

disappear into a cutting and finally a tunnel. So the city towered above and eventually disappeared from view and, after what seemed an eternity but in reality was barely two or three minutes, the train would burst out of the darkness of the tunnel into the great train shed that was Snow Hill Station. Soon we would emerge from the station into the very centre of the city itself. All this offered an experience of scale related to the sweeping movement of the train. As Birmingham built higher and higher more buildings came to break the skyline, and as the train sweeps around a great curve these tall buildings appear to move in relation to each other like dancers in some stately urban ballet.

Approaching many cities in North America by road offers a similar experience of scale. The intensity of the central business district creates a single experience from a distance able to live both with the scale of the open landscape and of the speed of motorway travel. It is surely the economics of territorial behaviour, which we shall discuss later, that drive us to build so high in these cities. The result in terms of scale is, however, wonderfully harmonious with long distance methods of transportation and the nature of perception from them. The approach to New York by sea with the huge twin towers of the Trade Centre slowly moving across the sky offers a similar experience. The final approach to Hong Kong when the old airport at Kai Tak was open offered yet another example of the city living with the scale demanded by the speed of travel. Nothing could ever quite compete as an urban scale experience with the dramatic late turn that aircraft needed to take and the final plunge down into the harbour. I will always remember the majestic and yet terrifying way the city used to revolve below you. It really seemed as if you owned the place. Then, in the very nature of air travel you landed and for a while could see very little as the aircraft docked into the terminal. You moved as if in another, this time pedestrian, world, through entirely internal spaces towards the taxi that would take you to your final destination. The shock as the taxi emerged from under the old airport to find now that all the buildings dominated you and towered above you produced a quite extraordinary contrast to the perception from the plane. Finally, to step out into the streets of Hong Kong from your air-conditioned taxi and feel the heat, noise and smell of the place was yet another kind of experience. It has always seemed to me to be a city able to make an impact on many different scales. One has a great sense of arrival at a special place.

The approach to Capetown when flying west along the southern coast of Africa is in its own way even more remarkable. It is necessary to begin the descent before clearing the mountains, so the plane banks first this way then that as it avoids the peaks, finally breaking out across the plains and revealing that most fantastic of sights, Table Mountain. This mountain towers above you and dominates the skyline when at the pedestrian scale in the town, but seems just the right size to live