exploration of the material relations and exchanges between these worlds, as well as of how people make everyday sense of such processes of alternate social ordering. In a focus on local spatial relations and practice, we must not forget to think globally. It is not impossible that there is a Camelot resident who is a shareholder or manager of Thor Chemicals, a patron of The Valley Trust, a keen conservationist and advocate of organic gardening, an employer of domestic labour from over in the Valley, invests offshore, takes guests from overseas to see the 'Zulu' life and culture at a tourist village up the road and takes them home for a medieval feast.

### Notes

1. Thousand Hills Tourism (undated publicity brochure), *Africa on Your Doorstep: Head for the Hills*. A subsequent brochure has been produced with modified text and the addition of the official provincial 'Kingdom of the Zulu' tourism logo.
2. The Valley of 1000 Hills, *Tourist Information*, <http://www.1000hills.co.za/1000/index.htm>. October 23, 1999.
3. Erwin is now the Minister of Trade and Industry and Crompton a director in the department.
4. A satire of the leisure heterotopia of illusion taken to its logical conclusion is Julian Barnes's *England, England* (1998). It is a tale of the theme park replica overpowering the original nation state through sheer market strategy.

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