

# SECTION B

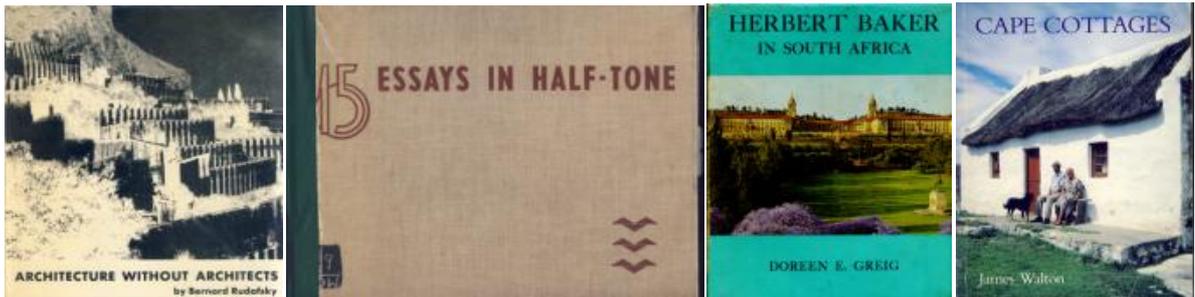
---

## CONTEXTUALIZATION

**This section positions Fagan's domestic architecture in its international and local context**

# Chapter 3

## VERNACULAR VARIATIONS



*Architecture without Architects* cover (Rudofsky, 1964). *Essays in half-tone* cover (Cole Bowen, 1957). *Herbert Baker in South Africa* cover (Greig, 1970). *Cape Cottages* cover (Walton, 1995).

**This chapter frames Fagan's domestic architecture as mediation between Tradition and Modernity:**

Terminology will be investigated and explained. Terms such as 'vernacular' and 'neo-vernacular' will be elucidated and new terms such as 'inherited' and 'fourth vernacular' postulated.

Design approaches to the vernacular will be explained.

Fagan's work will be described in the context of a series of Cape vernaculars, all as mediations between local and international influences.

### 3.1. Introduction

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists<sup>69</sup>. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism (Eliot, 1982:37).

To understand Fagan's architectural influences we need to trace their origins. Fagan's context needs to be clearly described in terms of his relationship to architectures and histories of the past.

This chapter will position Fagan's domestic architecture within a continuum of place-specific or regional architectures. The determinants of tradition and modernity which suffuse his work will be discussed so as to elicit an understanding of the approaches to architecture that he has adopted and adapted over time. To contextualise and locate the influences on his work it is necessary to identify remnants of influences on his domestic architecture and then investigate their lineage. Two main aspects are evident: firstly, the response to place as exemplified in his reverence for the local (albeit inherited) vernacular through the years of conservation work that he has undertaken, particularly in the Cape, and secondly, the abiding influence of the functionalist and pragmatic late modern architectural education that he received at the University of Pretoria. "[h]is houses do not take a polarised position between modernity and tradition, but creatively combine both in a circumspect way" (Pretorius and Raman, 2006:53).

The common threads of tradition and modernity that permeate Fagan's domestic architecture are at opposing ends of the scale of possible architectural influence. They contrast contextual necessities with universal spatial ideals. They merge functionalist and rationalist requirements with recognisable but manipulated vernacular form, while using the principles of traditional technologies to foster new tectonic solutions. They also mediate functional concerns with experiential qualities. In *Architectural Regionalism: Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity*, Canizaro (2007:22) notes that the tension between tradition and modernity is as much about the relationship between people and place as it is about the needs of imitation and the desire for invention. Fagan manipulates these oppositions to fuel a new architectural direction, refusing to be limited by either of the informants. He creates a heterotrophic architecture that mediates between the extremes of the polarities, each architectural solution creating new tensional syntheses.

To understand Fagan's responses it is necessary to position his work within the continuum of the way both international and local vernacular architecture is defined. This chapter deals with

---

– <sup>69</sup> Include architects here as well.

Fagan's relationship to his local vernacular and later chapters assess his relationship to the Modern Movement and regionalist mediations both internationally and locally.

## 3.2. The vernacular – definitions and clarifications

### 3.2.1. Introduction

The study of vernacular, or spontaneous architecture has recently become popular, especially since the publication of Bernard Rudofsky's "Architecture without Architects" during the early sixties. The reasons for this resurgence of interest in this type of architecture may be of a varied and complex nature but it would be safe to assume that the human quality of the buildings, with direct relationship between occupant, structure and decoration and simplicity of construction and functional organization, has a powerful appeal in an environment that is marked by an increasing impersonal and inhuman dimension and by bewildering technological complexity (Theron<sup>70</sup>, 1973:3).

When nomadic peoples first settled, they built spontaneously and intuitively in the landscape. The formation of shelter was guided, in the main, by prevailing environmental factors such as climate and available materials. This 'primitive' or indigenous architecture displayed a conscious response to the creation of internal realms while being initially influenced unconsciously by limited social and cultural practices. As Frampton (1983a:148) notes, this type of architecture was a synergy of climate, culture, myth and craft.

These responses were constantly reworked, as Rudofsky (1977:13) suggests, through a redistribution of hard-won knowledge. The tried and tested solutions were replicated to form a *vernacular* architecture that was particular to a region. As these solutions were handed down from generation to generation they established a building *tradition* which shifted the pendulum of influence from unconscious responses to climate and materials to a more self-conscious expression of identity through social, cultural and religious symbols. The *vernaculars* established historical continuity, providing the inhabitants with a sense of belonging.

And since they were of an imitative and teachable nature, they would daily point out to each other the results of their building, boasting of the novelties in it; and thus, with their natural gifts sharpened by emulation, their standards improved daily (Vitruvius, c. 46B.C.1998:39).

Initially, all of these responses were internally generated, but as trade and more aggressive cross-cultural engagement took place, external influences began to play a larger role; the more powerful the external influence, the more serious the effect on the local tradition. But in *Shelter*

---

– <sup>70</sup> See Appendix J.

and Society Oliver (1969:11) notes that

... the assumption that vernacular architecture implies that which is indigenous to a country and not borrowed, or learned from, is still open to argument.

The advent of colonialism impacted both negatively and positively on vernacular architectures. Where vernacular architectures were ignored or did not exist, *inherited vernaculars* resulted. In some cases these vernaculars subsumed local architectures (as in South Africa), resulting in the demise of indigenous cultural expression. The advent of the Modern Movement has probably had the most impact on local architectural traditions, in the main being more deleterious than beneficial. However, for the purposes of this study the latter influence is an important one to investigate in the domestic work of Fagan, as his architectural training was largely a Modernist one. This influence will be returned to later in this chapter and in more detail in Chapter 4.

### 3.2.2. Definitions

Vernacular architectures are an allegory for the historical experience and cultural identity of their creators. A fully self-determined, self-named people own the right to build for themselves according to the relationships and patterns of their own particular culture, history, and environment. Once this right is lost, they are forced into dependence upon industrial materials and an architecture that reflects the cultureless anonymity of capitalist technology (Rodriguez & Pettus, 1990:2).

The term vernacular finds its origins in how it pertains to the use of forms of language and, as Oliver<sup>71</sup> (1969:10) notes, is extended in meaning from its use in linguistics as a metaphor to the field of architecture. He also indicates (1969:11) that George Gilbert Scott referred to the term 'vernacular domestic architecture' as early as the mid nineteenth century but that the origin of the term is not clear. Two possibilities exist: the first is the French term *verna* which refers to a home-born slave and the second *vernaculus*, from the Latin, meaning 'native'. Although both terms are etymologically linked to ideas of language and have been uncomfortably adopted into architectural discourse, both have validity in the work of Fagan as they reflect a condition of domesticity, respond to local conditions and imply a link to nature<sup>72</sup>.

---

– <sup>71</sup> Fagan has three books by Oliver in his library at Die Es.'

– <sup>72</sup> It is interesting to note that the domestic architecture of Fagan draws from the vernacular, while his commercial and institutional interventions rely more heavily on reinterpretations of modern architecture.

### 3.2.3. Approaches to the vernacular

In a very broad classification we observe two approaches to vernacularism: first is the conservative attitude and second, the interpretative attitude. While both kinds of vernacularism have the ideals of bringing a new and contemporary existence to vernacular forms and spatial arrangements, they differ in the way they treat technology and community (Ozkan, 1985; 2007:104).

Rapoport (2006:182) posits a similar distinction, closely related to the act of doing (a traditive approach), when he suggests that attitudes towards using vernacular architecture vary from learning by copying and learning by analysis. Curtis (1996:619) is more prescriptive:

To speak of inheriting and extending a tradition does not mean copying what has gone before, or enforcing stylistic norms. It rather implies the absorption of principles behind earlier solutions and their transformation to meet different conditions and fit new intentions.

'Learning by copying' tends towards a scenographic approach where formal qualities are privileged, while 'learning by analysis' extracts lessons and principles through environmental behaviour studies. Neither of Ozkan (1985; 2007:104) and Rapoport's (2006:182) distinct approaches to the use of the vernacular are satisfactory processes in their own right. The limitations of a formal expression freeze architecture and do not give it adequate currency, while a process of interpretation or analysis can abstract the architecture to such an extent that historic validity and meaning is lost. What is required is an attenuative approach that understands new circumstances and requirements, interprets the relevance of either polar approach and then effectively mediates between the two conditions.

Although the term 'vernacular' can be seen as static and formally directed, as applied to architecture it is not merely a monotonous response to local conditions. Rudofsky (1977:13) refers to this constancy as a possible weakness of the vernacular approach, but Rapoport (1969:4) has identified the vernacular process as

... one of models and adjustments or variations, and there is more individual variability and differentiation than in primitive buildings; it is the individual specimens that are modified and not the type. When a tradesman builds a farmhouse for a peasant, they both know the type in question, the form or model, and even the materials. What remains to be determined are the specifics – family requirements, size and relation to micro climate.

Fagan (1982a:2) agrees when describing pre-industrial building:

When great-grandfather wanted a house and hired a tradesman to assist with the building, they would walk to the site, look at the trees and the slope of the ground, at the view, also that the new house would not obstruct the view from Oom

Gysbert's house behind. They would then take a number of paces, take a stick and mark the plan of the new house out on the earth. Note that there was no need for great-grandfather to describe the type or model – both he and the tradesman knew the model.

Both descriptions illustrate that the vernacular as product is clearly understood in formal, material and contextual terms but that its interpretation is flexible. As requirements differ, so the model can be adapted. Vellinga (2006:88) indicates that

... the vernacular, in other words, needs to be de-reified. Rather than treating it as a category that consists of buildings that, as static objects, can be categorized in neat types and periods and that, concomitantly, may be more or less real or authentic depending on which type or period they belong to, the dynamic and processual nature of buildings, and the traditions they form part of, should be the starting point of analysis (Vellinga, 2006:81).

This suggests an interpretation of the vernacular that prevents it from being an outdated and irrelevant form of architecture and rather sees it as reflecting a regenerative intention. As Biermann points out:

This is of importance in assessing the contribution the past can make to our present day vernacular, as Mr. Revel Fox stressed in discussing the continuity of the tradition. The Cape architectural tradition was far richer and more complex than the surviving buildings (most houses) imply (Biermann, 1960:27).

It also shifts the emphasis from the term 'vernacular', as subject, to the term 'tradition' which implies, in its Latin etymology<sup>73</sup>, a process of handing down experiences and practices. 'Tradition' implies action and can be defined as a process of exchange and ongoing development. It is a more apt term to describe the dynamic nature of vernacular architectural responses, making its study relevant and valid.

Traditions can be seen as creative processes through which people, as active agents, interpret past knowledge and experiences to face the challenges and demands of the present (Asquith & Vellinga, 2006:7).

Canizaro (2007:27) quotes Giddens in his description of tradition.

[It is a] means of handling time and space, which inserts any particular activity or experience within the continuity of past, present and future.

Vellinga (2007:89) further elaborates on the processual nature of 'tradition' as a creative process through which knowledge is adapted and interpreted against the requirements of the present. Bronner (2006:25) concurs:

---

– <sup>73</sup> The Latin word *trado* means 'handing down'.

Tradition as an idea invites commentary and interpretation, and negotiation of allowable innovation, which might later become part of the dynamic of tradition.

Fagan also agrees with these approaches when he notes that

... a really thorough understanding of one's own vernacular architecture [is] an essential and also the soundest basis, for continuing creation (Fagan, 1985:2).

Once the act of tradition has run its course, a revised vernacular arises and the process continues, creating an architecture that is both of its time and reflective of time itself. Fagan's 1989 lecture on the vernacular is in fact entitled *Die toekoms van ons verlede* ["The future of our past"]. Authors such as Porter (2004:203) and Jencks (1977:96) have defined the traditive process that took place after the years of the Second World War (1939-1945) as neo-vernacular, suggesting that it is a vernacular that is subjected to an outside architectural style or design theory. This can be defined as a less spontaneous and more cerebral approach to the vernacular.

It is held that the use of models by craftsmen became less necessary as the development of scientific techniques enabled man to discover the general laws underlying the technical solutions of the pre-industrial age (Colquhoun, 1969:71).

Ozkan (1985; 2007:105) on the other hand, indicates that the term neo-vernacularism arises from an interpretative and not replicative form of vernacularism and "has emerged as an approach to bringing a new life to vernacular heritage for new and contemporary functions".

In any event, the traditive process is not only a resolution of the conflicts of constancy and change inherent in vernacular processes, but a strategy to allow the importance of the historical precedent to be retained and the necessities of modern life to be reflected. Rudofsky (1977:13) notes that a rigid definition of the vernacular "is so bound up with the essential indigenous character of the forms that any hints of imported techniques of building may invalidate them".

The following aspects can be said to define architecture as a vernacular response: firstly, a consistency of approach which results in recognisable form, use of technology and response to climate; secondly, a repetition of approach (which establishes a tradition) and thirdly, a development of the approach through a shift in influence, due to external or internal forces. The latter aspect could be a creative reaction on the part of the receiver (designer or builder), or an external influence, such as the arrival of a new group of people with different cultural practices, new functional requirements or changes in technology. As Fisher points out (1998:123), a change in any of these circumstances will foster a variation in architectural response.

If we understand the etymology of the meaning of the term 'tradition' as being a process of 'handing down', then we need to, firstly, identify the relevance and content of that which is being

handed down; secondly, how this transfer occurs and thirdly, how the information is received and interpreted. The next sections will investigate the vernacular in South Africa, particularly in the Cape region, what approaches have been taken, and how Fagan has understood and interpreted the process of 'handing down'.

#### 3.2.4. South African inherited vernaculars

Picture a Cape Dutch farmhouse [see Fig. 3.1]. Thatch and whitewash. Oak trees screening the open *stoep* [terrace]. Then wide, green doors, windows delightfully proportioned, and great tiles covering the floors. There is nothing inconsequent about these elements, these materials. They arose from a divine instinct for what is good, from a sure knowledge of the fundamentals of fine building. Architects today build houses in the "Dutch style". They must be Dutch, for they possess gables, they have stable doors. But thatch is not a practicable material. They use corrugated iron. They forget to plant the oaks. Granolithic is cheaper than tiles, asbestos replaces yellow wood and teak for ceilings, and so the cutting down goes on. The resultant house is a poor shallow thing compared with its predecessors. It does not resemble the latter even in spirit, certainly not in the letter. No, the lesson we learn from the old houses at the Cape is not so obvious. There is something more significant in studying the subtleties of a gable, than one would at first suppose. If we are not to abuse the privilege of study, we must not regard the gable as something 'to be worked into a design' at the earliest opportunity. Our approach should be from quite a different angle. There are certain qualities in the form of the gable, certain effects of light and shade, of texture and of modelling, which please us. By close examination and the drawing out of these forms we can see exactly what it is that satisfies us aesthetically (Martienssen, 1928:1).



**Figure 3.1.** Boschendal, Stellenbosch, Cape Town. One of the oldest Cape farmhouses, first settled in 1685 and restored by the Fagans in 1973 (Author, 2007).

South African architecture has been characterised by colonial influences which have, to a large extent, been tempered by climatic, constructional and cultural circumstances. The original indigenous settlements that created a zero vernacular (Fisher, 2003:123) were subsumed in the successive waves of colonialism that swept across the country for the next 300 years, resulting in Dutch<sup>74</sup> and English adaptations and later Neoclassical and Arts and Crafts manipulations.

The architect and historian Doreen Greig<sup>75</sup> (1971:17) (1943-) identifies three distinct vernacular periods in the development of architecture in South Africa, of which the first was the Dutch influence, later referred to as the Cape Dutch vernacular. Greig (1971:18) suggests that it synergised European, colonial and Eastern traditions with the local context. The second vernacular was a Georgian influence brought to the country by the 1820 Settlers which extended the first vernacular through the importation of classical features from pattern books. The inherited architecture was adapted by craftsmen through the use of local materials. The third, unconnected, vernacular occurred in Natal, where the use of red bricks influenced and adapted the British Victorian style.

In contrast to Greig's definition of a third vernacular, Fisher (1998:123) suggests that a third vernacular arose in Pretoria during the 1930s and 1940s. Here a short-lived burst of classical Modern Movement architecture shifted towards a more place-specific architecture, and after the Brazil Builds Exposition and the publication of a related book, the city of Pretoria underwent a regional shift in its architecture. This reflected

... a particular response to nature and landscape through the economical use of naturally available and industrially produced materials with an empirical response to climate, all of which tempered the emergent tenets of the Modern (Fisher, 1998:123).

A qualifying term is needed to understand the architecture that resulted from a colonialist occupation. Influences were brought by craftsmen to a new country where their constructional and formal knowledge was manipulated to suit the local availability of materials and climatic constraints. This can be seen as an *inherited vernacular* finding new meaning in a new context, as it reacted in dynamic ways and established ways of building that would influence architecture for many decades thereafter. Thus new vernaculars to emulate and interpret were effectively established.

If one accepts the definition of a vernacular as the result of a traditive process, then a formal lineage needs to be visible, with a consistency of context as a necessary prerequisite. Greig (1971:17) speaks of "belonging to a certain region as a requirement for a vernacular to exist".

---

– <sup>74</sup> Fagan (1977b:5) notes that the Dutch were also influenced by the Portuguese.

– <sup>75</sup> See Appendix J.

### 3.2.5. A redefinition of inherited vernaculars in South Africa

It can be argued that a more consistent vernacular lineage is to be found in the Cape region of South Africa, more so than that which existed in any other province in South Africa. It is possible then to contest and redefine Greig's and Fisher's classification of a third vernacular in Natal and Pretoria to align with developments in the Cape. Greig's (1971:17-18) classification of a third vernacular in Natal may be chronologically correct but it creates confusion in relation to the definition of her first two vernaculars. She describes these as building on one another in similar contexts. Although Greig's argument for regional consistency in determining a vernacular is relevant to the uniformity of architecture produced in Natal, her numbered classification does not support a lineage in vernacular development. A Natal vernacular would have been a more apt description.

Fisher suggests that the repetitious nature of the particular regionalist style that developed in the Pretoria region turned it into a vernacular. But the lineage of his definition of a third vernacular is not a continuous one and was largely born from an understanding of the climate of the Transvaal and adaptations of the pyramid-roofed houses of the time (Fisher, 1998:124). If one accepts the definition of a vernacular as posited earlier, then there is little supporting lineage to link it to Greig's first two vernacular definitions. Fassler's<sup>76</sup> (1910-1971) (1957:22) reference to a Transvaal vernacular<sup>77</sup> suggests a term more suited to the local context and the influence of Brazilian Modernism.

Although Fagan may have been educated in the Transvaal, it was the regionalist Modern Movement leanings of the Pretoria architectural course and not the local vernacular that influenced him. Fagan (2008d) has remarked that the amorphous shapes of Karel Jooste's<sup>78</sup> (1925-1971) 1950s and 1960s houses were appropriate for the spaces under the Mopani trees, but that the Cape called for singular object buildings. He further notes that

... although privileged to have personally known and learnt from architects like Gordon McIntosh<sup>79</sup>, Hellmut Stauch, and Norman Eaton, rather than identify myself with the latter's Zimbabwe-like vision of an organic African architecture, I sensed my home to be rather in the Cape, mellowed by centuries of European culture, which had produced an architecture of which Eaton himself believed that "the aesthetic pinnacle reached by this Cape Dutch work, in and of its own time and country" would never be exceeded (Fagan, 1983b:3).

The lineage of the vernacular in the Cape region of South Africa displays greater consistency in

---

– <sup>76</sup> See Appendix J.

– <sup>77</sup> See the end of Chapter 4.3.5 for supporting definitions.

– <sup>78</sup> See Appendix J.

– <sup>79</sup> See Appendix J.

terms of architectural form, response to context and tectonic tradition.

[The] basic element of South African colonial architecture is a broad, freestanding, single-story building only one room in depth. The high thatched roof is framed by parapet gables, its dark tone forming a strong contrast to the whitewashed walls (Van der Meulen, 1963:52) (see Fig. 3.2).



**Figure 3.2. Top:** Vernacular houses in Velorenvlei photographed in June 1972 (Fagan slide archive EM, undated). **Bottom:** Plan, section and axonometric of typical 19th-century vernacular dwelling in Struisbaai, Southern Cape (Japha, 1997:2159).

The Cape initially hosted the inherited vernacular (first vernacular according to Greig) of the Dutch/German rural tradition, which took on a limited influence of the Khoi-Khoi (a zero vernacular according to Fisher), through, for example, the adaptation of the reeded roofs such as those extant at Puntjie in the Cape (Fisher, 1997) (see Fig. 3.3). Fagan agrees that the roots of the Cape vernacular come from a common heritage but denies<sup>80</sup> any local influence.

Whereas the architecture brought to the Cape by the Dutch and subsequently by the English shared common European roots (it would take a knowledgeable person to distinguish a Cape Dutch town house from a later English Georgian one), neither had much in common with the Khoi reed shelters which the first settlers encountered here (Fagan, 1991a:2).

– <sup>80</sup> In an interview on 15 February 2012 Fagan reiterated this viewpoint quite vehemently. Although there may be no formal similarities between the local and inherited vernaculars, Fisher's argument is that local materials and the local inhabitants would have exerted some influence.

The origins of this vernacular are contested as being purely urban Dutch models and are probably more rural in nature and more influenced by a German lineage (Van der Meulen, 1963:51 and Japha, 1997:2150).



**Figure 3.3.** Houses at Puntjie in the Southern Cape (Fagan archive, undated).

In South African architecture there has been much speculation about the origin of Cape Architecture, with many writers, such as Sir Herbert Baker, Geoffrey Pearse, Hans Fransen, Mary Cook, Tremens Clefios and Jan Ploeger concentrating on tracing the lineage of the front and end gables to buildings in Holland. A notable exception was Jan van der Meulen who took cognisance of the typology of the house plan and other architectural features, as well as social considerations over a much wider geographical area (Prinsloo, 2000:147).

The vernacular architecture that ensued was informed by local materials and the skills of the settlers (Prinsloo, 2000:148). Fired bricks were available from 1654 onwards but their inferior quality required a lime plaster covering which was made from shell deposits discovered on Robben Island. The typology of these first dwellings reflected a simple rectangular building with central doorway (normally in the long side), shuttered windows flanking the front door, and a fireplace recessed at one end of the room (Prinsloo, 2000:148).

Later developments saw these linear buildings extended with access to other rooms from the central "voorhuis" or front room. T, I and U plans followed (see Fig. 3.4), all extensions of the simple linear form.

The climatic conditions of the Cape varied considerably from those of the land of origin of the settlers, a fact which also produced variations in their architecture. A brilliant sunshine all the year round with but little rain except in winter necessitated the employment of large, airy and lofty rooms covered with heavy roofs designed to keep the rooms cool, and shuttered windows which effectively kept out the heat during the day. Also, as a good deal of time was spent in the open air, the ample stoeps shaded by great oaks, and the enclosed courts, often covered with a trellised vine, were indispensable adjuncts to every home (Pearse, 1968:7).

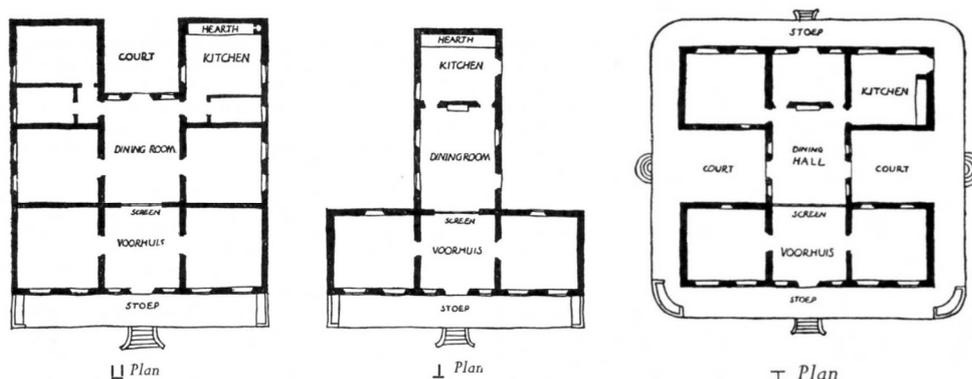


Figure 3.4. U, T and H plan types (De Bosdari, 1971:19).

The second Cape vernacular arose from the Georgian influence that transformed the first vernacular into a new, yet recognizable and climatically suitable formal architecture. Lewcock (1960:28), however, suggests that the British influence was changing the architectural patterns of the Dutch at least 25 years before 1820 while Cape Dutch homesteads were still being built. In any event, the arrival of the British certainly adapted Dutch influences (Anon, 1970:521). The planning and internal and external details of their houses were 'British' in character (see Fig. 3.5), but the block form was typical of the Cape (Japha et al, 1997:2157).

Between 1840 and 1885 British influence and the Cape tradition were combined to produce distinctive hybrid vernacular buildings ... the buildings of the more prosperous – the majority of surviving houses – brought together the block forms and building methods of the Cape with plan forms, building elements and details derived from British immigrant influence, pattern books and the work of British craftsmen. In general, 18th century building types continued to provide the models for these buildings (Japha, 1997:2159).

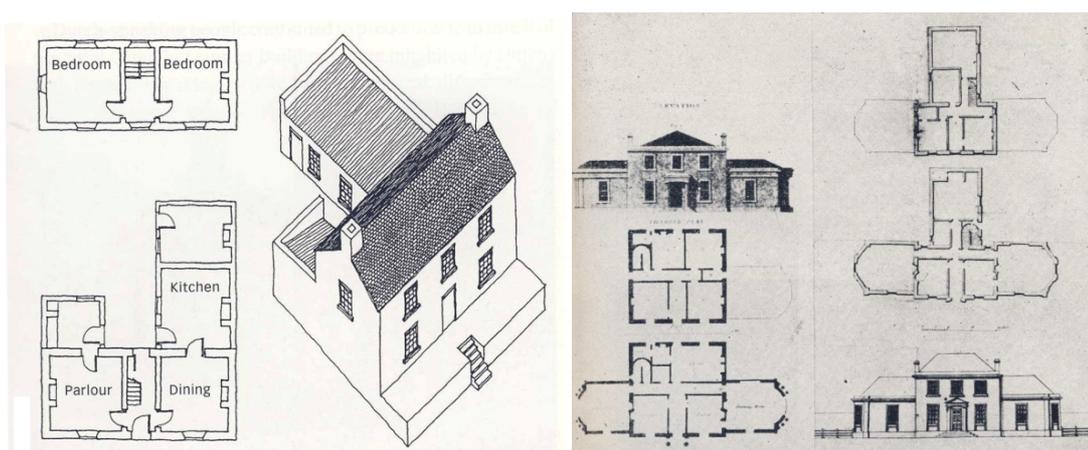


Figure 3.5. Left: Plan and axonometric of typical double-storey slate roofed Eastern Cape settler house showing central passageway (Japha, 1997:2157). Right: The influence of Nicholson's "Practical Builder" published in 1820 (on the left) can be seen in the design of the Dutch Reformed Parsonage in Worcester in 1824 (on the right) (Lewcock, 1960:31).

Derek and Vivienne Japha<sup>81</sup> (1997:2159) further suggest that the 18th century single banked T- and H-plan block buildings were modified to two room deep rectangular plans. Buildings became more vertical and windows were set back in the walls (Gledhill, 1971:2).

British houses at the Cape had halls and passages ... plans with passages had already been introduced before British rule; but they were not common then, and the subsequent popularity of passage plans in the houses of all groups at the Cape was largely the result of British influence (Japha, 1997:2156).

A third Cape vernacular was formed through the Arts and Crafts<sup>82</sup> influence of Baker, which already had its roots in a British and European vernacular approach.

The history of late Victorian and Edwardian architecture in Britain has been described as 'being of great complexity, with waves of fashion and many cross-currents confusing the sequence of developments'. Through it all flowed the consistent search for this elusive, free 'modern vernacular', emerging as what was aptly named the Free Style. Although the term was meant to be applied to architecture in a new style appropriate to its time, it was also used to describe any building which used a free treatment of an historical style or combination of styles – even a free vernacular style. As Hermann Muthesius, author of *Das Englische Haus* (1904-5) found when he tried to characterize 'the exemplary qualities of the English house', the qualities he admired most were not based on style but arose from the restraint and 'honesty' derived from the most simple vernacular buildings (Keath, 1994:12).

The resulting 'Baker School'<sup>83</sup> (often referred to as Cape Dutch revival) further extended the Cape architectural traditions, albeit in a more structured and architecturally designed manner (see Fig. 3.6). Prinsloo (2000:123), Joubert (2009:9) and Greig (1970:58) note that Baker synthesised the Cape vernacular into a classical eclectic approach. Chipkin (2009:56) indicates that

... this had been rediscovered via Arts and Craft awareness of the robust simplicity of the original colonial culture at the Cape – weathered, imperfect, full of genuine foibles amongst the richly creative responses, possessing what Baker recognised as "gracefully curved gables and softly moulded enrichments". Rhodes' famous instructions to his architect, which ended with the words "I like teak and whitewash".

---

– <sup>81</sup> See Appendix J.

<sup>82</sup> "Charles F. A. Voysey summed up the qualities that should emerge from an honest response to the vernacular tradition beautifully: 'Try the effect of a well proportioned room, with whitewashed walls, plain carpets, and simple oak furniture, and nothing in it but necessary articles of use, and one pure ornament in the form of a simple vase of flowers' " (Gebhard, 1989; 2007:195).

– <sup>83</sup> Prof. Geoffrey Pearse, of the Department of Architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand, coined the term to describe those architects that had worked in the office of Baker or the Department of Public Works in the Transvaal and Free State after the Anglo Boer War of 1899-1902.

Greig also indicates that Baker was instrumental in spurring others on to preserve Cape vernacular buildings and that he used these buildings to create a revivalist architecture, while Fagan (1991b:8) notes that:

Baker fully identified himself with ... a truly South African architecture that would combine the best of the English and Cape Dutch traditions, use local materials and be suitable to our harsh climate.



**Figure 3.6.** **Left:** Entry courtyard to Baker's Westminster near Ladybrand in the Free State (Author, 2008). **Middle:** Groote Schuur restored by Baker for Cecil John Rhodes around 1892 (Picton-Seymour, 1989:40). **Right:** Baker's Rust en Vrede, Muizenberg, Cape Town (Picton-Seymour, 1989:173).

The advent of formalised training in architecture during this period changed the nature of the vernacular influence. Unconscious traditive processes began to give way to a more intellectual approach. Neoclassical tendencies were countered by the Arts and Crafts influence which, as a neo-vernacular<sup>84</sup>, was influenced by eclecticism rather than by an interrogation of the original first Cape vernacular.

Sir Herbert Baker, of course, at the beginning of the century drew attention to the quality of Cape buildings, emphasising particular aspects. This was later to degenerate in lesser hands to the indiscriminate use of the 'Cape Dutch gable' and linenfold detailing, to everything from small suburban houses, barely able to carry the weight of their overpowering gables, to railway stations, post offices and electrical substations (Munnik & Visser, 1965:36).

The degree to which each vernacular has built on that which preceded it, or whether its development in the Cape relied on a process of reinvestigation of the first vernacular, is a matter for debate. Lewcock (1963:IX) suggests that colonial architecture generally reflects a conglomeration of influences so that

... one cannot confidently pronounce a fine building as belonging to either a Cape or a British tradition, but must declare it the product of a new, 'South African' culture.

Of importance is the fact that a consistent vernacular lineage was established with subsequent vernaculars building on and extending preceding influences. The Japhas (1997:2151) explain

– <sup>84</sup> This definition suggests that a neo-vernacularism exists at any juncture that reacts against a particular architectural tendency, in this case to Neo-Classicism.

the similarities of the vernaculars:

A thatch cottage with side gables built in the mid 19th century by a mission inhabitant, a poor 1820 settler artisan, an inhabitant of a small Cape country town, or even a Voortrekker, differed little from buildings found in the Cape countryside 150 years earlier ... Plan types, room widths, construction methods and joinery patterns were repeated over a long period with little variation; only the forms of gables changed to reflect contemporary European fashion.

Cape based architects Munnik and Visser<sup>85</sup> (1965:36) describe the simplicity and honesty of the vernacular:

It is the simplicity of their form, usually a rectangle with a simple pitched roof and clipped eaves, inevitably painted white, which seems to fit so honestly the purpose for which they were built ... What undoubtedly appeals to the modern architect, being endlessly bombarded by gimmicky materials and ever rising costs, is the unpretentiousness and unifying effect of whitewash, and the simplicity and honesty of the structure.

### 3.2.6. The fourth vernacular

Houses designed by Pius Pahl, Revel Fox and Gawie Fagan during the 1950s and 1960s can be categorized as a fourth Cape vernacular. The architecture built on and extended the formal and technological legacy of the first three vernaculars. A consistency of approach to climate was developed through window wall proportions and technology. Simple white box forms were generated through the reinterpretation of local vernacular form, often with fireplaces as focal elements either externally or internally placed. Consistency in planning was achieved through functionalist organization that revealed efficient use of space, all influenced by Modern Movement tendencies and the attenuated plan of the vernacular long-house. A simple approach to technology emulated that of old and fostered an economy of means, most houses relying on white painted bagged or plastered brickwork with clay tile floors internally and simple pitched roofs. The design approaches were attenuative in that they all displayed a shift in formal influence that recognised principles and formal attributes of the vernacular while contextualizing Modern Movement attitudes to space making, technology and climatic response. This approach fostered a new way of making buildings that layered functional determinism on an established formal tradition. A new and fourth vernacular was born.

The houses of Fox and Pahl, together with those of many young architects sympathetic to their ideas are sufficiently consistent in approach to be recognisable as a Regional Style ... But while these are the physically recognisable elements, they are born of the desire to express some form of historical continuity, to build simply and in an uncomplicated way and to a certain degree, to protest against the

---

– <sup>85</sup> See Appendix J.

current tendency of wilful and meaningless design. In their pure form, with their raw brick or tiled floors, and roughly plastered white-washed walls and untreated pine ceilings, have a stark contrast and strength akin to Brutalism except that in the Mediterranean sunlight and profusion of flaming bougainvillea the 'kitchen-sink' aspect of Brutalism is overwhelmed by charm, for better or perhaps for worse (Munnik & Visser, 1965:36).

### **3.2.7. Fourth vernacular architects and their approaches**

#### **3.2.7.1. Revel Fox**

The last houses done at Worcester, and those he was doing in Cape Town, soon came to be known as 'Fox boxes' – they had flat roofs, quite diagrammatic plans, and incorporated timber-louvered screens. They had something of those Californian case study houses (which were to culminate in the Eames house at Santa Monica) and were also reminiscent of the old flat-roofed cottages of the Karoo (Guedes, 1998:34).

Fox's architectural education at the University of Cape Town under Pryce-Lewis, the valuable historical lessons taught and later learnt on the travels to Egypt and Italy during the Second World War (Fox, 1998:26), and his subsequent sojourn with wife and child to Scandinavia paved the way for an ordered, and perhaps Classical or canonical, response to the making of architecture. The Swedish classicist architecture of Ivar Tengboom<sup>86</sup> (1878-1968) (Gideon, 1971:623) was influential, as Fox worked with an architect from the foreign buildings operation of the US embassy whose unit was based in the offices of his son, Anders Tengboom (Fox, 1998:13).

On returning to South Africa, Fox quickly established a reputation as an avant-garde architect of outstanding sensitivity and skill in detailing in the small country town of Worcester in the Western Cape. Buildings like his courtyard house for the Wilson family (1954) and the Fox and Ross houses (1955) reflect contemporary Scandinavian concerns that architecture should establish continuity with the buildings around it, without compromising the goals of using appropriate, contemporary materials. This work exerted great influence on a whole generation of young architects (Lewcock, 1998:37).

Fox admitted that he struggled with design in his first few years at university, but the influences of Barrie Biermann as a classmate must have heightened his senses to the opportunities of the Cape vernacular. On his return to the university in 1946 after the war he received a modernist education from lecturers trained at the Architectural Association in London who were

---

– <sup>86</sup> See Appendix J.

themselves influenced by the teachings of the Bauhaus (Fox, 1998:26).

### 3.2.7.1.1. Approach

Fox mediates replicative and interpretative approaches in the design of his houses, relying on both first and second vernacular influences. Fox's approach to domestic architecture was informed by his willingness to establish a continuity with tradition. Reynolds (1998:39), who worked for Fox in his Worcester office, suggests that it was the simpler single pitched workers' houses that Fox found inspiration in, rather than the larger and more ostentatious homesteads of the area.

Jean Welz<sup>87</sup> (1900-1975) must have been influential in this regard, as Fox notes that he often visited the office, critiqued their designs and encouraged them to look closely at the vernacular architecture of the Boland (Anon, 1979:20; Fox, 1998:27). But underlying the yearning for a connection with place through tradition there exists a classical formalism in Fox's domestic architecture. There is little fluidity evident in form making or spatial organization. A grid-like structure orders the plans while the extremities of the box form are rigidly adhered to.

I would argue that in all of these lie the seeds of what is essentially a classical approach. The term classical is used here not in its historically allusive sense, the nudge-nudge, wink-wink of Postmodern quotation. It refers, rather, to a system of values governed by the Vitruvian model of a sensibility based on clarity, order and firmness which yields a measured quality of delight. The qualities of the classical are that its form is linear, planar and stable, and that it achieves its compositional goal of harmony through a system of repetitive, equally accented elements. I would argue that these are qualities to be found in the key buildings of Revel's early Cape Town years (Dubow, 1998:44).

Fox (1998:28) indicates that they created small houses due to tight budgets and it must have been the simplicity and economy of means of the local vernacular that was inspiring. The late Modern Scandinavian tendency for synergy between building and landscape was also instrumental in the forming of Fox's domestic architecture. Just as Aalto's work alternated between the extremes of National Romanticism and Romantic Classicism (Frampton, 1992b:193) so did Fox's, as it mediated between the simplicity of the Cape tradition and the canonical sophistication of the Modern Movement.

If the planning has not altered in any significant way, one must ask what the significance of the houses is? It is their continuation and enlargement on the best in the local traditions of domestic architecture, while remaining wholly within the contemporary idiom? This goes further than faithful observance of tradition, such

---

– <sup>87</sup> See Appendix J.

as white walls contrasted against dark oiled timber of doors and windows and the use of slatted shutters. The essence of this fidelity to tradition lies in questions of simplicity of form and material, of delicately poised proportions, and of honest answers to the specific and general claims of living and building (Lipman, 1962:19).

But it was the 'rightness' of the vernacular that inspired Fox. He notes (Anon, 1979:18) that "I think that when Jean Welz spoke of 'appropriateness' in architecture - just getting it right and avoiding serious mess-up, he summed up what I have been trying to do".

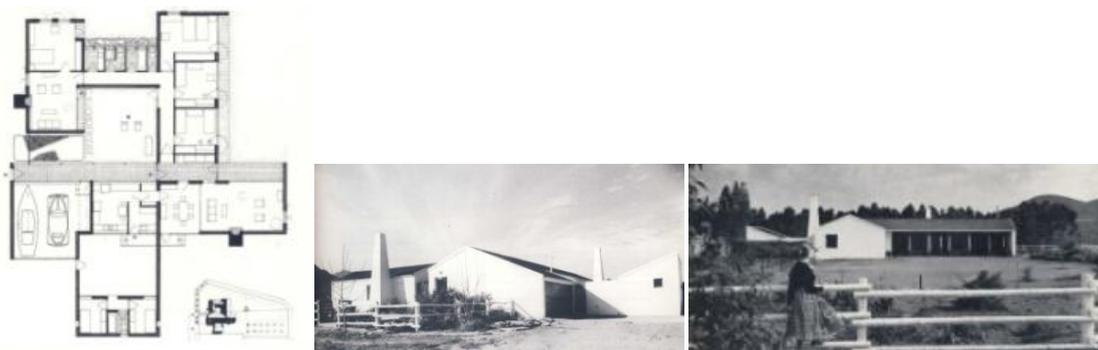
Fox's architecture after the Worcester period relied more heavily on the classicism of the Georgian or second vernacular.

### 3.2.7.1.2. The houses

House Wilson (1954) (see Fig. 3.7) is replicative of the vernacular in form and aesthetic as it relies on pitched roofs, distinctive chimney elements and small windows on approach edges. Although modern technologies were used to construct the house, white painted plastered walls and quarry tile floors reflect traditional approaches.

Revel's architecture was about putting together Scandinavian Modernism and the tectonics of traditional Cape building (Beinhart, 1998:42).

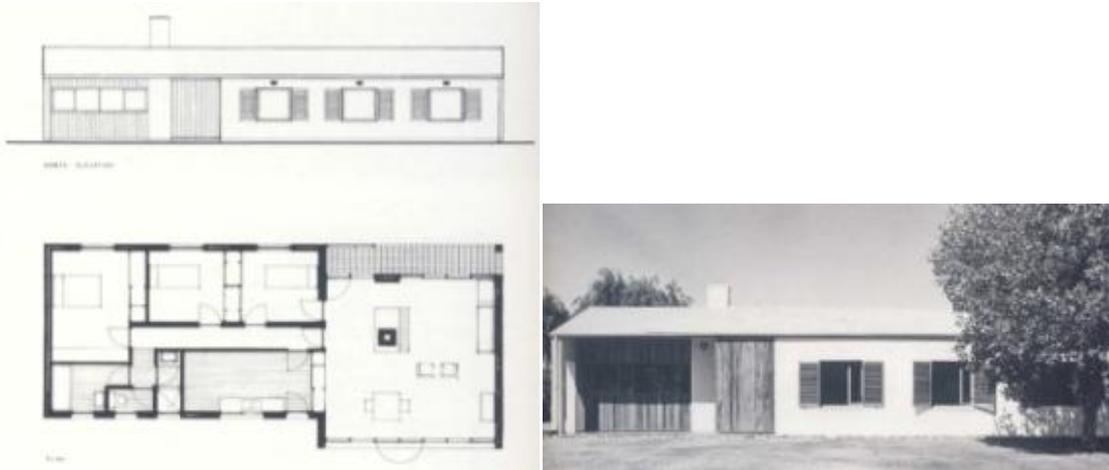
Interpretation is reflected in the functional organization, the definition of a court space by four boxes (which reflect a closure of the traditional H plan) and the reliance on large glazed openings to the rear edges for sunlight and view.



**Figure 3.7.** Left: Plan of House Wilson (1955), Worcester, Western Cape (Fox,1998:80). Middle: Front view (Fox,1998:81). Right: Garden view to House Wilson (Architect and Builder, April, 1958:45).

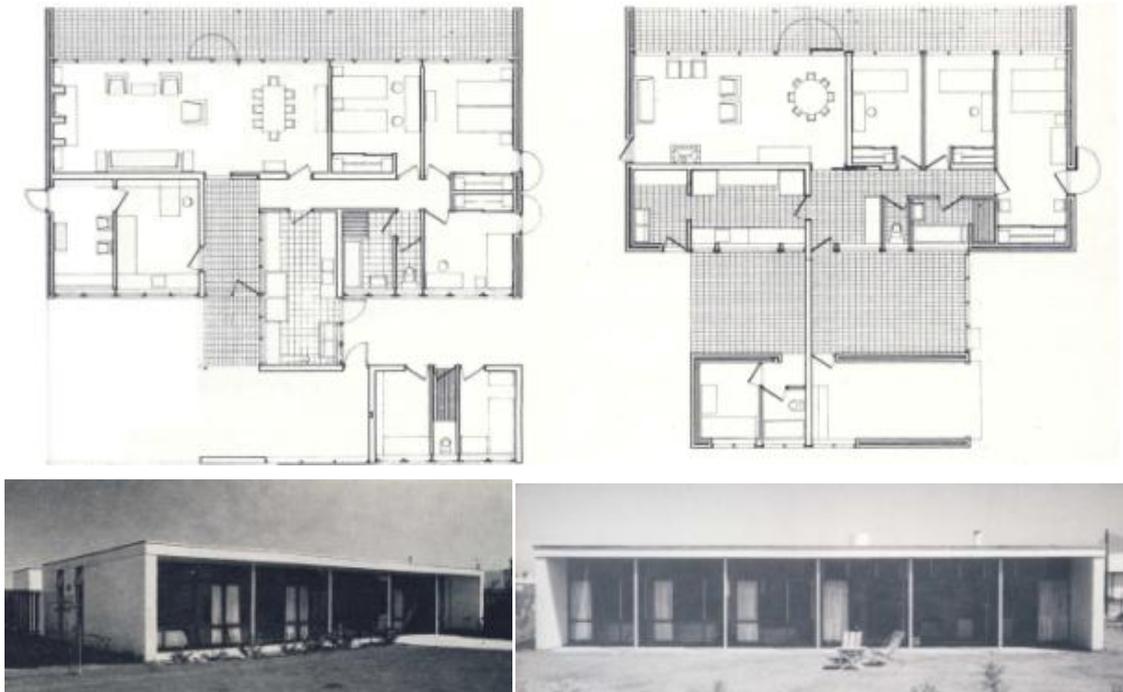
House Droomer (1955) (see Fig. 3.8) is replicative in its interpretation of the single double pitched roof and shuttered windows, but the functional organization of the Modern Movement is evident in the served and servant approach, allowing a northerly orientation for bedrooms and

living spaces. The introduction of timber clad walls refers to a Scandinavian tradition, reminiscent of Alvar Aalto's Villa Mairea, while the simplicity and internalization of the chimney express a shift from the vernacular tradition.



**Figure 3.8.** Left: Elevation and plan of House Droomer, Worcester, Western Cape (1955) (Fox,1998:84). Right: Garden view to House Droomer (Fox,1998:85).

In stark contrast, Houses Fox and Ross (1955) (see Fig. 3.9) are interpretative as they rely on a Modern Movement approach to both function and form. On approach, two parallel box forms with flat roofs are defined by solid walls with few punctures and contrasting floor to ceiling glazing on opposing edges. An uncompromising attitude to functional organization reinforces the Modern Movement served and servant relationship while simplicity of form and technology pay homage to the vernacular.





**Figure 3.9. Previous page and this page left:** Plan of and garden and entrance views to House Ross, Worcester, Western Cape (1955) (Fox, 1998:83) and Architect and Builder, April, 1958:46). **Previous page and this page right:** Plan of and garden and entrance views to House Fox, Worcester, Western Cape (1955) (Architect and Builder, April, 1958:42-45).

The early Worcester houses – strong, simple forms in a stark landscape – were seminal. Fox feels that the first time he really came to terms with domestic design was with House Wilson (1954), and the concepts embodied in that building have permeated much of his subsequent work. The elements were simple: a tight skin, clipped eaves, small shuttered windows or recessed glass walls, simple pitched roofs (there were also some flat-roofed examples more suggestive of the pure 'Fox box'), an atrium plan, brick-paved surfaces, pergolas supporting deciduous climbers and ubiquitous white walls. There was nothing very innovative or original, but in this particular combination – informed by the Bauhaus, Sweden and Cape vernacular – the houses represented a new yet old image in the Western Cape. This aesthetic was not very popular in Worcester, perhaps because it resembled too closely that of the simple farm outbuildings of the area. But Fox had made his mark (Fox, 1998:13).

An interpretative design approach is used in Houses Fox and Ross and is extended in the 1959 House Giannelos in Camps Bay, where an ordered concrete frame system is used to deal with the steeply sloping site. Fox (1998:90) indicates that the proportions were based on the classical system of a square within a semi-circle, illustrating a synergy between the canons of Modern Movement space making and Classicist attitudes to form. Fox's houses after 1960 seem to shift influence to Modern Movement or Scandinavian (Aaltoesque) form, such as houses Vlok in 1963 and Fisher and Faure in 1967, which rely on internal and external finishes to achieve traditional connection. House Faure's box-like forms with roofs hidden behind parapets bear a striking resemblance to the 1930 Rothenberg House in Copenhagen (see Fig. 3.10) by Arne Jacobsen<sup>88</sup> (1902-1971).

---

– <sup>88</sup> See Appendix J.



**Figure 3.10. Left:** Rothemborg House (1930) in Clampenborg, Copenhagen by Arne Jacobsen (De Corral, 1995:30). **Right:** Front view of House Faure, Bloubergstrand, Cape Town (1967) by Fox (Fox, 1998:109).

Interspersed with the houses were larger commissions such as the Deanery in 1960, where Fox relies less on the first Cape vernacular and more on Georgian manipulations (second Cape vernacular), due perhaps to the influence of the City Bowl context.

### 3.2.7.2. Pius Pahl

In 2001, Pius Edmund Pahl (1909-2003) received a Gold Medal from the South African Institute of Architects (SAIA) for his dedication to architecture and the wise and exemplary models he produced. At a ceremony to award Pahl Life Membership of the SAIA in 1987, Kench (1988:43) described the scene as follows:

Around the walls of the gallery were plans and photographs of Pahl's most important work in South Africa. Covering his career since his arrival in the country in the 1950's, they were an eloquent visual summary of the architect's creative maturity. Dominated especially by his houses in the Stellenbosch area, the images are elegant, 'complex but not complicated', harmoniously blending brick, wood, steel and glass. They are also perfectly atuned (sic) to the landscape of which they are a part.

Pahl trained at the Bauhaus in Dessau from 1930 onwards. The school had shifted from a theory, design and craft bias to a more technological and functional education. Pahl's influences were driven initially by the rationality of Hannes Meyer's<sup>89</sup> (1889-1954) functionalism exhibited through grid-ordered designs, glass curtain walls, flat concrete roofs and stucco finishes. This formal rigidity was furthered by the town planning schemes implemented under the guidance of Hilberseimer<sup>90</sup> (1885-1967) (Anon, 1998:19). But Tzonis (2003:41) notes that a regionalist inflection had begun to appear in Hilbersheimer in the early 1930s and this must have sensitised the young Pahl to issues of place. From his fourth semester he was taught by Mies

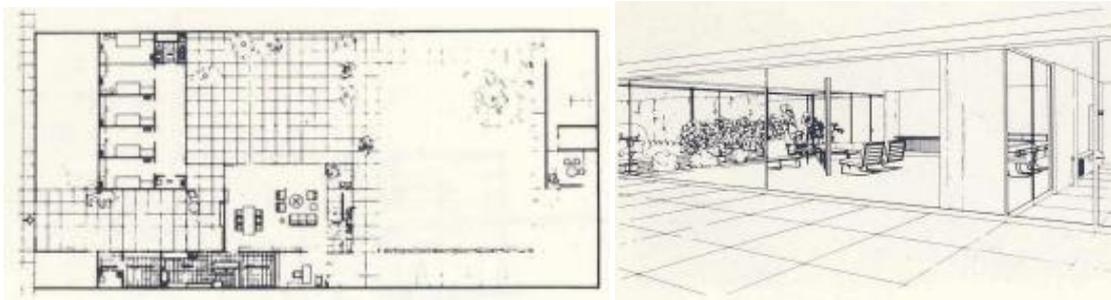
---

– <sup>89</sup> See Appendix J.

– <sup>90</sup> See Appendix J.

van der Rohe<sup>91</sup> (1886-1969) and the earlier rationality gave way to a freer expression with concentration on the unification of internal and external spaces (see Fig. 3.11).

Mies' Farnsworth house (1946) as well as the Tugendhat house (1930), find expression in Pahl's housing studies under Mies. Student studies of housing in walled courts (1931) were concurrent with similar projects that Mies was working on at the time. These houses were wholly bound by their rectangular frame with spatial continuity inside interrupted by carefully placed glass and solid walls, and partially roofed over courts. Influences of Corbusian form and the five points of Modern Architecture can be detected in his final project, "Haus am Gardasee" (1932) (Anon, 1998:19).



**Figure 3.11.** Left: House Dessau (1930s) plan. Right: House Dessau perspective (both UIA International, 1985:60).

Pahl received many prizes for his work and finished his studies with Bauhaus Diploma no. 88 in 1933 (Kench, 1988:44). In *Bauhaus 1919-1933: Workshops for Modernity*, Bergdoll and Dickerman (2009:208) note that his student work integrated furnishings, building and landscape in simple and economical ways, attributes that found a suitable home in the vernacular of the Stellenbosch region that he was to eventually work in.

Like Mies, he incorporated curtains to shield his glass walls and groupings of furniture (designed by Mies with Milly Reich) to define activity areas within the flowing open spaces. His delicate drawings reveal dexterity in handling a formal repertoire that went beyond Mies's own distilled language emulating, alternatively, Le Corbusier's plasticity (a beach house of 1932-33 has pilotis, strip windows and roof terrace) or Hilbersheimer's (sic) rationalism (Bergdoll & Dickerman, 2009:208).

It is this mediation between plasticity and purity of form that can be seen in the later South African work. After completion of his studies he undertook a study tour to Switzerland, Italy and Tunisia (Bergdoll & Dickerman, 2009:208) and then worked for a number of years with state and private practices in Switzerland and Germany, designing several industrial complexes. In the spring of 1952, Pahl and his Cape Town born wife and their five children immigrated to South Africa, settling in the Stellenbosch area. Here a purist Modern Movement training and work experience were tempered in the new setting through an appreciation of place and available materials.

— <sup>91</sup> See Appendix J.

Pahl himself said that the fundamental tenets of the Modern Movement, as he knew them, transcend fashion and style and that adaptation to local climate, lifestyle and available technology are all that is necessary by way of change and development (Floyd, 1985:60).

#### **3.2.7.2.1. Approach to the vernacular**

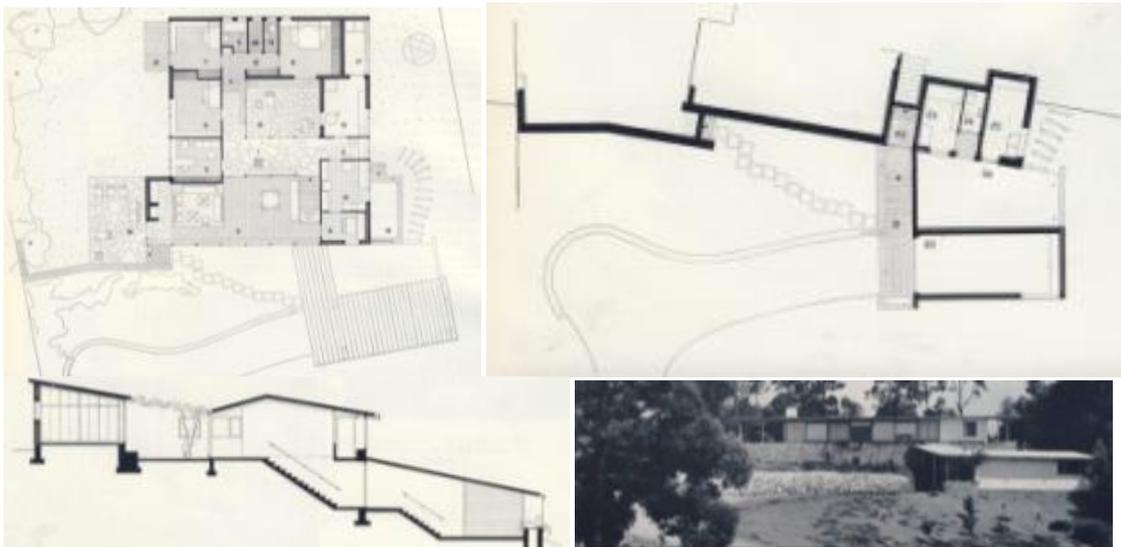
Here is the spirit both of the craftsman and of the conscious artist, sensitive to the lie of the site, to the effects of light and shadow, and to the three-dimensionality of a building. He has a strong sense of architecture as sculpture, feeling that a building, like a sculpture, should be approachable from all angles (Kench, 1988:45).

It was possibly advantageous that Pahl arrived in the Cape later in his career. His German training and work experience had engrained in him a functionalist and spatially open language. He was probably fortunate, too, to not have been previously exposed to the local Cape vernacular and thus approached it with circumspection, appreciating its qualitative nature and contextual appropriateness. Pahl's approach to the vernacular is mainly interpretative as there are few, if any, replicative elements to be found in his houses. He relied on a response to climate and setting and the use of materials such as white painted walls, brick floors and timber pergolas. It was possibly Pahl's pre-Bauhaus training as a craftsman that fostered this technological affinity. The response to the vernacular is also more experiential and focuses attention on relationships to view and solar orientation and the development of thresholds between inside and outside. These are possibly the result of a synergy between the tenets of the Modern Movement and the influence of the vine-covered pergolas common in Stellenbosch. Pahl furthers his European mediation between plasticity (here perhaps a combination of Le Corbusier's work and the first Cape vernacular) and the purist aspects of the Modern Movement such as the structural grid and economies of planning. He also furthers his exploration in the courtyard house typology very similar to the Fox explorations in Worcester. But the formal restraints of his education proved limiting in his three dimensional exploration, as little volumetric expression is evident in most of the houses.

#### **3.2.7.2.2. The houses**

Thirty years ago, Stellenbosch was a charming country town, where modern architecture was almost unknown. Old Cape Dutch and Victorian buildings set the style of the place. Pahl soon demonstrated that his kind of architecture was equally suited for this old-world setting. Among his early projects was the restoration in 1959 of an old Cape Dutch house, Brandwacht. Here he restored the outside, but introduced a distinctive modern note into the interior (Kench, 1998:45).

One of Pahl's first houses (see Fig. 3.12), in Krigeville in Stellenbosch for Professor Trumpelman and his wife (an author and ceramicist respectively), is an eclectic combination of an ordered courtyard plan (no doubt a further exploration of Pahl's student work and a reinterpretation of the local vernacular) and a Miesian continuity of space with the partial containedness of the Cape vernacular. This was probably also an extension of Pahl's student work where he balanced contained and lightly framed spaces. It relies heavily on the experiential approach from below turning the viewer through one hundred and eighty degrees to expose the panoramic view of the mountain.

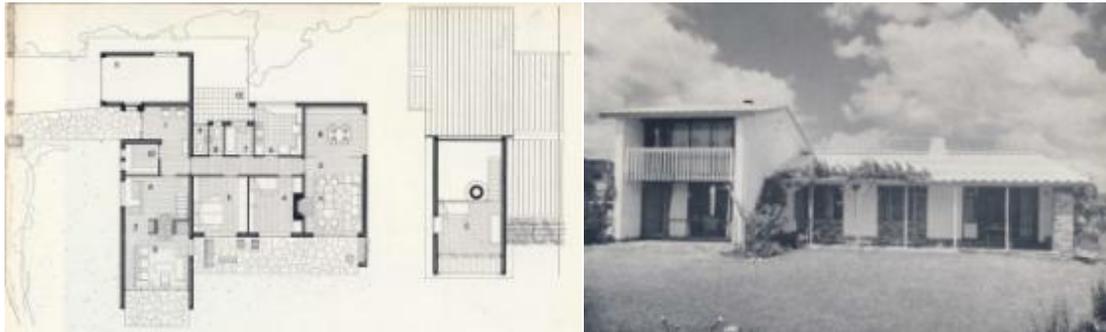


**Figure 3.12.** Top: House Trumpelman, Krigeville, Stellenbosch, 1954, ground floor and lower ground floor plans. Bottom: Section and view from the garden below (all Architect and Builder, V8.1, January 1958:38-42).

The front-stoep-backyard concept has always been stronger in South Africa than that of the courtyard, though a few notable examples of courtyards are to be seen in town and country houses in the Cape and in indigenous African architecture (Lennard, 1965:15).

The steeply sloping site with views to the north called for the house to be placed high up. The form of the building plays on the tectonic frame raised on a stereotomic brick platform. The design is interpretative in its relationship to the vernacular, relying on a lighter tectonic and more open quality to the courtyard plan to establish a greater synergy with the landscape. It is also reminiscent of Fox's House Wilson of 1954 but freer and lighter in its interpretation. The slightly pitched roofs hover between those of the local vernacular and Miesian flat roofs, and it is one of the few houses where Pahl shifts from the monotony of a single volume. Walls are white painted plastered brickwork and the balance of wall and window openings refer to that of the old.

House Verreweide<sup>92</sup>, also in Stellenbosch (see Fig. 3.13), is a restrained design that required a combination of two living units. A limited interpretative approach is taken to the vernacular mainly in terms of materials and finishes and the simple double pitch roof. The northerly orientation allows for adequate solar gain and the roof edge is broken open at times to create a pergola type structure. This element was developed in later houses to emulate that of the old vine covered pergolas of the vernacular within a Miesian language. The main living area with its slanted edge walls is reminiscent of Fagan's Keurbos house where a continuity of space is achieved between inside and outside, counterbalanced by the more solid bedroom walls



**Figure 3.13.** Left: House Malan, Stellenbosch, c.1958, plan. Right: View from the garden (all Architect and Builder, January 1958:45-47).

Built in 1965, House Malan in Parow North, Cape Town (see Fig. 3.14), relies on an interpretative understanding of the Cape vernacular through its tectonic qualities framed within a Miesian structural logic. Pahl further develops his student inspired courtyard plan and fuses a light framed Modern Movement aesthetic with the stereotomic nature of the Cape wall to define private zones. Bagged and painted brickwork is used to emulate the textural qualities of Cape walls. Modern Movement principles are applied through a fusion of inside and outside spaces, and the Cape pergola tradition is reinterpreted in the extensive partly covered terraces to both front and rear. The sloping site provides opportunities for extensive views and a reduction in building volume to foster a close connection with the singular formal nature of the vernacular tradition.



**Figure 3.14.** Plan and street elevation, courtyard house, Parow North (Architect and Builder, January 1965:17).

– <sup>92</sup> This house was unfortunately demolished in 2011.

### 3.2.7.3. Other architects

The influence of the inherited Cape vernacular was extended to the work of other local architects (see Fig. 3.15):

In Cape Town, Revel Fox, Michael Munnik and others, investigating their Cape Dutch heritage, have maintained the materials and proportions of that era within the context of Twentieth Century home building (Teeger, 1965:7).

Sam Abramson<sup>93</sup>, Mike Munnik, Colyn and Meiring, Naudé, Papendorf, Van der Merwe and Meyer, with Adèle-Marie Naudé (later Naudé Santos) were influenced by the Cape vernacular and extended the tectonic tradition. The 1974 Newlands house by Julian Elliott similarly expresses the painted brickwork tradition. Even a 1982 house in Harare by UCT-trained Keith Murray<sup>94</sup> (1946-) exhibits tectonic similarities.



---

– <sup>93</sup> Fagan notes (2010a) that Sam was, in his view, one of the few architects in Cape Town working in a similar architectural idiom.

– <sup>94</sup> See Appendix J.



**Figure 3.15. Previous page:** House Abramson, Newlands, Cape Town (Sam Abramson architect), south east view (Wale, c.1964:103). **Top left:** House Naudé, Kenilworth, Cape Town (Naudé, Papendorf, Van der Merwe and Meyer with Adèle-Marie Naudé), south-west facade (Architect and Builder, April 1967:9). **Top right:** House, Durbanville, Cape Town, (Colyn and Meiring), street view (Architect and Builder, July 1962:12). **Bottom left:** House Buurman, Belville, Cape Town, (Colyn and Meiring), north view (Architect and Builder, April 1964:8). **Bottom middle:** House, St. James, Cape Town (Munnik Visser), entrance courtyard (Architect and Builder, April, 1962:10). **Bottom right:** House Elliot, Newlands, Cape Town (Julian Elliot architect), exterior and interior views (Architecture South Africa, March/April 2003:cover and 8).

Clive Chipkin (1993:294) notes that a particular domestic vernacular architecture began to appear in the Johannesburg suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s.

Interior walls are bagged with a granular texture or left in clinker brick or in earth-bound fair-face walling, sometimes painted startling white in the interiors. Plaster is a less frequent option, despite the fact that South Africa has a long plaster tradition for overlaying rough-and-ready building work. Living areas are paved with red or dark quarry tile laid in a square pattern or in brick stretcher bond, or they may be in square-cut slate flags or in paving brick ... Large glazed sliding doors open out onto patios (Chipkin, 1993:295).

Although this architecture bore many similarities to a Pretoria regional aesthetic through the use of simple forms and materials (particularly the quarry tiled floors and white painted, bagged brickwork walls) it must have, to some extent, been influenced by the work of Baker and later Eaton. Other influences were a mediated modernist education (tempered by its Corbusian Mediterranean leanings) and the work of Niemeyer. Chipkin (1993:297) notes that Donald Turgel who trained in the modernist style under Martienssen at Wits, spent three years in Morocco after a London sojourn and on returning to South Africa named his first house Marrakesh. Turgel noted that there was no direct copying but that “the style is developed according to the dictates of our sunny climate and the want of South Africans for a great deal of comfortable outdoor living” (Chipkin, 1993:298).

Norman Eaton imbued many of his buildings, such as the Van Wouw (1937) and Anderssen houses (1949-50) in Pretoria, with an internal Cape aesthetic<sup>95</sup>, possibly fostered through his high school education in the Cape, his university field trip to measure up old Cape buildings with prof. Geoffrey Pearse<sup>96</sup> (1885-1968) and his association with Baker. Eaton believed that

... a distinctive contemporary South African architectural idiom can again be achieved, as had been the case in 18th and 19th century Cape Dutch architecture. The essence of this new architecture will be an understanding and appreciation of the underlying principle of Cape Dutch architecture ... (Du Toit, 1983:49).

University of Cape Town trained architects (see Fig. 3.16) furthered the aesthetic of the Cape tradition in other contexts around the country. Barrie Biermann's own house displays a masterful eclectic synergy between the plasticity and tectonic of the Cape vernacular, Modern Movement open planning, and the Durban climate. Through his role as lecturer at the University of Natal he fostered a large group of sympathetic contextualists who were equally inspired by Brazilian modernism. Hans Hallen<sup>97</sup> and Danie Theron, as well as Paul Mikula<sup>98</sup>, all exhibit the tectonic and plastic quality of the Cape vernacular walls in their work. Fagan (2008) notes the aesthetic emphasis of Cape architecture in Biermann's work:

The white walled aesthetic was after all the typical Cape way of building, but its use in the hot and humid Natal climate, where mass is probably a disadvantage, was presumably a stylistic choice. I am not sufficiently familiar with the Natal work to judge, but do remember that Biermann's own house, although employing white walls, was virtually a ventilating breezeway, in essence very different to the Cape.

The architecture had its inheritance in the necessity for simplicity of form and economy of means, but it must also have been influenced by external sources such as Corbusian Mediterraneanism, and the influence of Biermann's trips to South America and the Modernist adaptations that were taking place there.



---

– <sup>95</sup> McTeague (1983:47) describes Eaton's use of the small paned window and triple shutter as a Cape reference.

– <sup>96</sup> See Appendix J.

– <sup>97</sup> See Appendix J.

– <sup>98</sup> See Appendix J.



**Figure 3.16. Previous page left:** Anderssen House (1949), Pretoria, Norman Eaton architect (UJA International, 1985:22). **Previous page right:** House Biermann (1962) Barrie Biermann architect. **Left:** House Mikula (1965-7), Paul Mikula architect (Architecture SA, May/June 2005:14). **Right:** House Manor Gardens, Durban (1973) Hallen and Theron (Architect and Builder, February 1973:34-35).

The influence of the first Cape vernacular has resulted in a consistent and vibrant architectural lineage. It has inspired many architects through the years and will probably continue to do so. Chapter 7 will describe Fagan's attitude and architectural approach towards the vernacular and the development of the Fourth Cape vernacular.

### 3.3. Summary

Vernacular architecture has been defined as a traditive process that demonstrates a consistency and repetition, as well as the development of an approach to establish a tradition. A seminal neo-vernacular was formed in the 1950s and 1960s in the Western Cape, South Africa. The inherited Cape Dutch tradition was adapted through the influences of the British occupation along with Arts and Crafts influences through Baker and his later following. Architects such as Fox and Pahl attenuated replicative and interpretative approaches to merge inherited vernacular principles and Modern Movement influences to form a fourth Cape vernacular.

The next chapter will focus on Fagan's relationship with the Modern Movement and its effect on South African and Cape vernacular architecture.