

Texturing Absence

A geography of the disappeared Woodstock Beach

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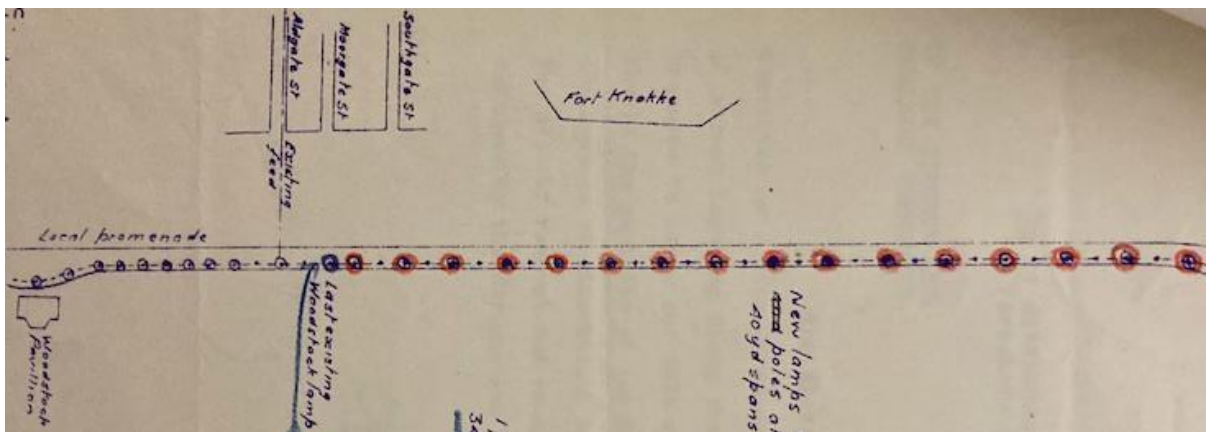
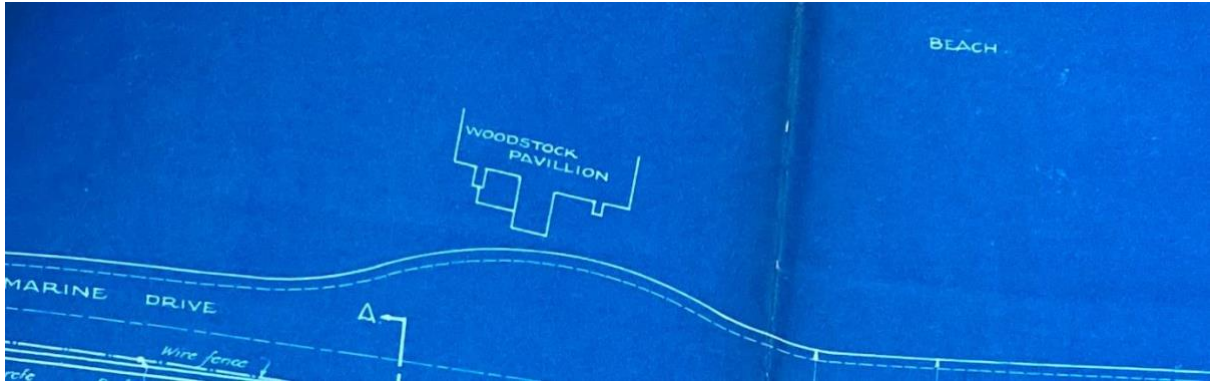
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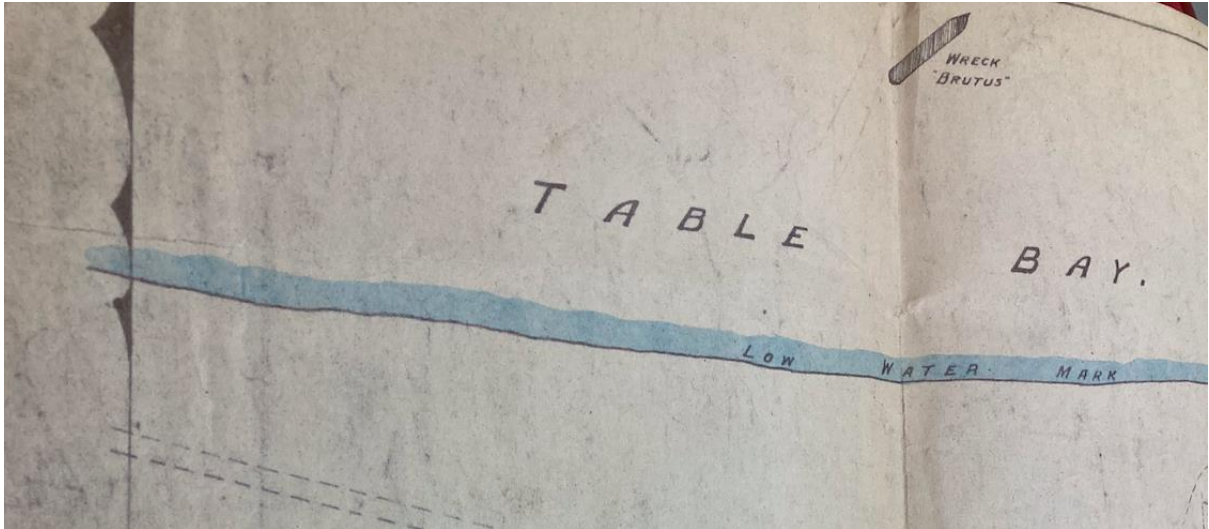
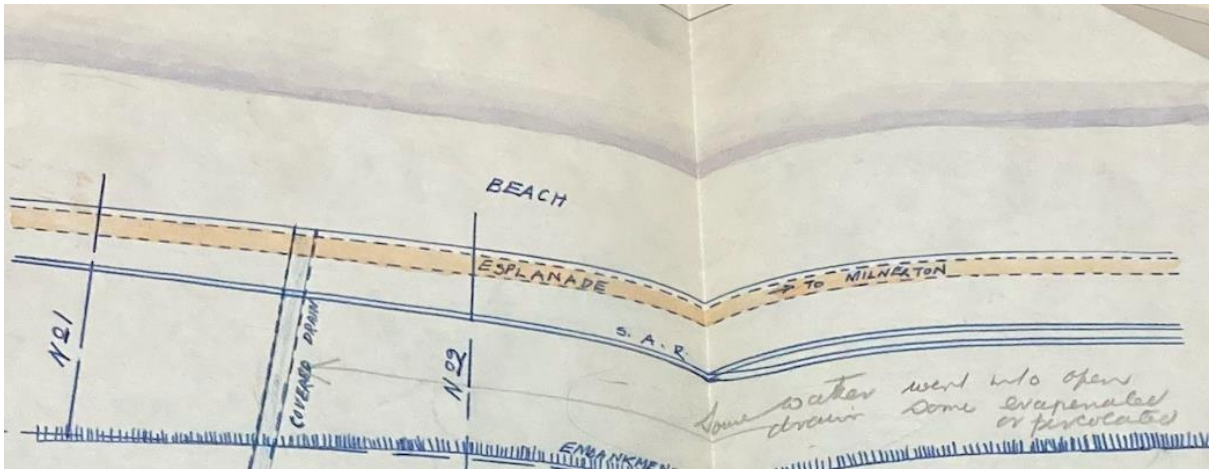
07 September 2022

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A geography of the disappeared Woodstock Beach.

Woodstock Beach





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SEA BATHING.

Woodstock is the only place which can boast of having provided its visitors with the orthodox accommodation for bathers, in the shape of machines, one or two of which are let out to hire on the European system at a nominal charge. It is perhaps due to this fact as well as its nearness to the metropolis, that it is fairly well patronised during the bathing season, although the water is somewhat colder than that of False Bay.

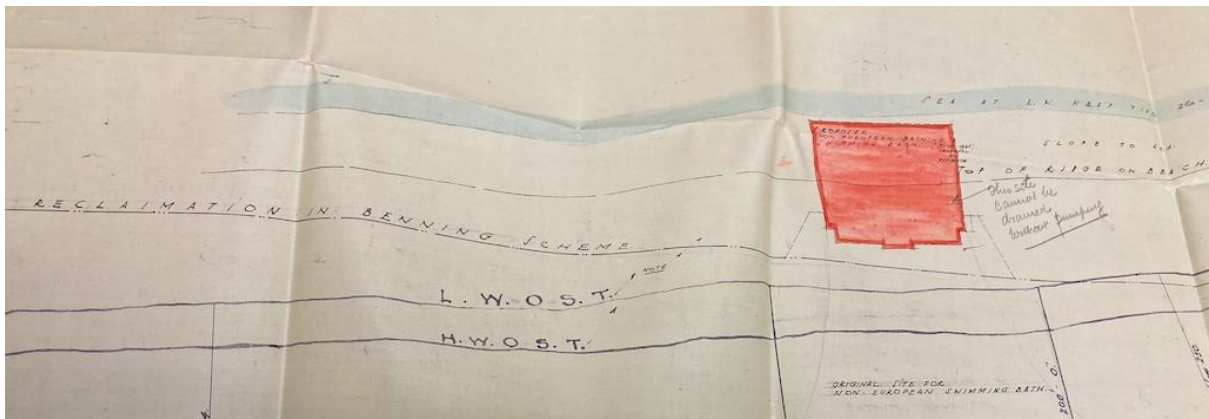


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Point of Departure

Winter mornings in Woodstock smell of salt. When I was younger, these salty mornings brought in the seagulls, who would circle high above in a soft grey sky. My dad and I would follow their cries, out of Woodstock, past the empty land of District Six, past bedraggled palms, along the elevated freeway, and down towards the Waterfront. There, at the edge of the parking lot, we would walk the path that followed the coast and its protective brown dolosse and watch the sea. That path is gone now, covered by carpark and shiny (not bedraggled) palms. It was here that, in 1860, the first wagonload of stone was tipped into the ocean. These tumbling stones surged across this small patch of coastline, pushing the sea back to create more land. This wave of stone buried Woodstock Beach.

Woodstock is a grey, windy suburb, squashed between the freeway and the docks, and I have lived here for 22 of my 25 years. The freeway – the upper edge of Woodstock – skirts Devils Peak, a broody outcrop of Table Mountain. Many Woodstock streets are steep, and – particularly in winter – you can hear water gushing through manholes, evidence of the underlying mountain and its rivers. My neighbor, Rikki, who lived in the dilapidated Victorian terrace opposite us, used to spend the night up in Woodstock cave. He and the other boys would light a fire, and the families down below would know that their sons were safe.

The bottom edge of Woodstock progresses over two main roads, the railway, the freeway, and eventually down to the docks. The docks are most lively at night, when the cranes light up and the boom of offloading containers resounds through misty late-night air. Newbies on the neighborhood Facebook group ask if those are gunshots. Woodstock crumbles away at some point here, when you cross the railway line. Not because there is any other real *place* there, but because the freeways and railway yards and billboards and docks extend in a flat place-less space with a view to nowhere. This space was once home to Woodstock Beach.

Woodstock Beach existed in various forms up until the 1960s. It was a beach for fishing, kite flying, baptisms, and bathing. There are black-and-white pictures of children building sandcastles, of Victorian bathing houses on wheels, and fishing boats coming ashore. Oral histories from District Six speak of walking down to Woodstock Beach, with buckets and spades, while the children turned “somersaults all the way down” (Jeppie & Soudien, 1990: 59). The area around the beach initially developed slowly – at first it housed only military hospitals and forts. Later it saw the railway, boatsheds, the Old Castle Brewery, Strand Hotel (‘strand’ is beach in Afrikaans), a tearoom and a racially segregated bathing pavilion. The area became increasingly industrial, with canning factories, tanneries, and fertilizer plants polluting the beach air.

While 1860 saw the official start of the infilling, legend has it that the process began earlier, and that any farmer coming to the Cape Town market was obliged to contribute a wagon-load of stone. This informal scheme proved unsuccessful when a series of poor harvests (or locust swarms, depending on your source) meant that farmers were no longer regularly visiting town (Green, 1981 and *SAR Magazine*, 1910: 626). While initially haphazard, this marked the beginning of an enormous infilling scheme, which would eventually create over 500 acres of land (2 km squared) in the city center as well as a series of dry and wet docks for the Cape Town harbour (*SAR Magazine*, 1910: 626, and *The Gateway to South Africa*, 1947). Woodstock

Beach, along with the fishing harbour at Roggebaai and the pier at the bottom of Adderley Street, was lost under tons of concrete and rock.

According to official sources, land reclamation at Woodstock beach happened in three phases. Initially, a small strip of land was reclaimed for a single railway track. This was then extended in the 1920s to allow for the railway to be widened (shown in orange below). Between 1937 and 1939, land reclamation progressed rapidly as the new harbour was constructed. Contemporary observers describe the scene as a mining pit (*SAR Magazine*, 1938: 1527). Up until the late 1970s, the reclaimed land stood flat and empty.



Figure 2: Table Bay harbour - historical development 1870-1985 (based on: South African Transport Services Drawing TBH 106 (1985): A-374). Proposed development sites shown in red. The area between the 1920 shoreline and the existing harbour was reclaimed between 1938 and 1943. Comparison with the 1926 aerial photo in Figure X shows that the information with regards to the 1920 shoreline omits certain features such as the Rogge Bay fishing "harbour".

Figure 1: Historical development of Table Bay harbour 1870-1985, from Halkett, 2012.

On the 'Cape Town Historic Society' Facebook Group, an old photograph of the beach prompts one Woodstock resident's memory of this wasteland stage:

I remember walking with my dad at age 8 or so on bits of wood that had been put down while they were busy with the reclamation. That's when they were building the new section of the harbour. The sand was like quicksand and it was pretty terrifying. (Conradie, E. Comment on Castegnaro, S. 2021 Facebook Post).

The memory of terror and haphazard 'bits of wood' signaling safety is hard to imagine on the map below, which shows the two lost coastlines. The precarity in this memory – between safety and danger, solid land and sinking sand – is at odds with the certain, hard streets that exist there now.

Woodstock in its current form shows little evidence of its beach-side heritage. It is well known as the home of the Cape Town textile industry, and less known for its history of unions and apartheid marches. Unlike the neighboring suburb of District Six, Woodstock was classified as a 'grey zone' (racially mixed) and avoided the apartheid-era forced removals. It is now home

to hooting taxis, sleek warehouse conversions, and all manner of pedestrians – swaggering, limping, groaning with plastic bags. But the salt, the seagulls and those wintry seaside walks keep bringing me back to the beach, and the wonder of how it was and where it went.

In this piece, I chart my search for the disappeared Woodstock Beach. My search takes me to a recycling depot, a brewery, museums, archives, shopping malls, train stations and factories. It leads me past pieces of graffiti, past trees, in and out of books, photographs, maps, wrecks, piles of rubbish, kelp and sand. It takes me back in time to the rock that formed the sand that formed the beach. It takes me back to the first people who walked and lived with the beach, and the penguins and whales and other creatures that lived with it too. It takes me back to the first conquests and victories on the beach, to first cigarettes and first loves.

I had hoped to speak to people who had lived in and around Woodstock to talk through memories of the beach, and how the space has changed since the beach was disappeared. But this proved impossible – I reached out on several forums, to neighbors and through personal networks, but I couldn't find anyone who had experienced the beach who was willing to talk. This unsettled my initial assumption – that the beach would have played a big enough role in people's lives to be remembered (and even missed) in the present in some profound way. I was expecting a story of topicide, or urbicide (Pain, 2021; Ernsten, 2021) – some reflection of the destruction of place – but this was not what I found. Instead, I found a slow, often mundane story of incremental change, of a city morphing through urbanization, industrialization and segregation. I found that the history of Woodstock Beach and its disappearance are tied to processes that have made place, race and land at multiple scales in South Africa. Instead of individual stories that were clearly situated in place, I was left to sift through a series of seemingly incongruous fragments. What could I do with a memory of the south easter wind, a piece of graffiti, and a letter asking about the policing of shells? What could I do with pictures of a shipwreck rescue operation, a plan for fencing, and enormous piles of seaweed? Or penguin eggs and pools? How do these come together? How could I reconcile or even make sense of the sometimes beautiful, sometimes painful, and often arbitrary glimpses of life that these fragments afforded me?

Before I had even begun, Woodstock Beach was gesturing to the importance of the gaps, the inconsistencies, and the ongoing changes that make up a place.

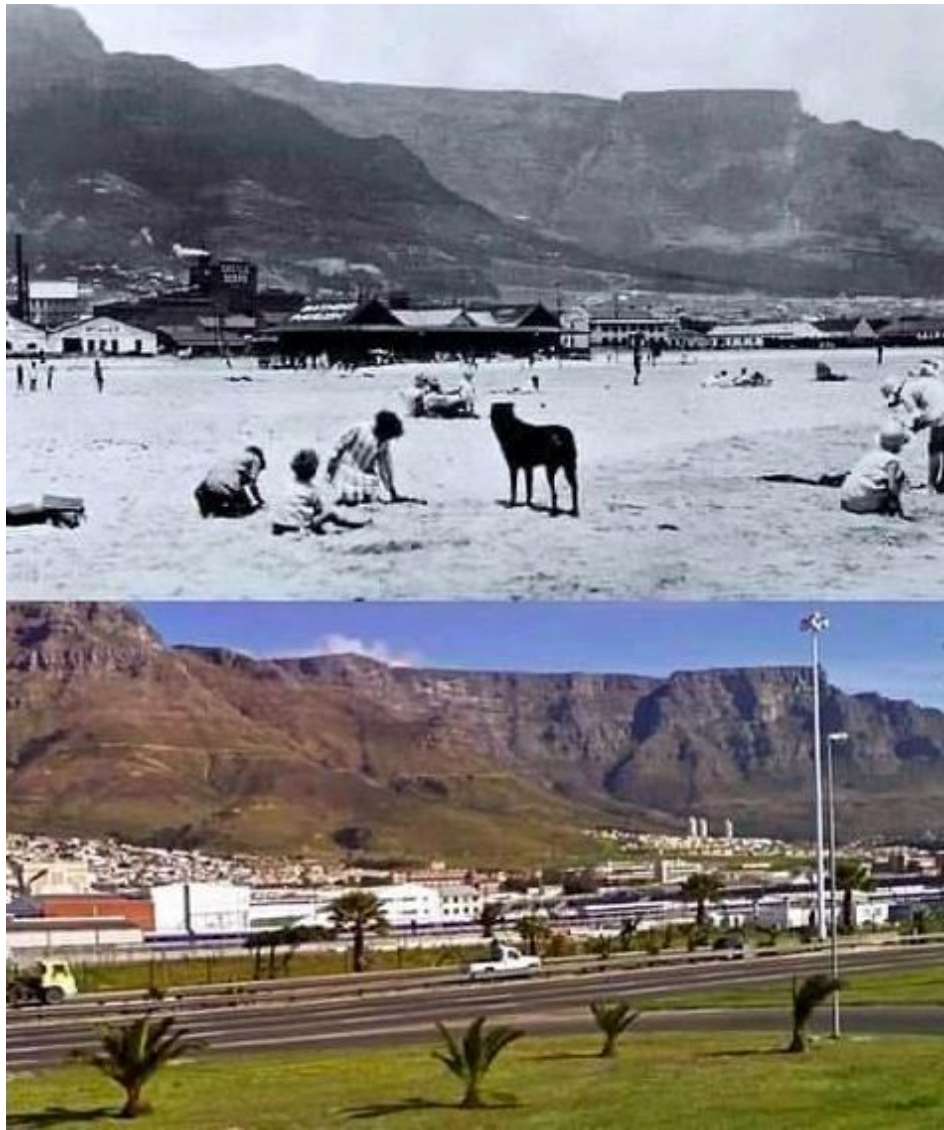


Figure 2: Woodstock Beach in the 1930s (above) and the same spot in 2010 (below).

Structure

Texture – Ground – Encounter – Trajectory

This thesis is structured in four parts. It rests on a method of texturing to explore the ways that the disappeared Woodstock Beach remains present and relevant in the space today.

The first chapter, *Texture*, engages geographies of memory, vital and material geographies, creative geographies, feminist geographies as well as non-fiction landscape writing. I draw on these schools of thought to outline my theoretical and methodological approach: texture. This chapter provides annotated examples of two key textures, *lines* and *grains*, to further illustrate the theoretical underpinnings of texture. These examples act as guides that will be returned to frequently. Having firmly situated texture as method, each of the three chapters that follows illustrates and argues for a particular attunement to place, in this case Woodstock Beach, and the stories it holds. Together they draw on creative methodologies, scalar flexibility, and expanded rigour to unearth disappeared histories of and in place, and trace the connections that continue to make these histories relevant across place and time.

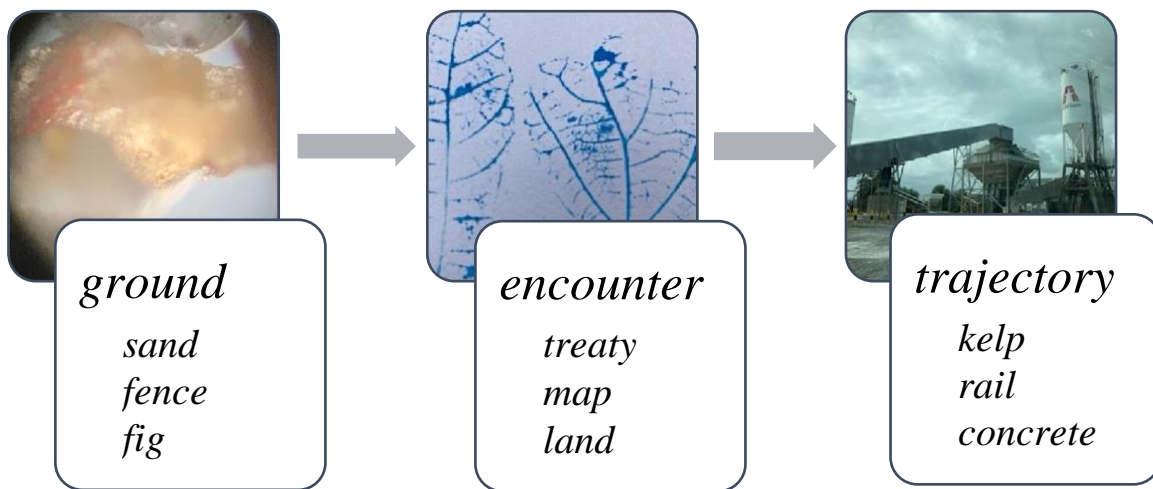
In Chapter Two, *Ground*, I turn to Woodstock Beach to illustrate the method of texturing at three key sites. I texture sand at the Waterfront, fences at Beach Road, and a fig tree at the Slave Lodge Museum. I show how texturing requires a curiosity that unlocks the metaphoric and analytic power of materials; they tell us stories, and they take us places. In the case of Woodstock Beach, these materials and their metaphors provide useful ways of thinking with place in South Africa. These materials suggest contradictions and contingencies – blurriness as a part of clarity, reveal-conceal, ground and flight – that help sharpen and orient analytical tools while maintaining an expansive reach. Overall, this chapter argues for the importance of beginning in the material to critically ground in place and context.

Chapter Three goes on to explore texture as *Encounter*. This section focuses on how texture allows us to read the processes that go into the production of the encounter; that is, it allows us to read the various social, chemical, environmental, and political histories that converge in any one thing or moment in time. Crucially, this means that previously ‘mute’ text(ure)s can now be engaged to retrieve and re-encounter different (entry points to) histories. In the case of Woodstock Beach, texture as encounter allows me to work more imaginatively and rigorously (more questions asked, more lines of inquiry followed) with the limited available traces of place and people of Woodstock Beach. Treating these textures – of a tree, of maps and archives and documents – as evidence of encounter leads back to histories of slavery and dispossession and illustrates the complex and central role of these histories in the process of making land, space and place in South Africa. This chapter illustrates how some histories are obscured and argues for the value of the encounter in re-engaging obscured histories.

In Chapter Four, *Trajectory*, I illustrate the importance of reading for the alter- and after-lives of place and its parts. In this chapter, I explore the various manifestations of the beach – in kelp, in rail and in concrete – and show how these materials gesture to alternative ways of being. I show how reading the socio-political histories of the beach through these materials unlocks stories of resistance that challenge and complicate the concrete trajectories of our unjust, unsustainable, and uncaring city forms. Finally, I offer ‘one kind of ending’, where I reflect on the contributions of each chapter, and this thesis as a whole.

At this point I want to note that the method of texture requires registers of writing that are experimental, evocative, and expansive. The section which follows engages a varied literature to situate the methodological and theoretical basis for this approach. I aim with my writing to enliven description, to tell and listen to stories as a critical practice, and to bring to bear the sense and mood of this place and myself in that place, for you, the reader. Drawing on Anna Tsing (2012, 2012, 2015), Kathleen Stewart (2007, 2011, 2013), Rebecca Solnit (2006, 2010) Pamila Gupta (2021), and Robert MacFarlane (2012) – among many others – I ask that you accept this invitation to walk with me, as I write about images and sensations and things and words as a way of thinking.

A roadmap to return to:



Chapter One: Texture

In this chapter I situate texture as an analytical framework and a method. I draw on relevant literature to outline texture's theoretical and methodological concerns, and show what it means practically, to 'texture'. I also engage theory to provide illustrative examples of two key textures that appear in this piece: lines, and grains. I close with a manifesto, which acts as a guide for texture as method. Texture, as will be shown, engages the critical confluence of methods and analysis, and so this chapter serves as both a literature review and a methods section.

Texture is an approach that requires an extended rigor – it requires that impressions, memories, fleeting glimpses, and incoherent strands are engaged as thoroughly as traditional theory and text. It requires that theoretical concerns are allowed to emerge, curiously and critically, in context, and through the material. At times, this involves drawing on resources that go beyond what is conventional in academic spaces. At times, this means that new theory will emerge later in the text. You can trust that these moments are considered.

Texturing place and process

I return now to the salt, the seagulls, and those wintry seaside walks, to my wonder at Woodstock Beach, of how it was and where it went. For me, Woodstock Beach is most prominent as snoek. The smell of smoked snoek and the sound of the snoek-horn are entwined with my memories of home, and of sticky ice-lollies on the stoep. Woodstock on a snoek day is warm and still, lazy and hazy summer. Woodstock on a salt day is cold and wet – or at least misty enough for the foghorn to sound. The beach continues to create a sense of place, even though it is disappeared. My wonder at Woodstock Beach is wonder at what the beach had meant for place when it existed, wonder at how it manifests in and impacts place in the present.

The root of 'place' means to spread (Harper, n.d.). Place holds meaning of social and spatial order. When you are 'put in your place', you are reminded of your social rank. To have 'taken place', something needs to have happened. To be 'out of place' is to be improperly positioned in relation to other things. Place is relational – spatially, socially, temporally – and therefore changeable. Place is also storied space. It is space that holds a sense of living, of dwelling, of history and memory. For Robert MacFarlane (2012), this means that "[P]laceless events are inconceivable, in that everything that happens must happen somewhere, and so history issues from geography in the same way that water issues from a spring: unpredictably but site specifically" (2012: 147). Place holds history, and is also made of history.

"It is the very definition of a place, in fact, that it is composed by these series of displacements and effects among the fragmented strata that form it and that it plays on these moving layers."

De Certeau, 1984: 258

While De Certeau was talking of place and its moving layers in the 1980s, recent thinking and writings about place have increasingly explored its contingent and ever-changing nature. In a thorough review of these recent geographic trends, Harriet Hawkins (2015) notes that place is

often figured as a convergence of lines of connection; as an emerging, shifting, fragmented, ongoing and always incomplete process of assemblage (Hawkins, 2015: 251-252). In these approaches, place is in process, even while it is a product of process. The processual qualities of place are usefully engaged in Derrida's (1993) concept of hauntology, which emphasises objects and places, what they represent, the stories they carry, how they came to be, and what they shade, erase, or disguise (see also Davis, 2005; Shefer, 2021 & Stoler, 2013). The relational and emergent elements of place mean that place does not just sediment, static, as accumulated layers of history. Instead, it becomes a living form, capable of generating lines of connectivity, affects, and qualities.

This affective and generative element of place has been explored beautifully, critically, and carefully, in Kathleen Stewart's writing on affect, place, and the everyday. For Stewart, place "hangs together as a thing, then—a recognizable entity with qualities, lived modalities, and a history of its social production and uses—not because its elements are coherent imprints or effects of something else but because they have qualities and affects" (Stewart, 2013: 279). Here, place could emerge from a loose association of apricots and bleached-white mussel shells, from a tricky small box, from something you've lost, the smell of shade, and a gesture that stiffens your back. The edges of these things are gently lifted, corners are gathered, and momentarily, these things hang together as 'place'. In a further exploration of place and affect, Bruno (2014: 19), suggests that places and affects are produced jointly, that affects are not only "makers of space but are themselves configured as space, and they have the actual texture of atmosphere". Here, place is again produced through affects, and is something that is sensed and attuned to.

Representations of place need to be able to convey this affect and sense of shifting, moving, emergence and multiplicity. Postcolonial geographies and histories have in the (recent) past had the tendency to 'reveal hidden histories'. Moving beyond the idea of forgotten or hidden histories is, for scholars like McKittrick (2006) and Yusoff (2018), crucial in understanding (black) geographies of the past, present and future. As Stoler (2011) notes, these are not linear histories, or ones hidden "formerly obscured, only now emerging from darkness to light" (2011: 128). These are histories that have repeatedly come in and out of focus, have been 'forgotten' by some, and then rediscovered, by some.

These understandings, with their emphasis on the shifting, the moveable, the incomplete, and the non-linear require us to find alternative ways to "research and re-present the textures and complexities of place" (Hawkins, 2015: 251-252). In this piece, I take texture not just as something *to represent*, but as an active mode of representation, research, and creativity in and of itself. Texture is the outcome of objects coming together in some pattern of force, pressure or interaction in a way that produces evidence of, or new configurations in, the objects' physical and chemical structures. Importantly, much like place, texture is process, and it is also evidence of process. Because of this, I propose that texture, as a method, is well suited to approach the moveable fragments that make up place and time. *Texturing* – engaging texture as method – is an active exploration of and attunement to place that may involve touching, rubbing, writing, walking, thinking, reading or sketching place. Texturing may also involve tracing formative structures, processes, and events that are not obviously present but nonetheless make up place. Texturing engages presence and absence, as well as the ongoing making-of presence and absence. It is a method that acknowledges that my curation and research of this place in turn produces and textures place.

Contact

Taking texture in Woodstock is not always an easy task. My body holds the memory of a mugging in the space, and I when I am on the street, I am never fully relaxed. But the material draws me in, and I settle in to a space of wonder. Weeds grow through cracks, tiny deposits of different soils, sands. Moss in cold wet walls. Layers and layers and reams and reams of wire and fence and all it accumulates. Myself, pressed against them, snagging on barbs and rust. Piles of broken things – ceramics, bottles, planks. Chicken bones. At times I have to temper my urge to touch and collect – these things can be tricky to handle. Engaging with the material in all of its difficulty is an important orientation of texture as method. It requires an awareness of the edges and effects that exist between (and because of) my person in a place.

Texture as method has emerged out of my interest in creative practice, both in text and art forms – Karen Till’s place-based artworks and the affective writing of Kathleen Stewart and Toni Morrison were formative here – and in the ways we read and represent place. Engaging texture as method in this research involved taking texture tapes from the environment, taking rubbings of different textures (walls, streets, etc), collecting found objects, and taking photographs, sound recordings and videos. It involved extensive archival research, and the collection of texts which relate to Woodstock Beach. It also involved me trawling through the memories and comments about Woodstock Beach on various local history groups on Facebook (a covid-limitation). The ‘Cape Town Down Memory Lane’ and the ‘Cape Town Historic Society’ Facebook groups provided me with several pages of brief, individual memories. The specific content of the post (mostly photographs) was often unrelated to the memories they evoked, creating a jumbled and often incoherent depiction of the beach. In the process of data collection, I also plotted sites, connections and experiences onto a contemporary map of Cape Town.

To make texture tapes, I apply duct tape to a surface (the floor, a tree, a fence etc.) and see what emerges when I pull it up. The tapes pictured below were collected on Beach Road, Woodstock, and they tell the story of my movement through the space. They reflect an enormous bamboo grove, a fence and an old wall. The bamboo must be fairly old, but as the tapes show, it gives little away. The texture of the fence reflects a paint spill – a yellow vinyl which travelled through the gaps in one fence onto the fences behind it, and the last texture tape reveals the presence of moss growing on damp brick walls: the sea returning. The process is in part curated – I choose where to apply the tape – but there is always an element of surprise: pulling up the tape reveals the ‘bottom’ of my chosen texture. In these moments, texture brings issues of imprint, relief, reversal, response and juxtaposition to bear.



Figure 3: Texture tapes of bamboo, paint, and mossy wall (left to right)

Texture allows us to think more immediately, more intimately, about the materiality of our worlds. The textures I find are made up of gaps, ebbs, flows and juxtapositions. The ambiguous ways that *contact* is evidenced by texture is crucial here; it gestures to the tensions of things coming together and falling apart. The open-ended, ambiguous, and contradictory stories that textures tell allow space for alternatives and imagination.

The pictures above are made up of lines and grains. The tape is a line, but so are the fences and walls and swaying bamboo trunks they stick to. What they pull up is often grain: sand, grit, flecks of paint and rust, rogue seeds, broken glass. Lines and Grains are two textures that repeatedly surface in the case of Woodstock Beach. What follows are guides to these textures. These guides illustrate how texture interweaves theory and materiality and demonstrate the multiple ways in which lines and grains can be engaged. Return to these when you need them.

Lines

Lines of the tides – both high and low. Fishing lines. Lines on maps; lines formed by the folds in maps. Lines of text, handwriting. Lines of inquiry. The shore line. Railway lines and the lines of roads. Lines between slabs of concrete, or bricks – lines that are actually cracks. Lines drawn separating people and place. Lines of movement and migration, lines of communication. Life lines.

Tim Ingold (2016), in his ground-breaking anthropology of lines, draws the distinction between two major kinds of lines: threads and traces. A thread is a line that moves through and connects across three-dimensional space. Examples here are a ball of wool, a spider's silk, a necklace, a barbed wire fence. Threads are not drawn onto surfaces but can – through manipulation – come to form surfaces. A trace on the other hand, is any “enduring mark left in or on a solid surface by a continuous movement” (Ingold, 2016: 102). They can be additive (a line drawn by pencil on paper), or reductive (a line carved into wood by a tool). Lines in the form of threads come to form surfaces. Once a surface is ‘complete’, its “original constitution from threads remains evident in its textured tracery” (*Ibid.*, 134). For Ingold, physical stuff bears the texture of the threads that went into its making (*Ibid.*, 285). The interweaving of threads – the coming and making together – forms *text*: textiles, textures, written texts. Again, texture is both process and thing, so engaging texture allows us to read the process and histories that made the thing.

Lines repeat – across time and space – and come together to create a surface. Repetitions of lines can form patterns, where a sequence of lines continues from the original. Helen Scalway tracks patterns on fabrics, buildings, and skin around London to trace and compose the city's various heritages (in Hawkins, 2015: 251). Patterns of lines are textured in their material imprints, as well as in the politics and lives that their being, here, gestures to elsewhere. In the introduction to *Patterned Ground*, Stephan Thrift (2004) explains that the book's collection illustrates an approach that is attuned to the presence of pattern, of texture, but is still “prepared to imagine the world before its patterns became obvious” (Thrift, 2004: 15). Here, imagination and critical awareness are coupled to think with the world before its lines, patterns and resulting domains come to seem fixed. Ingold suggests that power is expressed as the imposition of one kind of line on (and I would add over) another. Power “proceeds first by converting the paths along which life is lived into boundaries in which it is contained” (Ingold, 2016: 41). A classic example here is a colonial map. Lively paths are turned into boundaries that contain, confine, and order. Hard colonial roads, made of tar and concrete with indentured and enslaved labour ties to hard colonial rule. Texture reveals the multiple traces and threads that make up this ‘single’ line, which illustrates how some lines come to be powerful, and others are slowly erased. Texturing lines in all their forms allows an exploration of the experimental paths and navigational codes which – even if erased – lie as traces, as alternatives, just beneath the surface. Texturing lines in all their multiplicities is a reminder to “map systems of oppression, not oppressed people!” (Mesquita, 2018: 30).

There are other kinds of lines too. For Rebecca Solnit, metaphors can be understood as “a line drawn between two things, a mapping of the world by affinities and patterns” (2010: 165). Here, metaphors – as lines – let us “enter a world of resemblances and kinships, in which we can approach the unknown through the known, the abstract through the concrete, the remote through what comes to hand” (*Ibid.*). In this world, everything is relational: we are because of each other, and we travel in terms of the other. Lines string us together, and take us places. Engaging metaphors as lines of connection and lines to travel by is a crucial approach used in texturing.

Grains

Grains of sand. The grain in wood. Grains can accrue and sediment to create something bigger (accrued sand = beach, sedimented sand = stone). Grains can also be evidence of ruination and weathering – a form of debris. Grain as power structures: hegemony. Grains, in the archive; reading along and against them. Grain as in grainy – grainy images; unclear, pixilated, old, blurred. Grains in metal, tiny crystallising atoms, randomly distributed. Grain as a staple food.

Following grainy texture is one way to “track the uneven temporal sedimentations in which imperial formations leave their marks” (Stoler, 2013:2). It allows us to follow how things are cemented in place, or loosened over time. Grain in the wood of a wrecked slave brig. Grains of sand caught between cobbles. Grains of salt, carried by wind and water, drying to form a crust. Much like deep mapping, texturing is a way of recording and representing “the grain and patina of place through juxtapositions and interpenetrations of the historical and the contemporary, the political and the poetic, the discursive and the sensual” (Hawkins, 2015: 252). Everything is relevant. It allows us a certain scalar flexibility; we can look at the single grain, or layer of grain, but also at how grains come to layer and mound in forms of hegemony.

For Foucault (1969), the archive is the ‘first rule of what can be said’ – the assumed *a priori*, a kind of hegemony (Foucault, 1969: 145-146). However, if we read the archive slightly against the grain, it becomes a “theoretical apparatus for mapping emergent relations rather than isolating and classifying certain forms as belonging to the past and others to the present” (Rao, 2009: 382). It seems that, reading against the grain, archives can be hopeful: they can enable the reconstitution of social relations, as opposed to only allowing for reflections on/of pre-existing conditions (*Ibid.*, 380). The creative force of archives when read against the grain – combined with a critical reading *along* the grain (Stoler, 2002) – is engaged in this piece to allow for a future-facing orientation that is open to alternatives. Reading against the grain also engages ‘accidental archives’ – archives of objects that have outlived their origins, and whose meanings and stories have changed and morphed over time (Rigney, 2017: 474). Similarly, engaging against the grain is to engage with “some of the least celebrated, often most disposable archives” (Campt, 2017: 16) whose material histories “sediment and arrive in the now as a continued challenge to presence in the context of erasure” (Yusoff, 2018: 102). Grains sediment, here, now, and refuse to be swept under carpets. For Yusoff – as for Rao, Rigney and Campt – engaging the grain of history differently is as much about sensibility as it is theory: it requires an attunement to affective worlds where presences and absences are both explored.

If you have enough grains you can come to form strata – geological layers of differing rocks and soils. Here, grains and lines converge somewhat. Over geological time, strata fold and snap and shift across space – layering and moving in all directions. Thinking with layers of grains that shift and move might allow us to see how certain moments come to be, and then come to un-be, across space and time

The guides to Lines and Grains show that, while texture is intimate, it is not limited by spatial or temporal scale. Instead, it is a way of bringing memories of other times and places into intimate conversation with the immediate moment. Attending to the material – texturing – requires that we notice surfaces, refractions of light, leaks, and the paths the wind has cleared. It also requires that we engage with entanglements, disappearances, explosions, decay, assemblages, traces, dreams, and politics. It is a way of grounding (beginning) with material realities and following trajectories of what could be. John Wylie (2007), reflecting on recent work in vital, hybrid, relational and topological geographies, has suggested that attendance to exactly these “uncanny and hybrid foldings of near and far and past and present” is what “becomes the crucial critical task” (2007: 204). The strange ways that things and politics disappear and re-emerge has been – and is – a crucial concern for many geographical thinkers

and writers. The examples above illustrate how texture allows us to attend to these ‘foldings’ of space and time in the material, in thinking, and in representation.



Figure 4: Seven Oceans Emergency Drinking Water, encountered on Beach Road.

Texturing the streets of Woodstock Beach, I come across an abandoned emergency water sachet. It's branded *Seven Oceans* with the image of a ship. Woodstock Beach, appearing here, in litter, in water, in ships.

The material world is important in my search for Woodstock Beach. In words that hum in my chest, De Certeau (2007) writes that “objects and words also have hollow places in which a past sleeps, as in the everyday acts of walking, eating, going to bed, in which ancient revolutions slumber” (2007: 257). Here, everyday objects and words are always charged with the past and are always on the verge of awakening from their slumber, and bringing the past into the present. This makes objects and movements political. Ann Rigney’s understanding of objects is similar, but she extends their material powers to include the accidental meanings that objects can be imbued with as they move across place and time. Here, objects hold past revolutions, as well as new and potentially unrelated meanings.

For Ann Rigney (2017), objects

fascinate through their shape, texture, color, and size. They capture earlier moments and promise us stories by outliving the time in which they first came into being. Crucially for memory studies, their materiality often secretes more meaning than that which was consciously inscribed in them, making them into what I have elsewhere called ‘accidental archives’ (2017: 474).

Objects and things hold memories and meaning, and as objects exist and move in the world, they themselves create meaning and force. Understanding how objects come to make meaning

in the world has been a crucial concern for scholars like Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway and Jane Bennett, among many others. Their complications of concepts like agency, life and force laid crucial groundwork for geographies of memory, vital and (im)material geographies, political ecologies, and political geologies. In all of this, objects are part of making place – their affects and accumulations, their origins and movements, the memories they hold and the stories they tell – add to the shifting layers that in turn make place an (often unexpected) repository of memory. What are the odds of a ship-branded water sachet on Beach Road, and what stories can it tell?

The ocean, the sea, has an extended materiality. Thinking with oceans and wet ontologies, Steinberg and Peters (2019) find that the ocean's presence and materiality is always beyond itself; the smell of the ocean travels miles inland, our bodies hold salty water expressed as tears, and a shell carries the sound of the sea. For them, this suggests that materiality is scored across states and elements, that it is turbulent, interrogative, and excessive. This *scoring* of materiality makes texture as things move through chemical and social states, across time and space. The material world is not just a vessel for memories and ancient revolutions: it enacts them, and is in turn “infused with sensations and distinct ways of knowing” (McKittrick, 2006: ix). The material world is imbued with knowledge – we look to the material to learn how to think.

Learning to think with the material creates generative opportunities. Caitlin DeSilvey (2006, 2007, 2010), in her search for memory on a decaying Montana homestead, encounters what she terms ‘ambiguous matter’ – things that are recognizable but unstable, that are busily fermenting and decaying. Here, mice nest in newspapers, beetle eat wood, molds create psychedelic patterns, and trees engulf fences and tools. At Woodstock Beach we find similarly ambiguous matter – that pile of broken things, chicken bones, fences and bamboo, a cold mossy wall. That abandoned ship-branded water sachet. Attending to the ambiguity and instability of material – of decay and growth – enables “an engagement with the past that draws its strength from incompleteness and absence” (DeSilvey, 2006: 329). Engaging the past through incompleteness and absence expands the reach of our critical energies and demands that the question remains open. For DeSilvey, drawing on the instability of material can allow for a process where:

constellations of loosely associated fragments make present previously absent objects. A poetics of suggestion and conjecture recovers stories that might not allow themselves to appear through more direct methods. (2007: 420).

Following the gaps, confusion and loose associations of objects, words, and atmospheres allows space for the material world to *create*, whether it comes together or falls apart. This in turn can “can open up alternative ways of knowing the past in place” (DeSilvey, 2010: 492). Here, ‘alternative’ refers to overlapping, multiple and sometimes contradictory pasts, as opposed to a singular, ‘other’. To better understand these multiple inscriptions of past on place, DeSilvey argues that geographers need to attend to the ways that memory moves across places and things (2010: 506). Interestingly, in DeSilvey’s work, this mobility of memory tends to be confined to a well-defined site: a single building or piece of infrastructure. In my research, I combine DeSilvey’s slow, intimate approach with the more expansive and explicitly political approach offered by Ann Stoler.

In Stoler's (2013) work on imperial debris, an engagement through absence (as above) demands that we look for the entanglements between what is absent and what remains. It requires attending to the "connective tissue" that continues to bind human lives to the material refuse – toxic soils, polluted waterways, morbidity – of imperial projects (Stoler, 2013: 7-8). Her focus on connections usefully expands the spatial and temporal scale at which objects matter. For Stoler, the interest is in how the long-lasting, often less perceptible, effects of imperial rule come to settle in social and material ecologies (*Ibid*: 3-4). Stoler's work is certainly more explicitly centered around the political afterlives of things, but for both DeSilvey and Stoler, the focus on the material "is not on inert remains, but on their vital reconfiguration" (*Ibid.*, 10). Crucially, these approaches necessitate an orientation that works through the material and is both critical and creative. The chicken bones, the fence, and that ship-branded water sachet take on a different charge when, in the chapters which follow, they are brought into conversation with histories of slavery, burning boats, graveyards and dispossession. Absences and presences, critically refigured.

Karen Till (2008, 2012) and Christian Ernsten (2021) have engaged this kind of approach – refiguring absences and following hauntings – in the context of inner-city Cape Town. Both Till and Ernsten walk the landscape of early colonial burial in Cape Town and read the city's contemporary politics from these places. Ernsten's work explores the creation and management of 'official heritage' in Cape Town, as well as the ways that multiple pasts emerge from fragmented materialities in the present. His work traces heritage through a variety of sites and materials, as do I in this piece. He suggests that the jumbled fragments of heritage (material, policy, plans) are best engaged as local lexicons for spatial ruination, and as invitations to write and visualize entry points to other space-times (2021: 148). The approach of 'fragment as lexicon' is usefully engaged in texture – which reads stories and histories from the material. Similarly, Till looks at 'spectral traces' in what she calls 'wounded places' – places that have been structured by decades of violence – as a way of thinking with multiple pasts (2008). She argues that attending to multiple pasts offers glimpses to possible futures, which might allow us to return differently to presents (2012). Karen Till's work emphasizes the future-facing elements of the past in place, and centers creative practice and the political valence of memory in challenging dominant regimes of power. The approach of texture draws on the creative and political charge of memory and material. Important here is that, as in the above approaches, the generative instability of material does not just reveal, it also actively creates.

For the authors outlined above, these uncanny space-time foldings, these hauntings and memories, do not just show the past in the present, but also connect to futures. Some of these futures are solemn. Here, material ruins in the present connect to failed promises for the future, and represent a shared history that forms the base of a differentiated and unjust future (Stoler, 2011 & Derrida, 1993). Some of these connections point to futures that are hopeful. Here, attending to these space-time foldings is one way to acknowledge the everyday, subaltern, world-building practices that reveal already existing alternatives (McKittrick, 2006 & Ernsten, 2021). For both Till and Ernsten, an ethics of care (place-based, subaltern) has emerged as crucial in beginning to recognize, and perhaps eventually heal these wounded spaces. This ethics of place-based care is engaged in texture as method by following and curating moments of contact, similarities, and intimacies across place and time. Bringing these stories into the world allows them to affect people and be pulled into subtle relations of care.

The work outlined above highlights some of the core material and theoretical concerns of this thesis, and of the methodology of texturing. They gesture to questions of material and metaphor, absence and presence, hauntings, remembering's, pasts, futures, alternatives.

Create

Texture as a method requires a degree of imagination and creativity, a willingness to follow arbitrary traces, to land in different places, and to momentarily suspend disbelief. It engages Anna Tsing's assertion that "to enlarge what is possible, we need other kinds of stories—including adventures of landscapes" (Tsing, 2015: 324). Enlarging what is possible requires new stories, but it also requires an 'epistemological mood' that is oriented towards curiosity, wonder, and creativity. Maintaining a sense of wonder and curiosity – as a *methodology* – opens multiple tempos and scales and helps to engage the tricky moment where the materiality of the present gestures to an anticipated future (Tsing, 2015: 21 and Ballesterro, 2019). To engage these tricky moments, texture as method draws on creative practice.

To maintain the expansive and critical reach of 'enlarging what is possible', a different form of communication and representation is required. In many ways, this thesis is about stories of place, and my methodology of texture is about how to read and tell them. Texture as method engages text, material, story, affect. It is not just about 'gathering' data; it also informs the analysis and representation: it is about listening to and telling new and old and alternative stories, differently. Crucially, it draws on imagination and curiosity as a form of critical reflection and patience (Das, 2020). In the following section I outline approaches to telling stories, differently.

"To listen and tell a rush of stories is a method" (Tsing, 2015: 37).

Storying is both method and analysis. The creative and curatorial labor that goes into telling a story does analytical work – it orders events, decides on relevance and tone, and tailors the specifics to the audience at hand. Telling a story of place requires the data and the content, but it also requires the analytic and creative force to make it make sense. Memory and imagination are two key creative and analytic tools in storytelling.

Toni Morrison emphasizes the role of memory and imagination in her story-telling process. Importantly, these memories and imaginings are tied to places, people and things. For Morrison, writing is:

a kind of literary archeology: on the basis of some information and a little bit of guesswork you journey to a site to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply. What makes it fiction is the nature of the imaginative act: my reliance on the image – on the remains – in addition to recollection, to yield up a kind of a truth.

(Morrison, 1990: 302)

This kind of 'literary archeology', this engagement with material remains and their implications, is an analytic and creative act. Morrison explains that while memory forms the 'sub-soil' of her story-telling work, it is the act of imagination that allows her full access to

inner worlds (1990: 302). Here, memory and imagination come together to create evocative truths. In a similar vein, Ivan Illich, in an expansive and beautiful book about water, writes that imagination is the faculty which forms “images of the invisible; it is the faculty that ‘sings reality’” (1985: 21). Imagination – conjuring the invisible, the possible – allows us to access different truths.

Imagination is therefore also crucial to McKittrick’s work of reasserting the oft-invisibilised black geographies in the United States. McKittrick engages a powerfully creative and imaginative register when she asserts that “geography is always human and that humanness is always geographic—blood, bones, hands, lips, wrists, this is your land, your planet, your road, your sea—” (2006: ix). Her words tie geography and place to politics and personhood in a way that is imaginative, evocative, and reveals – after Morrison – a ‘kind of truth’. Here we find truth, connection, emotion, and the material all intimately bound in what McKittrick terms a ‘new geographic story’. McKittrick’s ‘new geographic story’ and its treatment of place has an affective quality that carries the sensibilities and scope of a centuries’ long urgency. It invokes presence and process and material at a speed and scale that is necessarily alarming. McKittrick’s ‘new geographic story’ is one where pavements answer questions, the earth is skin, and rooms are filled with exhausted, weeping countries. These stories unsettle the idea that space ‘just is’, that what we see is what we get, and that human geography is unalterable (*Ibid.*). I draw on the way these imaginative stories ground truths across those uncanny foldings of space and time.

These stories need to be told, and in my case, they need to be written. I take this responsibility seriously. In Veena Das’ book *Textures of the Ordinary*, Das reflects on years of ethnographic research with women in Delhi. For her, writing and describing events is a moral activity (Das, 2020: 97). I want to charge this idea of writing as a moral activity with Augusto Boal’s assertion that “Morality refers to that which is commonly accepted; Ethics refers to that which we want to come to be” (Boal, 2006: 113). This is my favorite approach to ethics – it requires creativity and the imagining of alternatives. Drawing on the discussions around imagination above, I proffer imaginative, truthful writing that engages both slow, and urgent, description as an ethical orientation: it critically creates ‘that which we want to come to be’.

To ground this method of writing as ethics, I draw on Kathleen Stewart’s slow and careful approach, where writing is “a method of awkwardly approaching an object by attuning to it as a thing of promise and contact” (Stewart, 2013: 284 and Stewart, 2011). My writing is imaginative, but it needs to be critically attuned to the minutiae which make things true. Stewart’s ‘awkward approach’ to a ‘thing of promise and contact’ suggests a considered and reflective engagement with the stories and trajectories of things and place.

This piece is an invocation of the ethical imperative and critical necessity of “prefiguring another world as possible” (Mesquita, 2018: 27). The descriptions of events and places in the pages which follow draw on the material and theoretical strengths of texturing – incompleteness, different truths, surprise, juxtaposition. There are gaps in this text for us to see other worlds. There are descriptions in this text that suggest, rather than assert. The expansive and experimental way this text is written represents my engagement with the ethical charge of texture as method: to write different truths, to imagine as a critical practice. It brings academic rigor, poetry, thinking, affects and texture together in meshes of entanglement; it draws on imagination and a poetics of suggestion; and it uses description and story as an analytic force

in and of itself. It is a process where I put myself – my body, my mind – in contact with the materials I find, and see what things are lifted from different kinds of touch, what traces are left on and of me, and how these contacts make stories.

Overall, texture as method is an approach that attends to the ways things come to be. It requires attention to the moment of contact, which may or may not become a connection, but will always leave a mark or a trace. Texture as method – *texturing* – is a way of exploring, thinking, connecting, and making with the world. The critical pillars of this approach are offered below.

***A note on the method of encounter or:
A brief manifesto for curiosity***

To encounter curiously, one needs acceptance. This is “the openness to experience while judgement is suspended” (Berleant, 2005: 27).

To encounter curiously, one needs agility, mobility. Experience on the move, however you can, through your body. Do this before you write (Ibid., & Thoreau, 2006).

To encounter curiously, one needs stories. Read them, hear them, collect them. Acknowledge the concepts that live in them (Tsing, 2015: 321).

To encounter curiously, one needs imagination. “Morality refers to that which is commonly accepted; Ethics refers to that which we want to come to be” (Boal, 2006: 113). Alternative futures are alive and well.

To encounter curiously, one needs to go beyond progress. Different worlds are built on things other than ‘goals’ (Tsing, 2015: 21 & Berleant, 2005: 27).

To encounter curiously, one needs critical reflection. It is a crucial form of action
(Freire, 1972: 99).

Theoretically tooled and grounded, I now turn to Woodstock Beach.

Chapter Two: Ground

Sand – Fence – Fig

In this chapter, I illustrate the process and method of texturing at three key sites: the Waterfront, Beach Road, and a fig tree at the Slave Lodge Museum. I show how this method of texturing requires a curiosity that unlocks the metaphoric and analytic power of materials; they tell us stories, and they take us places. In the case of Woodstock Beach, these materials and their metaphors provide useful ways of thinking with place in South Africa. Crucially, because of the metaphoric and analytic powers that emerge from grounding in the material, this grounding ensures context, while also gesturing elsewhere. Overall, this chapter argues for the importance of beginning in the material, and grounding in place and context.

Sand

I am a dangerous driver on a site visit. My eyes lock in on any potential links to my site, my subject. Street names, tags, litter, trees, billboards, buildings, anything really. Today: lucky star pilchards – that iconic image, first plastered on a corner café in Woodstock, then again on a building in the docks as I fly by on the freeway. Uncle Ponty tells me that Tsafendas – who lived in Woodstock in 1966 – bought a can of lucky star pilchards from old Mr Parker (of Parker's General Dealer on Roodebloem Road) the day he killed Verwoerd. So many things colliding there – the pop culture can, the apartheid architect. The Beach Road sign as I cross the railway on Lower Church Street, the piles of sand, the earthworks happening below Mediterranean Shipping Company – the water in the bottom of those pits, a reminder of where the sea once was, and its perfect memory, always returning. The circle at the bottom of Adderley Street, which mirrors what would have been the esplanade out to sea. But all of this while I'm driving – overstimulated.

The sand I'm looking for is the last remaining sand of Woodstock Beach – preserved and enclosed in a museum dedicated to documenting the colonial history of the Victoria and Alfred harbor basin. It's hot and trafficky and I'm tight on time.

Google Maps directs me to a loading zone. Apparently, this is where I'm supposed to park. A security guard called Ashley asks me where I'm going and informs me that I can't park here, although he's also not sure where else I could park, especially given my car is so tall. He asks me how long I'll be – 15 minutes? 10? And goes to ask his manager if I can stay in a wheel clamp zone. I wait in the shade of an emergency exit. It's calming here, right by the sea, slightly removed from the clanging of metal on metal. A breeze scuffs the surface of the water, the fresh salt smell is a relief on this hot day. A ferry for the Robben Island tours is slowly filling up, she is called *Krotoa*.

Krotoa. Krotoa the KhoiKhoi go-between and translator for the Dutch and the Goringhaicona. Krotoa, the clever politician whose authority and presence around the castle unsettled Dutch occupational powers. Krotoa, the first KhoiKhoi Christian, and eventually an outcast to both the Dutch and her own people. She died of alcohol abuse, and was the first KhoiKhoi to be buried at the castle (Worden et al., 1998, Camissa Museum, Plant, 1961). She probably lies encased in sand.

The guard returns to let me know I can go ahead – but please, he emphasizes, don't take longer than your allocated time. Official speak. I tell him I will run. He directs me through a fishy building – suddenly dark and cool after the bright heat of the dock, and through two white doors. I emerge in a dazzling foyer, shop-fronts strung with Christmas decorations, filled with glittering jewels and promises of more. Conscious of my already diminished time I ask another guard (although Ashley called them officers) where I can find the museum. She looks at me in confusion and says something along the lines of 'oh my darling but the museum is closed'. Eh. But it's around the corner so I go to have a looksee. Yup, a closed sign. A couple walks up and turns away. I press my face against the glass – there's someone cleaning inside, he waves at me.

It is so hot. Canons, reflecting – no, radiating – heat. Pressed against the glass, I can see the sand and the old fortifications preserved in the museum. Both continue through the glass, and

out into the open, where I stand. Walking along these fortifications, I find the prettiest lilac shells in the concrete, and to be honest I'm suspicious. They seem too placed, too pretty. I almost break a nail trying to pry one out. The wall of the fortification supports a grass mound, and around it a staircase leads down to a pit and a door in the old wall. Scrappy sand at the bottom – bottle caps, cigarette butts, bones, blue and white china that I see and then can't find again. The heat is blinding. It turns out I have reason to be suspicious; a board informs me that the top part of this wall – delineated by a red line – is a replica, built according to archival instructions of the day. There are shells in the bottom layers too, but there they are crumbly.



Figure 5: Textures and texture tapes of fortifications, shells, and sand.

My texture tapes pull at clumps of sand and shell, a crumbling composite. They reveal bigger stones and shells which remain in place even as the sand comes up; the sand slowly wears away, but the structure remains. These tapes must be pushed into crevices and smoothed over curves. They go where my hands can go. It's funny how rough things, rubbing together, feel smooth. Sometimes the chaos of exiting from these crevices and curves tangles the tape, surface sticking to surface, new arrangements of sand and shell. It's almost a horizontal archaeology.

An old picture, of a horse-drawn cart on Woodstock beach, loaded with shells, presumably to be taken to a lime kiln, burnt and added to cement for building other walls just like this one. There is a pair of shoes on the shore (Abraham-Adams, N. 2021 Facebook Post: "Woodstock beach"). I wonder who – in the picture or out of it – these shoes belong to. It's another ongoing intimacy with sand; when we feel it beneath our feet, others before us have felt it too.



Figure 6: Woodstock Beach, early 1900s.

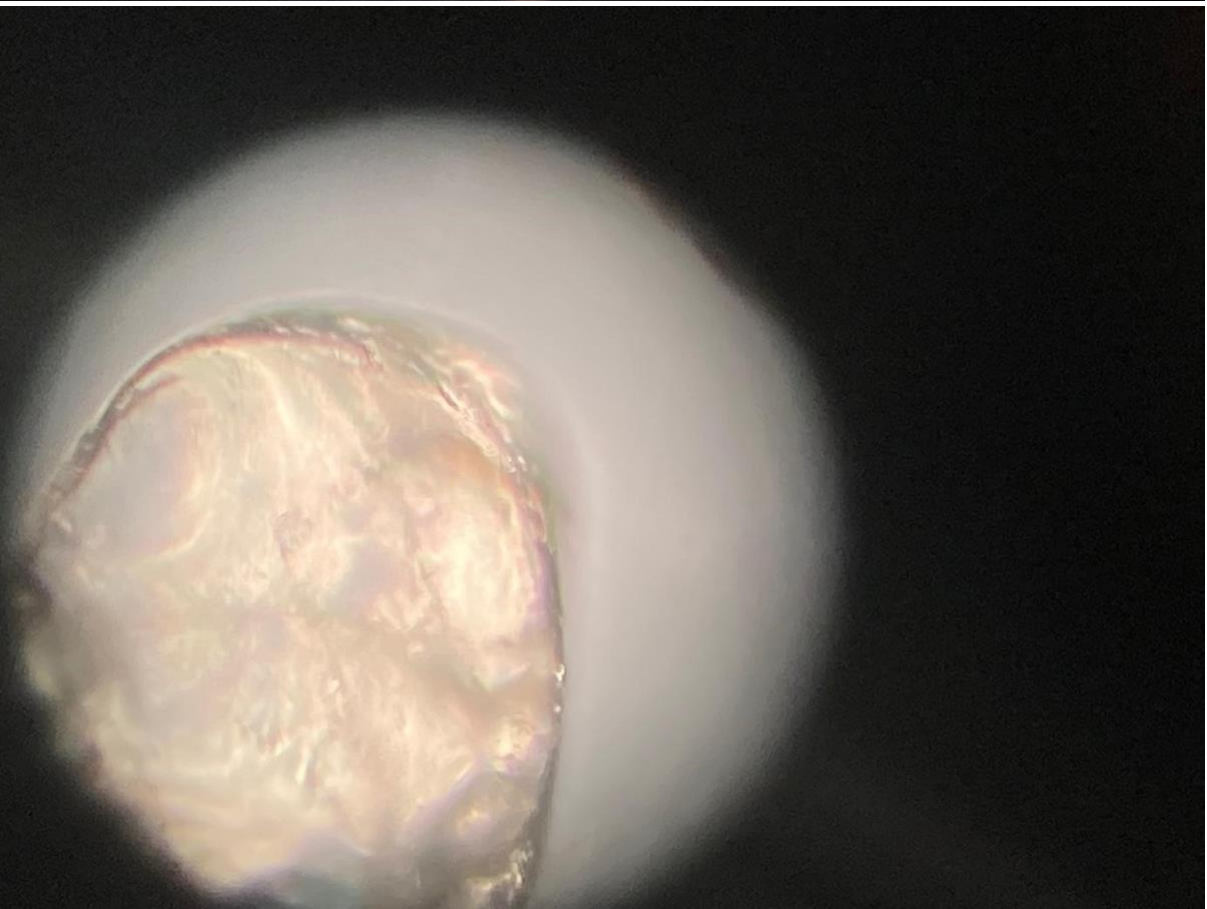
Hot, hot. So aware of the security guard's plea that I keep within the allotted time. Out of the pit, up the stairs. The Nedbank building towering over me. Den Anker restaurant. New and old capital and colonialism comfortable side by side. It feels soft and peaceful, sea fresh and calm, muted background chatter. Back through glittering hallway, back through dark corridor, back into blinding light. *Krotoa* has gone. On the drive back, another enormous Lucky Star Pilchards billboard. Jane Bennett's line about the moment the sardine can looks back comes to mind (Bennett, 2010). The beach looking back at me, with new eyes.

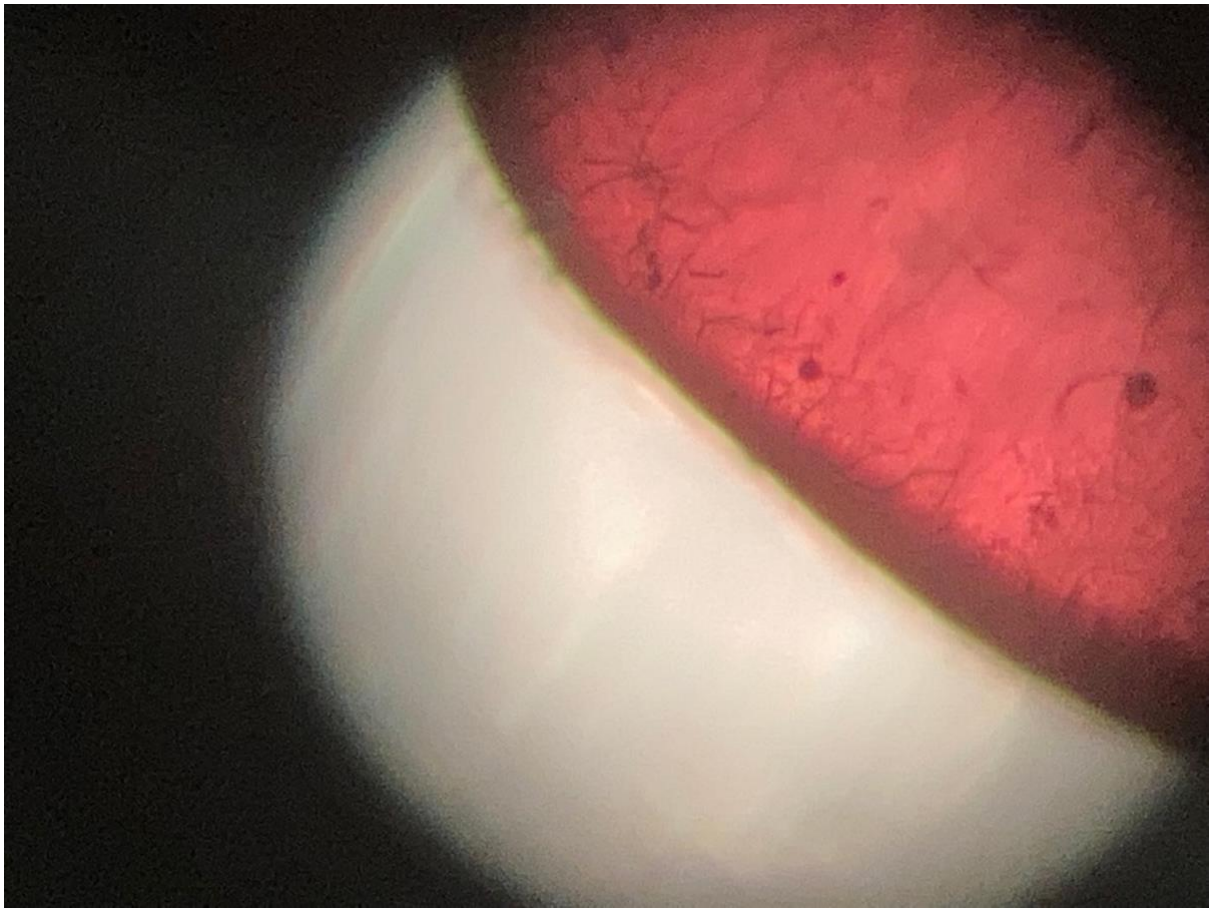
Sand under a microscope. The colors – pink, green, blue, different shades of white – kaleidoscope under the lens. Textures of the grain fade in and out of focus, layer by layer, frustrating, confusing; these grains remain blurred in places even as they become crystal clear in others. I wonder what I'm doing wrong. Eventually, I realize that the issue might be that this sand is 'immature' sand – more like grit – where the grains are not yet small enough to be seen clearly in their entirety, at least not at this magnification (Sepp, n.d., and Welland, 2009). An interesting textural position: the grain is still in process, so it cannot be clearly seen or categorized at any one time. It requires that we accept blurriness as a part of clarity. Accepting that not everything can be seen, perfectly, at any one time creates space for possibilities, for layered realities that necessarily shift and move, and for the imaginative process of what may or may not lie in blurred edges.

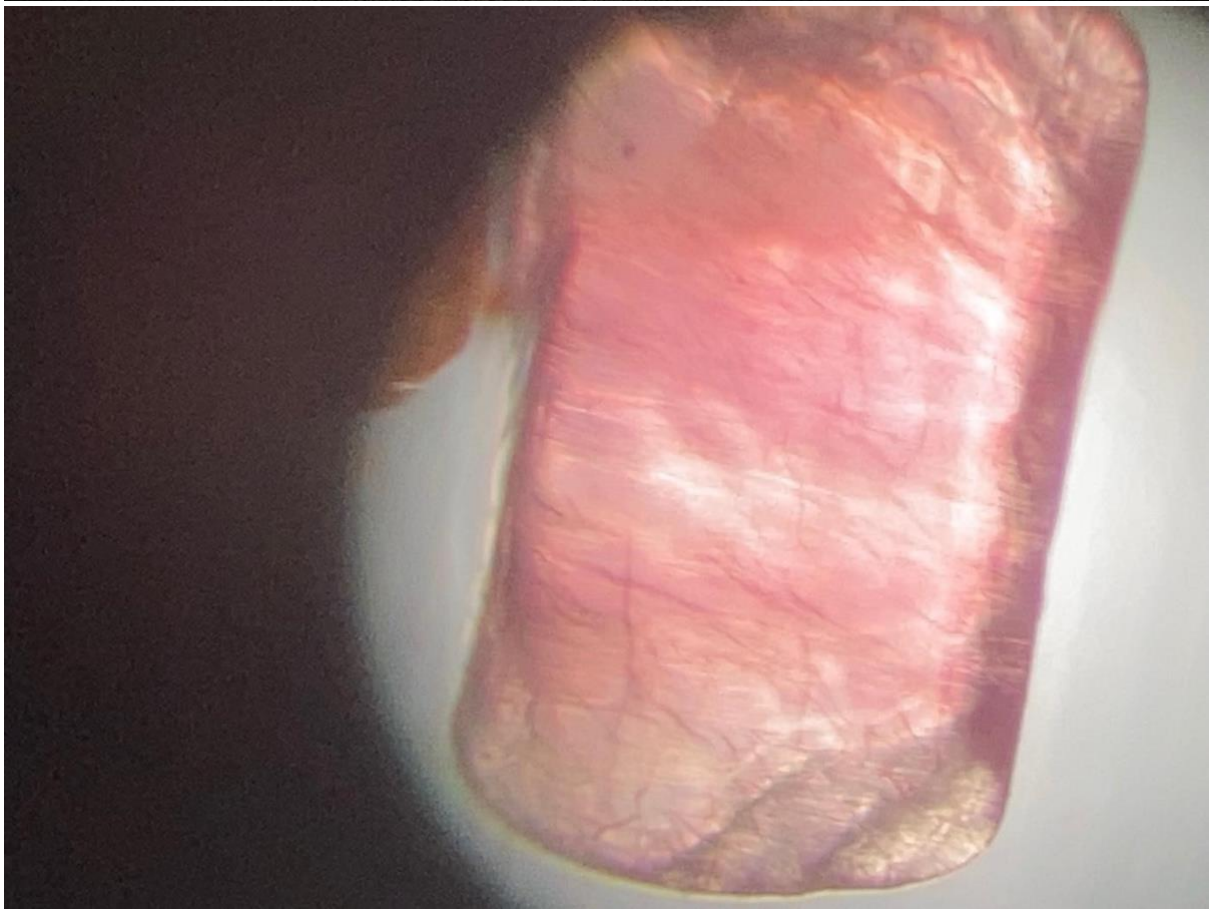
The grains emerge, swimming in and out of sight, as planets, or moons. Most are shiny and transparent, made of the mineral quartz, which also makes the huge granite boulders I would climb as a child, and the pretty pink stones I would collect on mountain walks. Organic matter with the sand too, and other debris. This view is an institutionally mediated one. My studies at UCT allow access to this microscope. UCT, strangely, is tied up with Woodstock Beach in other ways too. P.D. Hahn looked for gold in its sands, and in 1936, A.E. Snape assessed the quality of the rope that failed in a life-saving practice, resulting in the death of a traffic constable (Rosenthal, 1959 & Correspondence File B905/5, Western Cape Archives). Both men are

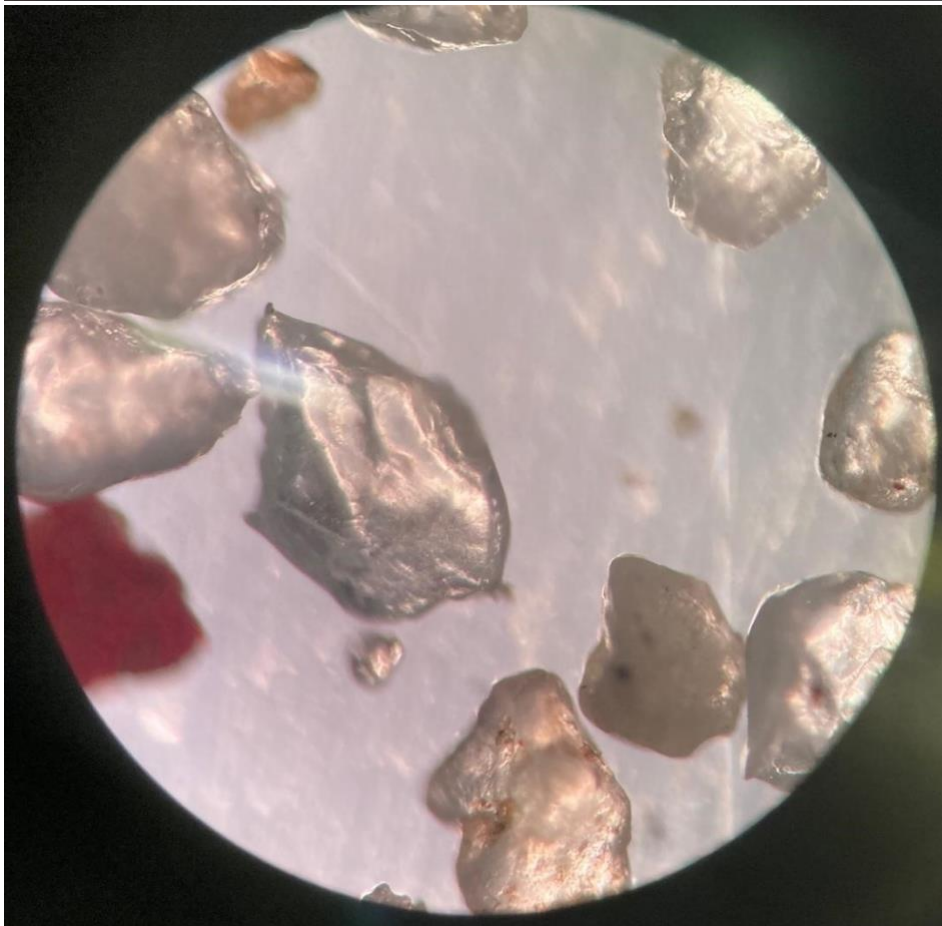
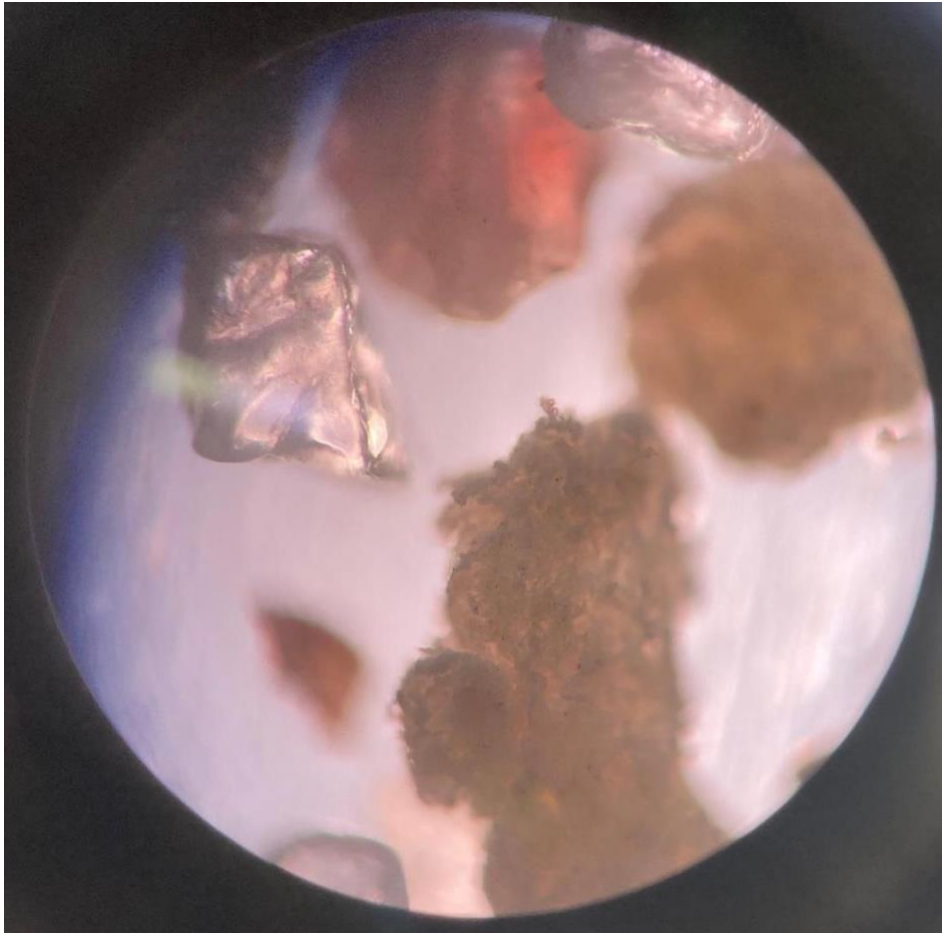
remembered at UCT with buildings bearing their names. Grains of sand from Woodstock Beach touched the lives of people who touched the architecture – for good or for bad – at this place of learning. These grains of sand ground us at the beach, in its mineral qualities, which in turn reveal a useful set of analytic qualities – scalar flexibility, an acceptance of blurriness. Seeing with the material of Woodstock Beach illustrates the power of engaging the material on its own terms, reading the stories as it writes them.

Figure 6-13 (below): Sand from Woodstock, as seen under a compound microscope.









Sand, it turns out, is a useful inter-scalar vehicle. That is, thinking with sand allows us to travel through space and time at multiple scales – from seconds to eons, from the atomic to the astronomic (Hecht, 2018). Referencing the poet William Blake, who sees ‘a World in a Grain of Sand’, Michael Welland suggests that “sand is a character that has a role to play at every scale, both in the physical sense and in our collective imagination” (2009: 42). In addition to sand’s flexibility of and at scale, sand as material emphasizes the liminal, ever-shifting basis of things and our world. Objects and words are only ever what they are momentarily – they then move and change and land elsewhere, differently. Similarly, sand is never still. Today’s sand has come from the rocks and shells and reefs that existed millions of years ago. Eventually, after processes as varied as weathering, erosion, corrosion, saltation, sedimentation, digestion, calcification, and crystallization, today’s sand will be the rocks and shells and reefs of the future. However, this future is uncertain. Sand’s role in other processes – especially colonial and capitalist construction – means that the world is running out of sand. Sand is illegally dredged at an astonishing rate, and in some places, entire beaches – as well as flood plains and other buffers – disappear overnight (Welland, 2009 and Carruthers & Dakkak, 2020). Attending to sand highlights the politics in processes that may seem ‘natural’. Julian Brigstocke, in their work on sandscapes, finds that “sand is drift. Thinking with sand—walking upon sand, touching it, looking at it, smelling it—opens up questions about origins, metamorphoses, processes, decay, death, and the nature of time passing” (2020: 532). Texturing and attending to sand allows us to explore the issues that niggle beneath our fingernails, those that are swept under carpets, as well as those which sediment and cement themselves beneath our feet.

In sand, in the material, we find metaphors and modes of analysis that open up worlds for contact.

Fence

With my dad, taking the recycling.

He's driving and already my eyes are locking into focus in a way that doesn't quite work in a car. My neck snapping around to keep my eyes on the thing, or the movement, as we zoom off. The recycling depot is on Beach Road, and I've been there many times. It used to be quite ramshackle; a ramp barely wide enough for a car, piles of sorted plastic in open air, and a garden – carefully curated statues, toilet basins, old tires, and wind-scraped plants. They tore down the old asbestos shed a few years ago, and now the ramp fits two cars comfortably, everything is neat and concrete and new. The garden has been replaced by a security check. Of course, before all of this, the line that is now Beach Road was in fact the beach.

The beach, here, with its pristine, white sands. Horses were exercised in the surf. Fish were caught and cooked, engagements celebrated.

My dad is impatient with the temperature scanning. He says were in a rush. We're not. He also says I should note that it's interesting that the recycling depot is on the site of what would have been the Cape's first polluted beach really. Noted.

The drop off is quick, almost rudely efficient. As we leave, we drive past the group of men sitting on the corner, against a wall, amidst plastic and paper waste, below what could be birds, or bunting, but what is actually the ubiquitous (in this space) tangle of plastic in a barbed wire fence.

Fencing, pollution, enclosure, breakage. The ecologies of fences in this space: plastic tangles, rust, peeling paint, weeds – the chemical legacies of the beach in the salt in the air in the wind. People drink beer and dump plastic, or tiles, or bottles, or tickets. Fences enable accumulation – of things along their boundaries, of land through enclosure and dispossession. Other memories of the beach: wind and polluted water. The beach covered in fat. Salt River Power station was on Woodstock Beach, and it used the sea water for cooling. The warm water was piped to the municipal baths, and was let out into the ocean – memories of finding the swirling 'kettings' (ribbons) of warm water to swim in. Ways of living with that first polluted beach.

For Michael Sheridan, fences are “excellent sites for the study of both historical ecology and political ecology in southern Africa because they mediate both material and ideological change” (2008: 154). In their work, fences figure as a ‘keystone’ technology in colonial ecosystems. What do we find in the textures of fence and their tech-ideologies? Of the lines they make and the lines – of barbs and metal and rust – which make them? Materially, metaphorically, fences always have two sides to them; accumulation, dispossession, inside, outside, legal, illegal. The fences below, reinforced over the years, are an assemblage of everyday and ecological lives, of the politics of property and capital.

Figure 14 (below): Layers and accumulations of fence along Beach Road



The picture below, painted by an artist called L'Quelbec in 1840 is titled *Woodstock Beach with Mill*. The presence of the mill, with its smudgy plume of smoke, suggests industry: energy harnessed, things being ground and processed – the beach; a frontier of industry.



Figure 15: 'Woodstock Beach with Mill', 1840, L'Quelbec. Oil on canvas.

While there is both a mill and a beach in this painting, I can't help but be more struck by the fence. The line of the fence, like that of the beach, runs across the entire picture plain. The fence, like the mill, provides vertical emphasis. Its regular posts and disappearing line are used to bring us in to the picture (the proximity of the post on the far left suggests that we are close to it), to lead us through it (our eye travels the fence's path), but also to maintain our position as separate from this world into which we look. This is what the line of the fence does in this picture. But it is also what lines of fence attempt to do in real life. Fences were used to create space at Woodstock Beach, to bind it, to guide our movement through it, and to categorize it.

Driving the beach streets of Woodstock, we drive the lines of the tides, and the lines of colonial arrival and defense. We drive corridors of fence. The picture below is of Fort Knokke, a military base that stood on the shores of Woodstock Beach (*Fort Knokke*, Morris Collection M849, Western Cape Archives). The sentry boxes remained in their initial positions until the 1950s. They stood for over a century, guarding nothing. Again, this picture of the fort is more a picture of the fence.



Figure 16: Black and white photograph of Fort Knokke on Woodstock Beach with fencing in foreground.

The fencing is barbed wire, strung and woven in loose diagonal grids. Somehow this slightly ramshackle fence undermines the implicit power of the fort. It reminds me of thorns, or thicket, or a rural cattle post. Scrappy.

Fences are designed to keep animals, plants, and people in (or out). On Woodstock Beach, this could have included cows grazing on kelp, or people walking the shores. In South Africa, the history of barbed wire fencing is intimately tied up with settler colonial politics.

In 1886, gold is discovered. Barbed wire fences are used in the mining labor compounds and hostels – which proudly drew inspiration from Cape Town’s slave lodge. In 1890, the Boer government of the Orange Free State made fencing mandatory for agricultural land. White farmers were encouraged to fence off land (an early form of land-grabbing), and to intensively farm wheat and cattle, which could be sold at a profit to the booming – and hungry – mining towns. Fences fundamentally changed the nature of agriculture in South Africa, shifting an economy based on pastoralism and hunting to one based on intensive farming (Forth, 2017). Fences here are both a catalyst for and a response to changing social conditions and technoscientific discoveries. The metal in the fence is linked to the metal in the ore and also to the seeds in the soil and the wealth in our hands.

In 1899, fences very similar to the ones that the Orange Free State government had made mandatory were now being used against them by the British in the creation of Boer concentration camps. The map below (from Forth, 2017) shows the extent to which these fences crisscrossed the country, creating nets and networks to chase down Boer rebels more effectively. These lines are long enough to be rivers.

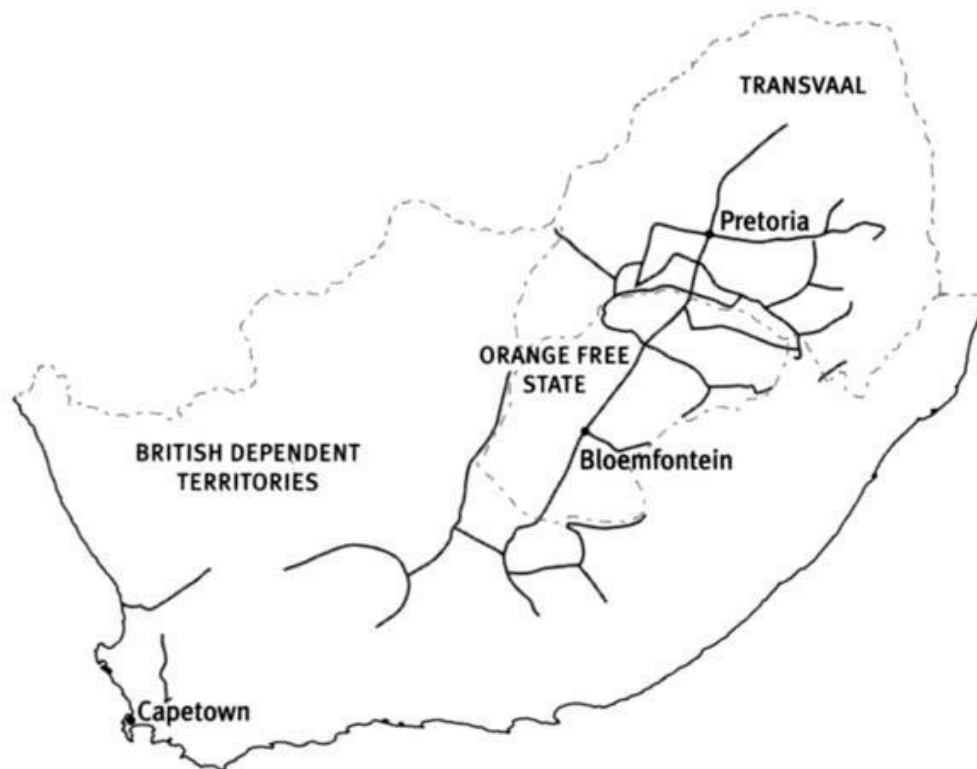


Figure 17: Lines of barbed wire, South Africa, 1902. Based on maps in the War Office 1906. In A. Forth, 2017.

Of course, these fences had all along been used to inscribe race, and to dispossess people of color of their lands. While fencing became mandatory in 1890, it did so along racial lines, and black and brown people were initially left to live and work on unfenced land. However, other fences meant that animals could no longer freely follow the rains or the seasons, which restricted the movement and grazing of game and stock animals. These restrictions had important socio-economic effects for black and brown people, who were increasingly unable to derive a living from their lands and were increasingly compelled to work as farm hands on fenced, white-owned lands. During the South African war, the British housed black servants of Boer families in separate concentration camps. Fences in South Africa created racial categories that were inscribed on and through space; white people live on fenced land, and black people live on unfenced land. With the Land Act of 1950 and the increase in fencing across the country, this divide was less about the actual fence, and more about whether the fence conferred the title rights of the land to you (yes = white, no = black) (Netz, 2004). Texturing fence renders these politics visible.

Back on Beach Road. The space today is busy, trucks roaring by and overloaded vehicles of all degrees of dilapidation, rattling. Around the corner, the Esplanade railway station. The name esplanade a trace of the walkway that used to extend from the beach out into the sea. A woman sitting selling bruised bananas. I wonder if anyone comes this way. A broken *Castle* beer bottle (also *Savannah*, *Hunters* – colonial no?). Beautiful stonework, peeling paint. The wall heightened by a fence. A sign for Cash Loans, but its entrance is filled in, covered up by the railway. Signs of life removed.

There is no such thing as a weed – only a plant growing where you do not want it to grow. An imposition of order onto space, which people and process keep complicated. Weeds grow through cracks, and fences unwittingly protect them. Fences trace the line that would have been the beach, that would have been the shore. The story of Woodstock beach as told by fences.



Figure 38 Lines of fences and layers of walls along Beach Road.

In the archives, fences are put up on Woodstock beach for very clear reasons – to keep out “undesirables” and other “evilily designed persons”. Generally, these undesirable and evil people seem to be children and the poor. Nick Hayes (2020: 399-400), in *The Book of Trespass* suggests that

a fence is first and foremost a method of division. When the line is drawn in an argument, it implicitly creates the illusion that, according to its logic, one side represents the direct opposite of the other. The notion of common ground, the idea of shared values, is entirely obliterated by the dualist command of the fence. It divides the value judgement from all context and polarises the debate into an absolutist, partisan mindset of good versus bad.

A fence does not just create division, it creates opposition – the sea *versus* the land, the road *versus* the beach, the good *versus* the bad. Perhaps even more important than this polarizing effect, is the way in which fences simultaneously reify and obscure the power of the people (colonists, settlers, landowners) who claim control over the land (Van Sittert, 2002: 117). A fence makes power absolute in the landscape; it is an uncrossable boundary. Once the fence is established, once the line is drawn, it allows us to forget the process and the people who were required to draw the line, and erect the fence (Ingold, 2016). Forgetting creates a lack of accountability for the effects of the fence in the present. This obscures the power of the process, but also determines the terms of engagement; it is impossible to peacefully resist a fence, because a fence remains mute and unanswerable to its actions. In the moment of encounter, the only immediate way to question a fence is to trespass or destroy it. Both options are criminal. The lives of fences on Woodstock Beach discussed below suggest that the power of the line goes beyond us forgetting its origins and includes the way in which it is unanswerable to this process.

On Woodstock Beach in 1917:

The fencing is in a very defective state and is most unsightly having been pulled to pieces for firewood by undesirables frequenting the tip, but it has served the purpose for which it was erected.

(*Woodstock Beach: Petition Requesting Provision of Accommodation for Bathers and Visitors*. Correspondence File 3CT 4/1/4/239 E130/4, 1916. Western Cape Archives.).

Here we see the deflctive power of a fence; people dispossessed of their land tear apart the fence for firewood. The system of dispossession and exclusion, remains mostly intact.

In 1918, the Railway Yard asks whether they can erect a barbed wire fence over the stone retaining wall of the foreshore at Woodstock beach, “so as to prevent any evil{y} disposed persons using the wall as a parapet to climb over the wire fence” (*Proposed Warm Water Swimming Baths: Woodstock Beach. Repairs and Improvements to Bathing Pavilion, Woodstock*. Correspondence File 3CT 4/2/1/1/356 34/30,1930. Western Cape Archives). Parapets remain fenced today:



Figure 19: Parapets and fences covered in barbed wire fencing at the Woodstock Brewery, Beach Road.

Moral codes accompany the fence; people who cross the line of the fence are at best ‘undesirable’ and at worst ‘evily disposed’. Even when the fence does not yet materially exist, it changes the language used to describe people and place. Fisherfolk who rented boat houses are no longer referred to by *name* or the term *lessee*, but are also called ‘occupiers’ when the land they use is proposed to be fenced. The boathouses below are ‘to be shifted’ (*Proposal to fence land at Woodstock Beach*, Correspondence File 3CT 4/1/5/1293 R101/5, 1926-1928. Western Cape Archives.). The permanence of a building, of material and social relations, is undermined by the power of a fence. The fence is power, makes power, hides power.

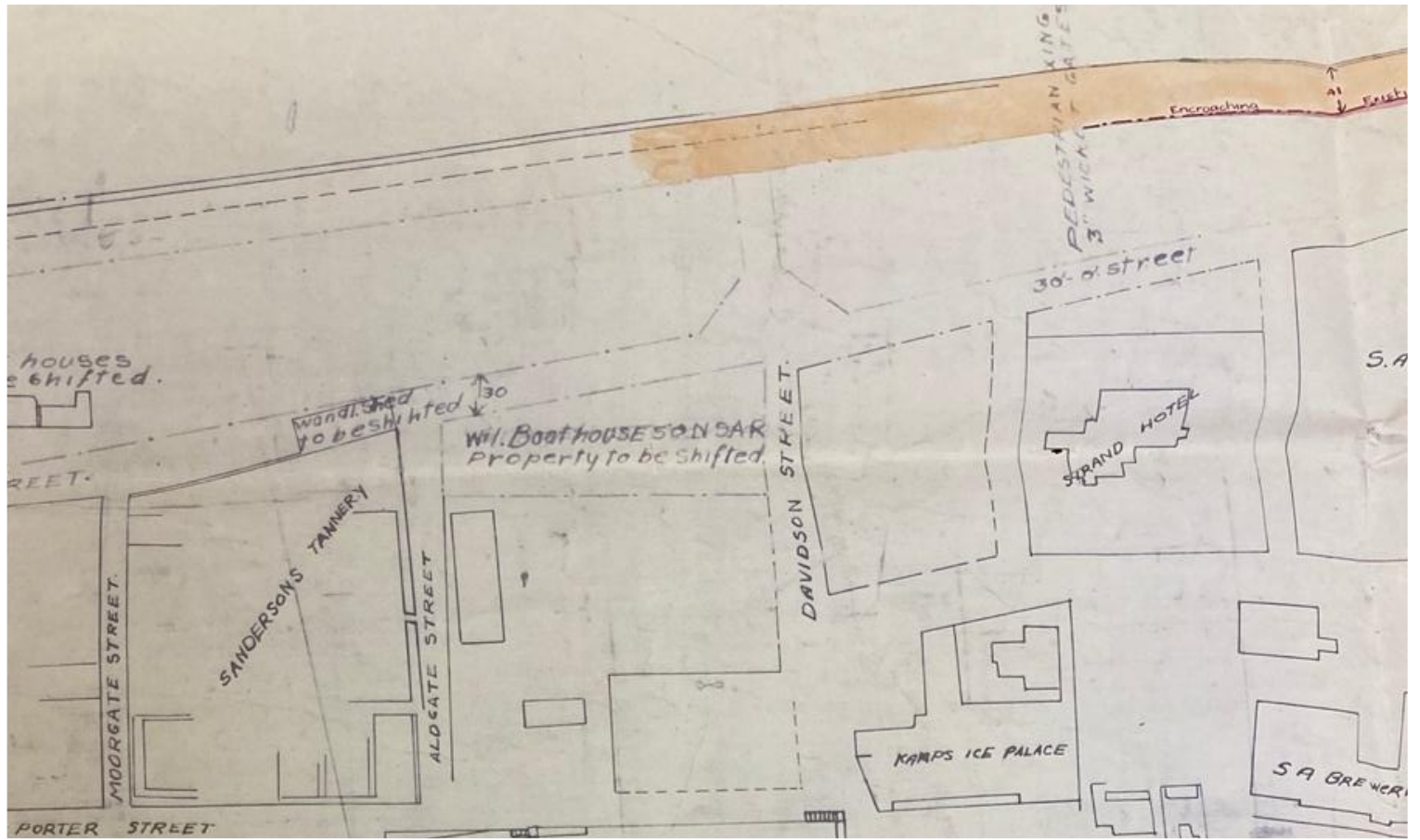


Figure 20: Detail of map proposing the fencing of land at Woodstock Beach, showing bathouses 'to be shifted'.

The pictures below show a contemporary fence situated on Tide Street in Woodstock, and a 1690 map of the Cape peninsular.



Figure 21: Textural and visual similarities between fencing at Woodstock Beach and 1690 map of the Cape peninsular.

Texturally, I was struck by the similarities between the patina on the (left) and this 1690 map of Cape Town and surrounds (right). The mountain ranges in those splotchy green blues, and

cultivated land in the yellow rectangles. These colors and shapes – different land uses and understandings – echoed in the fence. Different lines making place.

Texturing fence highlights how Woodstock Beach is made and unmade, and how land and wealth is created, accumulated, and dispossessed at a country-wide scale. Attending to the texture of fence ensures an attunement to power and the visible and invisible ways it moves across space. It also engages the productive tension between fence as division – the effects of the technology – and fence as boundary – where edges act as meeting points and spaces of accumulation for unwanted things. Attending to these political effects, accumulations, and the way in which their power obscured is an important analytic attunement.

Fig

In the gardens.

Doves – warbling?

That watery wooden timbre. Bamboo. Cool.

Still air, like in Zanzibar, and still bodies too.

A place a body can rest.

I've arrived after a hot and trafficky drive through town. Under the archways, along New Market Street, looking for the scribbles of stow-aways. I read a Sean Christie (2016) article about that. The sea would have been right here. Parking is difficult, but now, there is shade, and I'm on my walk to the Slave Lodge.

Texturally, I am here because of an encounter with a graveyard that sinks in and out of focus on Woodstock Beach. In the archives, the cemetery is – officially – lost and found several times. Many months and maps later, I determine that the graveyard must have been on the beach in an area that was replaced by boatsheds, then by two roads, and more recently by a fishfinger factory. When I visit the site I am greeted by an enormous billboard – *Fish tonight? Good for you!*

In the 1950s, a mass grave was discovered while excavating for the foreshore. A combination of isotopic analysis and anthropological archaeology suggests that these skeletons belong to the 20 European soldiers and the 50 enslaved African people who died in the wreck of the *Paquet Real*, off of Woodstock Beach. My hope on this visit is to find some kind of material trace of the *Paquet Real* shipwreck. I know that they are currently working on another shipwreck, and hope that they will have some information on mine. (Mine?) In a coffee shop before I go, I learn that the skeletons of those who died on the *Paquet Real* are housed at the South African Museum (Worden et al., 1998: 109).

The wreck of the *Paquet Real* was by no means exceptional for the times, except in that it was a slave brig that asked to come ashore for refreshments at the Cape in 1818. Because the British had abolished the slave trade, this was not usually an option, but the ship had taken 72 days to reach the Cape on its way to Brazil. Usually, the entire trip to Brazil would take about 60 days in total, so this is extreme. The boat was critically low on supplies, and the captain made a 'humanitarian' plea to dock and provision. This provided the British authorities with the awkward (and at times seemingly agonizing) task of deciding how to accommodate this ship and the enslaved (Letter from C. Arbuthnot, Esqre., to Henry Goulburn, Esqre. Enclosures concerning slaves in the *Pacquet Real*. August 1818. Records of the Cape Colony from May 1818 to January 1820. 1902, Vol XII: 30). In the end, the back and forth was unnecessary, because when the ship wrecked the enslaved folk were no longer in transit, and therefore no longer part of the 'trade'. Of course, at this stage the officials also had no choice in the matter. The captain still requested to see the hospitalized slaves to assess the value 'lost'. There was a hospital on Woodstock Beach, near the cemetery – they could have been housed there.

At the lodge, student's price. The arrival hall charts the development of historical and modernday slavery. I walk through the dark corridors and am immediately drawn to the outside courtyard – it feels easier to be hands on I guess, in the less curated space. The floor, patterned

stone cobbles. A sentry box from Fort Knokke – I wasn't expecting that. It was moved from the upper reaches of the beach– by then the railway – in the 1950s, but I didn't know it had been moved here.

There is an old well in the center. A group of Muslim womxn sit at a table chatting, and a dark doorway offers coolth – but a tour is in progress. “You can go in” they say. The guide – bleached straw blond hair – is talking about the routes the slave ships took. This is an experience of the Indian ocean, she says. Names after the place of the market, not the place of origin. Names changing all the time. A dark display for a different Portuguese slave ship, also wrecked. Ropes and wood. I squat at the back, trying not to be in the way. This is about the cultural life of the city, she says. This is about educated people, artisans, script. We move to the next room to a display on the layout of the lodge, its artefacts, and the system of chattel slavery. I leave the tour, conscious of appearing disinterested but I need to see the other exhibits.

I walk around the building, intrigued as much by its layout as by its contents. Vases and instruments and weapons and suits of armor and snuff boxes and watches. Stairs up and down to nowhere. This part of the lodge has that old musty smell. The exhibits downstairs smelled like wood, or thatch. Through these dusty blinds I notice an enormous fig tree.

A full tour of the building ends up with me back outside. The womxn are still there, chatting in Afrikaans. The fig tree is beautiful. I feel I can exhale. It filters the light, green and expansive. Branches reach up to a yellowed plastic ceiling, and the floor is covered with fruit. I stretch to pick a few; squishy, enormous. I wonder how old it is, this tree. We used to have a fig tree in Woodstock, fed by a perennial underground stream we never saw but could always hear. It bore the most delicious fruit, until beetle got under its bark. I slip the figs into my bag, feeling guilty in my spoils. I try to settle them gently amongst my books and pens and tape and computer. I complete my circuit of the courtyard, and come across an anchor, and what looks like a piece of the hull (or stern?) of a ship. Its paint is faded, but it's a beautiful blue-green. The paint must be relatively recent. An *amajoya* sweet wrapper in the same faded color. It's time for me to leave.



I emerge and it feels a bit jarring. I'm trying to think where Spin Street is – where the Slave Tree monument is. I notice how the buildings – warm sandstone gold, stand proud above the lodge. The space felt lively for a museum. Voices and laughter drifting through those dark rooms. And it felt so much like Zanzibar. Calm quiet chattering in heat, friendly people, at ease, relaxed. Headscarves, stone, courtyards, trees with fat leaves.



Figure 23: Watercolor print of fig leaf.

I retrieve a fig from my bag and gently pull it open. The inside is dry and wrong. The second is the same. Not to be eaten. It feels like a metaphor.

The texture of this fig evoked an embodied response – I was jolted into awareness. My body felt that this thing was *wrong*. Part of texturing involves momentarily suspending disbelief. In the textures above, there are intersections of the gaze, the ground, and of realization. These lines intersect with points of connection, but they also suggest an expansive reach. I take this textural encounter with the fig as an opportunity to imagine the meanings and stories around it – what possibilities are out there. This genus of fig tree – *Ficus carica* – can live to be 200 years old. This tree could have been around in 1820. The *Paquet Real* was wrecked in 1818, and those that survived were sold on as ‘prized’ enslaved. They could have been here. They could have been here alongside this fig tree. Of course, that’s all story, but its evocative, and not necessarily untrue. Allowing myself to be jolted by texture allows my critical engagements to follow embodied responses, which in turn allows histories to momentarily manifest in the present. The texture of the fig – dry and crumbly on the inside, malleable, and tacky to the touch – opens up the world for contact.



Figure 24: Criss-crossing patterns as I realize the fig is texturally 'wrong', inside the lodge as I see the fig tree, and in the paving of the lodge courtyard (left to right).

In 1935, a letter in the 'South Africa Advertiser' argues against the construction of the new docks – the docks which will eventually subsume Woodstock beach. Their argument is that while over four thousand ships had entered the bay in the preceding 25 years, only 44 had wrecked. They argue that the loss of life had in fact been minimal, except in the case of the “slaves lost in the wreck of the Portuguese brig ‘Pacquet Real’”. The author discounts the death of these passengers because the slaves were “debilitated by confinement and paralysed by fear. Many sank almost without an effort to save themselves” (1935: 73). It seems that this very evocative report is meant to act as an argument against the increased safety that a new dock would afford. An entire history, the life stories of hundreds of people, are mentioned only to be made an exception to disregard. Compassion in these texts, in these materials, in the arguments that went into the texts and the materials that took away the beach, is sorely lacking.



Figure 25: Details from print of fig leaf, showing lines, veins and positive and negative space.

Fig trees are keystone species on a continent-wide scale. The presence of figs enables the lives of mammals, insects, birds, fungi, and other plant species. In much of sub-Saharan Africa, the

presence of fig trees appears to be the main factor affecting the presence and numbers of fruiteating birds. It has been suggested that if figs were to die out in Peru's Amazon basin, the entire ecosystem could collapse (Shanahan, 2016). The unruly edges of the lives of fig trees, as well as the friction caused by their sticky tacky messy latex weeping, brings parts of the world into contact in ways perhaps previously unforeseen (Tsing, 2011). The smudginess and patchiness in the prints above, and in physical encounters with the fig, create gaps and ambiguities. For Anna Tsing, patchiness gestures to "open-ended assemblages of entangled ways of life" and emerges as "patterns of unintentional co-ordination develop", which are able to show us potential histories in the making (Tsing, 2015: 23). Patchiness reveals an incompleteness that is *full* – just with other things, elsewhere. In texturing patchiness, we attend to these full and incomplete stories, elsewhere. Unintentional co-ordination; things make meaning without what we understand as 'intent', and; interactions and encounters matter. Histories are in the making – artefacts are never truly consigned to the past; they are always *potentially* involved in some unrealised interaction, somewhere.

The role of the fig as a textural guide slowly emerges. It is central to the arrangements around it. It's veins suggest a process – or ground – of contained expansion. It acts, for me, as a reminder to keep my critical energies focused, but also to tread lightly, leaving and attending to spaces for gaps and backtracking, ambiguities.

The fig tree takes us to Woodstock Beach, and gestures to possible histories – some of which are still becoming. This fig tree has never touched Woodstock Beach. But it may have been touched by others who landed there. The fig tree is evidence of hundreds of years of experience and witnessing, of the ongoing process of growing and being alive. Encountering the fig tree attunes us to the tacky, sticky, smudgy things that cling to our skin, and requires that we treat them seriously. Following embodied responses, true and possible histories, and ecological roles that emerge in this encounter with the fig enables stories, truths, connections and histories of Woodstock Beach to be accessed, differently.

All in all

This chapter ('*Ground*') has taken an intimate meander through the materiality of sand, fence and fig at Woodstock Beach, and has argued for an understanding of place as written by place itself. The textures of sand, fence and fig connect to varied histories and ecologies, provide contextually grounded metaphors, and suggest useful analytic lenses.

Engaging sand highlighted the scalar flexibility of the method of texturing, and ensured an attunement to the blurriness of ongoing material and social transformation and realisation. The texture of sand provides metaphors that allow analysis to spring from the material itself. It guides my lines of inquiry – whether to engage the contradictions and frustrations stemming from blurred edges, or the intimacies of shared experience across history, of sand between toes. Texturing sand at Woodstock Beach pulls us into relations of curiosity, frustration and wonder which ensure an extended rigour where multiple, far-reaching histories are engaged to understand the creation and relevance of place at Woodstock Beach.

The edges of sand proved productive: its blurred edges under a microscope allowed space for possibilities, and gestured to the presence and importance of ongoing processes. Attending to fences and their edges in the second section of *Ground* allowed similarly useful insights. Texturing fences highlighted not only the creation of division in space, but also the creation of relations of opposition, of inside versus outside, of good versus bad. Engaging fence on Woodstock Beach revealed the ways in which these lines determine modes of engagement, and simultaneously enact and obscure power. Texturing fence connects place to broader histories of enclosure, dispossession, and the creation of wealth and race. At the same time, the material of fence also contradicts and at times undermines its own technological and ideological position by enabling the accumulation and protection of unwanted things – of debris or weeds – along its edges. Texturing fence grounds and highlights the creation and maintenance of order in space, but it also allows for connections (lines of fence entangle, lines of history too) and contradictions (a fence is a barrier and a point of connection) to be included in an understanding of place that is shifting and bound up with other places.

Finally, texturing fig heightens awareness of embodied responses, and attends to moments of unruly contact, of friction, stickiness, and overlapping edges. Attending to the ecological role of figs as a keystone species – and this is true for sand (the never-ending story) and fence (keystone species) too – ensures these things and places are understood in relation to the things and places around them. Here, the material reveals histories – of slavery and resistance – and also provides insight into how to read and understand their continued presence and relevance in the world; as central to the arrangements around it.

Chapter Three: Encounter

Treaty – Map – Land

The previous chapter illustrated the value of texture as a materially grounded but metaphorically and analytically expansive approach to reading stories of place. This chapter focuses on how texture allows us to read the various processes that go into the production of the encounter; that is, it allows us to read the various social, chemical, environmental, and political histories that converge in any one thing or moment in time. Texture as method – with its attunement to presence and absence – allows us to engage multiple spatial and temporal scales to understand how things remain relevant, and how places are always coming-into-being. Crucially, this means that previously ‘mute’ text(ure)s can now be read and used to retrieve and re-encounter different (entry points to) histories.

In the case of Woodstock beach, texture as encounter allows me to work more imaginatively and rigorously (more questions asked, more lines of inquiry followed) with the limited traces we have for the place and people of Woodstock beach. Treating these textures – of trees and maps and archives and documents – as evidence of encounter leads us back to histories of slavery and dispossession and illustrates their complex and central role in the process of making land, space and place in South Africa.

Treaty

This chapter begins in Woodstock, visiting a milkwood known as the Treaty Tree. The tree, on the corner of Spring and Treaty Streets, once stood on the edge of the beach, and is one of the last living contemporaries of Woodstock Beach. Kev is with me. I tried to make plans with Pip but life is busy. I wanted someone there though, to act as eyes, so that I could relax and focus. Probably unnecessary in the end, because the Treaty Tree is now in a kind of public-private enclave; it's a City of Cape Town Park with the usual signage (no loitering, no littering, no graffiti) but its access is controlled through TSIBA (a business school, says Google). The whole thing is gated off, and the security guard is not exactly enthusiastic about us visiting. Eventually we are told to park outside and are given 10 minutes to look at the tree. Note, this is a *public* park.

The tree seems to form part of TSIBA's lunch garden set up. It's pretty, manicured, and very separate. You mostly hear bird song (red-winged starlings in the tree) and the shouts and murmurs of children in nearby houses. The other sounds of Woodstock – the kind of boom bash crash of industry and cars – muffled by the leaves.

But the tree is there – and it's so inviting! It looks so much like the tree in the paintings I've seen, and the pictures. Funny that, that a tree can look so particular to be recognizable. It has this gorgeous, gnarled, fat, wind-bent trunk that is just asking to be clambered onto. The trunk flattens out into the arching canopy, which is beautiful. A cathedral, surely. I can imagine placing one barefooted sole after the other, carefully, and walking its length. Filled with birdsong and movement, and of course bedraggled plastic – although it looks pretty here. The tree is splattered with paint in places, and thread is caught in its bark. The floor beneath is covered in gravel, but also leaves and berries, bird poop, cigarette butts, tinfoil.



Figure 26: The Treaty Tree



Figure 27: 'Ground'

I collect these things, and press paper to the tree bark and score my blue pastel across the surface, transcribing texture of this encounter from trunk to sheet. A chaotic, messy process. Above is a textural assemblage of the tree – the rubbing ‘grounds’ the tree in its physical materiality, in its place and context, while also suggesting lines of movement. The found objects gesture to fragments of other stories, elsewhere. In this section, I texture encounter. This process begins firmly grounded in the immediate context, and then follows the histories that inform the texture of this context.

Etymologically, ‘texture’ is from the Latin *textura* - "web, texture, structure,". The root **teks-* encompasses several words relating to fabrication, making and activity (Harper, n.d.). I want to bring this generative and layered element of texture as method into conversation with the ‘contextual aesthetics’ outlined by Berleant in *Ideas for a Social Aesthetic* (2005:23-38). Here, we find

‘acceptance’ as an open and non-judgemental quality of attention, ‘perception’ as sensory experience inclusive of memory, imagination and thought, a ‘sensuousness’ inclusive of all the senses, not just the distance receptors of sight and hearing emphasised in traditional aesthetics, ‘discovery’ as a freshness and sense of new possibilities, ‘uniqueness’ in the unrepeatability of each aesthetic experience, ‘reciprocity’ as a dynamic exchange, ‘continuity’ of all these factors, ‘engagement’ where boundaries fade away and we become vulnerable, and a ‘multiplicity’ of sites for aesthetic involvement, limited only by our willingness to participate and our perceptual sensitivity (Clark, 2010: 358).

This contextual aesthetics speaks usefully to the attunements required in texturing. The emphasis on openness, inclusiveness, dynamism and possibility speaks to a form of encounter that is curious and expansive. The ‘contextual’ element speaks directly to issues of texture: context means to make (*text*), together (*con*). Making – together, is a very good way to think about engaging with the world. It is also a good way to think about writing stories, and collecting data. Encountering the material of the milkwood through texture allows me to follow traces, to curate similarities, and to engage critical imaginings.

Milkwoods are found in coastal areas or make up coastal forests. You could join the dots, milkwood to milkwood, to trace the coastline. For me, milkwoods are deep shade for sand-scorched feet, and a musty-musky smell that somehow feels mournful, not-quite-right for this summer day that is otherwise sun and salt. The Latin name for milkwoods is *Sideroxylon inerme* – which translates to iron wood. These trees were highly valued by colonial settlers for their strength and durability, which was particularly useful in shipbuilding. Forests of milkwood were decimated to support this industry, as well as for firewood (Ellis, 2019). Four Milkwood trees have been declared national monuments in South Africa, and milkwoods generally are protected in law, making it illegal to cut them down, or damage them in any way. These trees clearly have a potency.

Imagining a beach here, in this fenced off, built up, closed in corner, where all the surfaces seem too close and hard to fully discern, feels almost impossible – a white expanse of sand and sea makes no sense. And yet, standing here now, the living presence – the living memory – of this tree that was *there then*, grounds the immediacy of the histories and relevance of Woodstock Beach in the present. This tree is a definite artefact of the time, that touched the

beach, that I have now touched and been touched by. Texturally, I'm struck by the number of berries – squishy or shriveled – that have amassed on top of the gravel. Given the protected status of milkwood's I had assumed that their reproduction is difficult. But here; so many berries, so many seeds. Gravel around its base serves as a barrier between the seed and the soil – new growth would be impossible here. The legacy of the tree is tied up and contained.

Gravel is a busily uniform texture. Visually, it can be quite overwhelming. Gravel is put down to neaten and contain; it demarcates this tree as an object in a space of leisure – to be looked at and enjoyed. The gravel, as a clearly created surface, comes to demarcate what Mary Douglas (2003) terms 'matter out of place', which in turn demarcates what is proper and accepted in a space. The messy texture of the tree – its bark, leaves and berries – has been controlled and its impact contained. The berries may still fall, but they do not *land*. They are not able to make a lasting imprint on place. They cannot sprout and take root. This textural relationship reveals its politics. The tree is positioned neatly as 'the treaty tree'. It's meaning has been decided, labelled, and put aside as something to remember, which allows us to promptly forget (Marschall, 2010). Texturally, the messy, ongoing (growing?) histories are landscaped/manicured out of sight.

Three of the four milkwood monuments are intimately tied up in colonial contact. The 'Post Office Tree' at Santos Beach in Mossel Bay was used by the Portuguese as a place to store messages. This began with a captain nicknamed O Inferno (Hell), who left an account of his travels suspended in a shoe from the tree. Today in Mossel Bay, you can send your letters via a post-box shaped like a shoe. There is even a special stamp (Gavin, n.d.). Further inland, the 'Fingu Milkwood' marks the spot where the mFengu people committed themselves to Christianity, and signed into alliance with the Cape Colony in 1835 (Bikitsha, 2019). These are the histories that are told, anyway. In the latter, there are whispers of the Mfecane, but not much else written. All of these stories chronicle colonial encounter. Here at the Treaty Tree, a plaque tells the story of the battle of Blaauwberg:

The "Treaty Tree" is an at least 500-year-old milkwood (*Sideroxylon inerme*) that stands on what would have been Woodstock's beach front. It was declared a national monument in 1966 because of its historical 'significance' as the site at which the Blaauwberg Treaty was signed in January 1806. This treaty signaled the defeat of the Dutch (Batavian) Forces and began the era of British control in the Cape.

A rubbing renders it so: Blue, fizzing with static (a contradiction in terms), comprehension fading in and out of focus. If you let your eyes linger, change your terms of attention, words and dates do become legible. But perhaps what is more important is its ambiguity, its inconclusiveness.



Figure 28: Rubbing from memorial plaque at the treaty tree.

Different terms of attention. While the plaque tells the story of the battle of Blaauwberg, this site has other histories. The tree was known to mark the site at which, in 1510, Khoekhoe enacted revenge for years of cattle raids, abductions and extortions by the Portuguese. Dom Francisco de Almeida (a well-known Portuguese ‘explorer’) and 64 of his men were killed in this incident, making this a significant victory over colonial forces (Johnson, 2011). These events are often cited in protests against the development of land upriver, and in calls for the site (near the Two Rivers Urban Park) to be declared a national and international heritage site. The tree was also known as the Old Slave Tree: it was the site for auctions of enslaved people, and the punishment (often by hanging) of ‘disobedient’ enslaved people and convicts. I wonder about the histories of those other trees, and what they are bound up in now.

In 2019, an offshoot from the treaty tree was planted by The Princess Vlei Organization at the vlei. The vlei, the organization explains, has long been associated with women and indigenous people. The vlei is said to have been formed by the tears of an unnamed Khoekhoe woman (the ‘Princess’) who was violated by Portuguese soldiers. It was these Portuguese soldiers that the Khoekhoe battled against on Woodstock Beach. Lines across space and time, stories from one place making stories elsewhere; texturing.

William Ellis suggests that milkwood forests should be understood as a “vast rhizomatic, vegeto-neural network that discursively, symbolically, and epigenetically retains events and evidence” (2019: 3). For Ellis, milkwoods become botanical witnesses of violence and subjugation. These trees “observed those very settlers who committed these acts of violence as they sat in churches protected by milkwood beams supporting the thatch or tiled roofs of

their chapels” (2020: n.p.). What is important here is that the potency of the milkwood as witness remains with the material – whether it be a living tree, or a plank of wood.

Along the street, bougainvillea, and in it, torn up and scattered lotto tickets, lots of them. Parking, railway. TAPZ as always. A pile of gorgeous wooden goodies – including a whole spiral staircase. A castle beer bottle lid – what are the chances. Two people walking the railway line, in opposite directions, with backpacks, with purpose.

A scrap of blue turns out to be a sliver of ocean, cut from a map. Beneath the streets, beneath the tree, the beach.



Figure 29: A sliver of ocean found beneath the Treaty Tree

While texturing the tree I encounter an array of small, mundane objects – the blue egg, the castle beer bottle lid, the scrap of an ocean. These are small, seemingly insignificant material specks in the grand scale of the world. And yet, in this space, they gesture to profound connections across space and time. Colonialism, capitalism, ecocide, blue, the sea, my hands, a map, genealogies and geographies of connection and life and violence.

In an interview with Pippa Hudson in May 2020, historian Vivian Bickford-Smith notes the importance of the treaty, signed here in 1806, in cementing British rule and the creation of the Cape Colony. This treaty has had lasting material and political effects. It allowed the British greater mobility in the ‘frontier wars’–in the Eastern Cape, which eventually meant that amaXhosa territory was effectively colonized. The events at this tree – the signing of the treaty – in some ways enabled the events at the mFingu tree. It also meant that the Cape came under the control of the world’s first major industrial power, one which rejected slavery because it was inefficient, and instead devoted itself to capitalism (Pippa Hudson & Bickford-Smith, 2020). The material effects of this economic legacy continue to play out.

In the years following the British's outlawing of the slave trade, Woodstock became one of two major 'freetowns' in Cape Town – spaces where previously enslaved people were housed in a complex array of arrangements. Some were truly free – as free as they could be – and lived and worked on their own terms. Others, the so-called “prize negroes”, were enslaved people who had been rescued (captured) by the British from slaving ships. While they were supposedly ‘freed’, these people were held in mandatory, unpaid apprenticeships that lasted on average 14 years (Felipe-Gonzales, 2015 and Worden et al., 1998). In the meantime, Cape Town was thrust into the free market, and the areas around the treaty tree, including District Six, Salt River and Woodstock saw an increase in industrial and factory buildings. There is a row of cottages opposite the tree, probably old fisherman's cottages. They lie low on the landscape, crowded over and out by new office blocks, the railway, and old industrial works buildings. Perhaps it is fitting that a business school now shares this site.

Looking for images of the treaty tree online, I find a winery called “flagstone” that has a range of wines that they have named after the treaty tree. They speak to the tree's history, and at one point describe it as such:

It has seen massacres, slavery, hangings, treaty signing and once used to peer out over the Woodstock beachfront. Besides famous and infamous events, Treaty Tree has watched everyday life over several centuries. It has stood through shifting climates and all manner of weather. Its shape is an impression of its long relationship with the Cape Doctor (Flagstone Wineries, 2020).

‘Its shape is an impression of its long relationship with the Cape Doctor’. The wind in Woodstock, which still brings in the sea (the salt wind, the rain wind, the snoek wind... the sand wind). The wind which wrecked ships, the wind which brought the boats. The wind has shaped the treaty tree to the extent that it is now supported by a large metal trunk, which holds the leaning tree in a vice grip. A centuries long relationship between metal and wood, figuring this way, now.



Figure 30: Flagstone Winery's Treaty Tree line

Another line of connection: The Flagstone winery sits in an old dynamite factory that had been built in 1901 by Cecil John Rhodes. The factory was built to ensure a supply of cheap, locally produced dynamite for the De Beers mining company. De Beers made their fortune from diamonds. Mining, explosions, dust, silicosis, colonialism, wealth. Ongoing material effects. And of course, the histories of wine in this country; the dop system, fetal alcohol syndrome, gender-based violence, a shocking road death toll. And the treaty tree gesturing there, reminding us. Colonial histories folding over and re-emerging, strata, contortions. The beach figures in all of this as a place of contact, resistance and domination.

The treaty tree brings Woodstock Beach into the present in the place where it would have been. It is a powerful marker in this site, but it also has an impressive ability to travel. Here, following the material and textural traces from Woodstock Beach, we connect to other stories in other places and times. Bringing these traces and fragments together we begin to weave a story of place that remains in process. The treaty tree on Woodstock Beach is a living witness, a possibility of intimacy – of touch and affect – across time. The treaty tree is what remains. It is evidence of centuries of encounters. It enables staying with the trouble . Texturing the treaty tree – materially and in writing – creates new contexts, new encounters, and brings stories together in different ways.

Map

Ghost rivers.

Salt River pricks its way through the map, its outline could be footsteps, carefully trodden as we wade our way through its marshy ground.

Salt River made straight.

Salt River as written fades, leaving inky blotches and barely perceptible runs, like tears.

Salt River as blue, and red, and grey.

Salt River mouth, Salt River's first mouth. Salt river opens its mouth and swallows us whole into its snaky, deep, brewing, brooding waters.

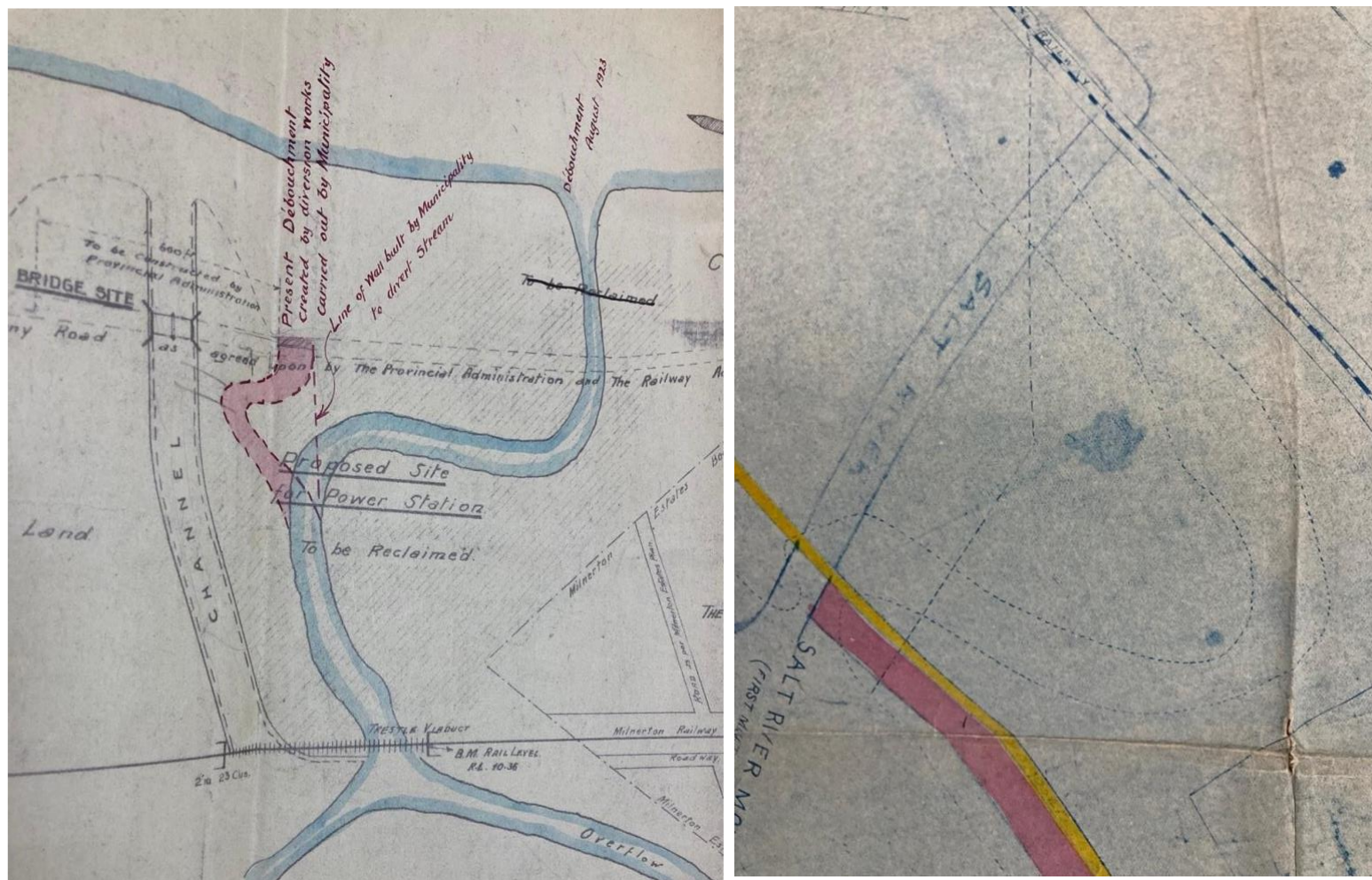


Figure 31: Details from maps showing Salt River.

In 2020, in the deep winter of COVID lockdown, I cross the Salt River regularly, driving to see the sun lap the water touch the boats and slowly sink below that ultimate line - the horizon. It's never an easy sunset. That deep winter was difficult. The river we cross; slick green, a muddied mixture of petroleum and fat.

On the other side of the river, the beach that's left – the outer reaches of what would have been Woodstock beach. Walking the beach, in a skin so aware of life and its limits, I find pieces of coal, smoothed to pebble perfection. Coal on the beach, from a ship that wrecked on Woodstock in 1878. Coal, collected and burnt by the fisherfolk of Woodstock in hard winter times. Coal; the pressurized bones and breath of life millions of years ago. Life limited and also, in ways, limitless.

Salt River's sands were treacherous. People and horses and boats could be lost to them within a matter of minutes. Salt River as written is a brown and scrappy marsh, a dangerous place, a place to pass through quickly. I wonder about the salt in Salt River. Colonial obsessions with salt – for preservation and for flavor. In her 1799-1800 diary, Lady Anne Barnard wonders why the local people don't use salt in the same way as colonial people; “they used no salt I observed which I wonderd [sic] at, salt being to me so necessary”. She likens this lack of salt to a lack of forethought and enterprise; “what Hottentot would think of saving up any thing for a future occasion? too indolent – too careless & too indifferent, they would rather eat a bit of meat roasted on the coals fresh as it is killed than step five yards aside to get the salt I mention to give it a relish” (Barnard, 1999: 200). Salt, wealth, taste, race. These stories don't appear on the map, but these stories do structure its world.

Much of the colonial project relied on delineating space as bounded, fixed and categorized, and maps were an essential technology in this. Categories and maps enable disappearances, even while materially the process might be look like accumulation. A line is put down; but several thousand others are erased. A category is created; but the lives within it are obscured. Maps are made; but its multiplicities ignored. This is the power of a map – it makes a singular truth for the world.

The power of maps and related line-drawing activities has been extensively outlined (Ingold 2016 & 2010, De Certeau 2007, McKittrick 2006, Hayes 2020, MacFarlane 2012, Thrift, 2004), and is agreed that much of this power comes from the map's ability to erase not only what was there before, but also the processes that went into making the map (Ingold, 2016 & 2010). For De Certeau and Rao, space (specifically the city) exists beyond the map in emergent relationships and lines of movement (Rao, 2009 & De Certeau, 1984). Essentially, the lines we use to make life and movement visible on maps, have the effect of rendering the map-making act and the encounters that informed it, invisible. In this section I engage map as encounter to deepen our understanding of land-making relations at Woodstock Beach, and to explore the ways in which maps are used to obscure particular histories. The following images all represent Woodstock Beach and surrounds, albeit in slightly different ways.

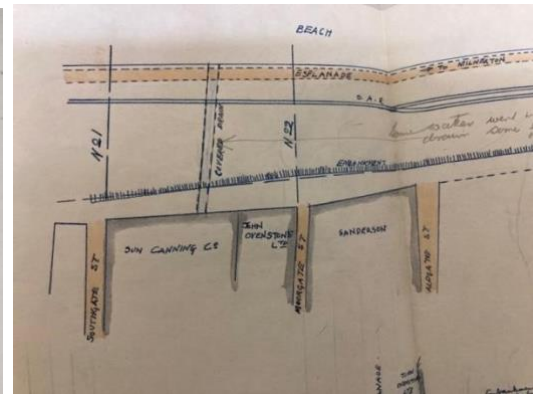
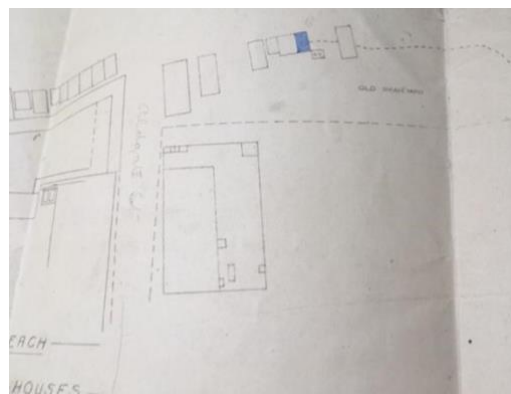
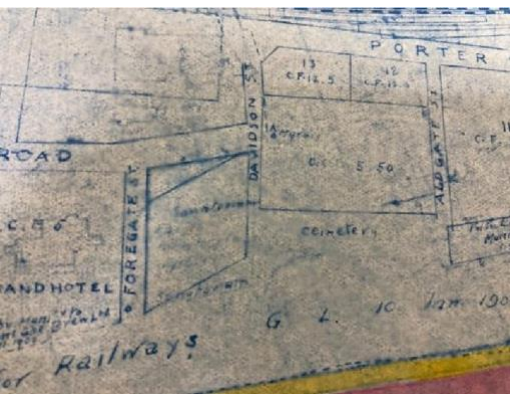


Figure 32 (previous page): Top: Sketch, date unknown, of 'Guns of Sceptre', M756 WCA. Middle: 'Het Gesigt van Cabo de Goede Hoop', 1987, showing Woodstock Beach in the far left. Bottom: details of archival maps showing the disappearing cemetery at Woodstock Beach.

The shifting lines and perspectives that represent Woodstock Beach reflect different encounters – different times and purposes. In the first two images, our view is from an imagined, distant, slightly raised but still eye-level perspective. In these two images it seems that the most important things are the mountain peaks and the presence of ships. In the first image, the ship is wrecked, and most of the picture plane is taken up with wild mountains, lands and skies. In the second, a slightly higher perspective better conveys the 'lay of the land', its coastline and fortifications, and offers a far more optimistic representation of colonial impact on the space. Here, the map shows triumphant ships and castles, flags raised high, a spread of orderly farms, and buildings whose size challenges that of the mountains around them. The final row of images are sections from maps of Woodstock Beach, used in planning and correspondence by the City Engineer (Foreshore Reclamations: Seaweed on Woodstock Beach. Correspondence File 3/Ct 4/1/5/292 C1304/5, 1929. WCA and Lease Of Site on Woodstock Beach for Boat Shed to Mr. J Huckell. Correspondence File 3/CT 4/1/2/82 F202/2, 1915. WCA.). These maps subscribe to the usual cartographic rules – a flattened birds-eye view – even if they are not as detailed or 'complete' as a full topographical map. These lines also affect how the beach is encountered: as a wild place, a place to be dominated, and a place that is empty – and needing to be filled.

It might be unfair to call the first two images maps, and certainly the second image is more map-like than the first, but because they include an explanatory typology, they – like maps – emphasize understanding space through names and categories. The match-the-number typology does interesting work. While names put straight onto the map's surface present a permanent and unshakeable truth, where name and place are one, the labelling typology offers more of an interpretive guide. For Ingold, there is a distinction between making one's way *through* the world, versus routing from point to point across its surface (2016: 163). The above representations highlight the implications of this distinction in terms of conceptions of space. Going *through* the world requires a three-dimensional understanding of place, filled with various surfaces, obstacles, and necessary engagements. The first and second maps allows for some of this sense; there is a choppy sea and other boats to be navigated, there is a shore to land on, and there are mountains to traverse. However, in the third set of maps the material relations that make place are flattened.

These last three maps show the disappearance of the graveyard on Woodstock Beach. Not shown here is that the disappeared graveyard morphs into a racially-segregated bathing pavilion. These maps and plans hang in empty space, devoid of historical or contemporary context (remember: context is making stories together). All this blank-ness references something, but it does so in the negative – in relation to that which is being drawn onto the map, as opposed to what is there now, and was there before.

The map tells the story of 'what is', not about how 'what is' came to be/know. The knowledge and experiences that went into making the lines on the map are not referenced, which creates the illusion that the structure of the map springs directly from the structure of the world (De Certeau 1984: 120–1). A map becomes the assumed *a priori*. Following Ingold's thinking, these latter maps are the kinds which "effaces memory" (20: 234). The power of the map here

is that the world is assumed to be fully known, with no space for alternatives. Reading maps as evidence of encounter is crucial in countering this power. For Kollektiv Oranotango+ it is crucial that the framework of map-as-image is replaced with the “the idea of an object in process [...] otherwise known as mapping” (2018: 267). Here, the processual and creative elements of mapping are made clear. Similarly, in *The Address Book* by Deirdre Mask, Tom Koch – an expert in disease mapping – explains that maps are fundamentally a way of organizing data, that they are “how we take our ideas and place them in a workable argument” (Mask, 2020: 87). Maps need to be maintained as ‘workable arguments’ – always in place and always in process, always evidencing encounter – for ways of understanding the world.

Beyond the disappearances on maps, there are also maps of Woodstock that don’t exist. There are experiences of this place – ways of understanding this place – that have not been represented as workable arguments. This was a site of graves, of freed slaves, and of homes and churches and livelihoods. Saartjie Baartman lived in Woodstock, as did Lydia Williams. These stories aren’t found in maps. There are few accounts from enslaved people, but Lydia Williams’ legacy lives on at St Phillips Church, where the 1st of December (Emancipation Day) is known as Lydia’s Day - or the "Feast of the Release of the Slaves" (Camissa Museum, 2021-2022). Lydia was affectionally known as ‘ou Tamelytjie’ – a tamelytjie being a hard toffee of Cape Malay origin, often made with pine nuts or almonds. The name Tamelytjie is a useful map of Cape Town – a map of lines stretching to the West Indies, tracing the movement of slave-grown sugar cane. A map dotted with pine trees, still here today, texturing colonial and ecological relations. This map-in-a-name is a map of hands shelling pine nuts and hands cutting cane and money changing hands. It evidences centuries of encounter.

Land

Having attuned myself to its presence, I encounter the beach, again and again, in excess. It comes to feel ridiculous, at times, how much the beach still exists. In the previous sections I have chartered its presence in street names, in smells and rust, and in the scrap of a map – cut from the ocean – lying beneath the treaty tree. I find sea-related litter: water sachets branded with a boat and broken tiles for a company that powered the first nuclear submarine. A postbox labelled 5 Stingray. Grafitti of fish, and boats, and a surfing Zulu. Sand between cobbles. Shells in cement. I encounter the beach through the material.

I also encounter Woodstock Beach through memories. Memories prompted by photographs shared on Facebook groups speak to the presence of Woodstock Beach in people's lives. It seems to be remembered more for its presence than mourned for its loss. Some of these memories resonate so exactly with other artefacts and stories that it feels uncanny. The similarity in these encounters brings us in to intimate contact with other people, at another times.

Responding to a video on the history of Woodstock Beach posted on the Cape Town Historic Society Facebook page, one memory reads:

It was still a beach with pristine white sand in the 1950s. We lived in upper Woodstock and on Sunday mornings our grandfather would take us for a walk down to the beach. It wasn't unusual to see dolphins in the bay. I remember a Sunday morning when a dolphin had washed up onto the beach. Three blokes who were passing by tried to get the dolphin back into the sea, but alas, the dolphin was on the brink of dying. They then put it out of its misery. Being from the poorer area of Woodstock, they took it home to probably have as a family meal.

(Comment on Valentine, H. 2021 Facebook Post).

The memory above speaks of the 1950s, but the photograph below shows a crowd around a beached whale in 1905.



Figure

33: "A beached whale, Woodstock Beach". Morrison Collection Photograph M350, 1905, WCA.

The water churns silver, turbulent around ankles and in shallows. In 1926, a South African Mirror newsreel shows footage of a large shoal of porpoises, trapped by 'bamboo weed', providing sport for fishermen on Woodstock beach (African Mirror No. 675 (silent) Rolprent FA107, 1926, NFA). Dolphins, whales and porpoises on the beach, a common encounter across a century.

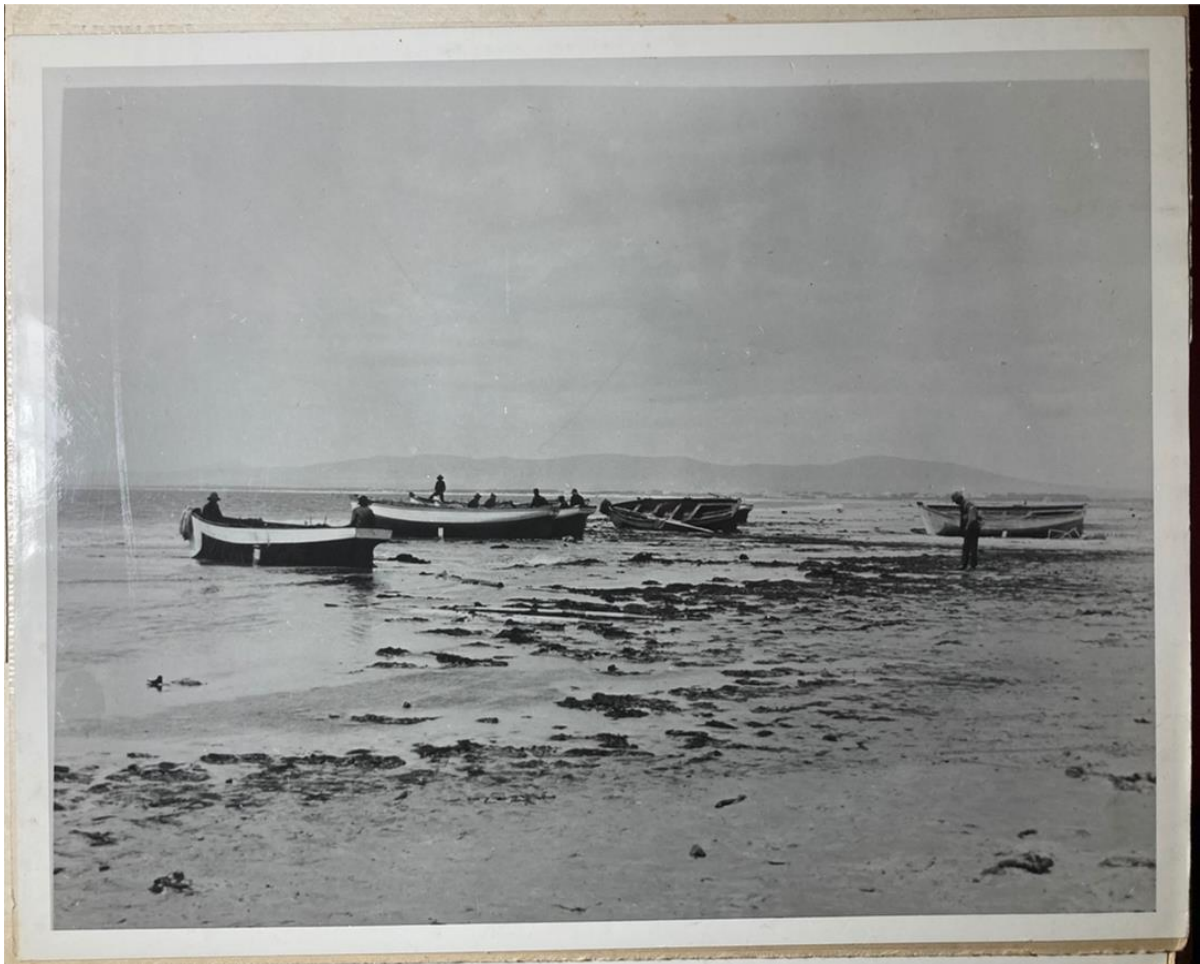


Figure 34: "View of Woodstock Beach showing fishing boats" (AG12509) WCA.

In another instance, prompted by a photograph of two young children on Woodstock Beach, one person recalls:

These Chinese trawlers ran aground regularly in the winter storms. I had boxes of chop sticks given to me a mate of mine whose father did the salvage ops (Kent, D. Comment on Davey, B. 2021 Facebook Post "Urchins on Woodstock beach late 1960s")

In 1968, a newsreel reports that all efforts to refloat the Chinese trawler which stranded on Woodstock Beach had been unsuccessful (Ons Nuus No. 886. Rolprent FA1064, 1968. NFA). Woodstock Beach was an infamous ship's graveyard. At least 88 ships – and perhaps as many as 360 – are estimated to have been wrecked off its shores (Halkett, 2012: 7). Sometimes, ships that were stranded on reefs or sand banks in turn wrecked other boats. Cargo as varied as rum, brandy, wine, coffee, coal, cotton, candles, cattle, china, flour, spice, sundry, pepper, timber, ivory, anchors, films, mules, sheep, wool, a 'famous racehorse', and sometimes gold and silver coin were lost to the sea. In the 'Great Gale' of 1865, thirty ships were wrecked in one day. 100 years later, Woodstock Beach was still the landing spot for wrecks. Over the years, over a thousand lives of crew, passengers, enslaved people, soldiers, sailors, fishermen and beachgoers have been lost near or on Woodstock Beach (Werz, 2003 & Cox, 1996). Lawrence Green – in typical romantic style – writes that in bad storms, the whole beach would be lit with bonfires to guide any survivors onto shore (Green, 1973: 147). In 1912 a boat anchored, on fire, on Woodstock Beach. Its cargo of coal and timber had somehow caught alight, and the

ship was engulfed by flames as high as forty feet. It burned for three days (*SAR Magazine*, 1912: 732-734).

In another Facebook memory, one person recalls:

Woodstock beach lost under dolosse. Would get Hardee's from the fishermen make a fire from driftwood on the beach. Grill our fish and eat it right there. No pots, pans, plates. Nothing.

(Dix, W.D. Comment on Castegnaro, S. 2021 Facebook Post showing children playing in the sand in front of the old bathing pavilion at Woodstock Beach).

Fire, the beach, and driftwood. These textures figure differently in encounters across time, but their presence draw us into an intimate reckoning with previously abstract lives in abstract times.

For Astreida Neimanis, estuaries, tidal zones, wetlands, the shore – spaces of watery contact – are spaces of tensions, transitions, and transformations. In this thinking, the shoreline is when, where, and how matter comes to matter, differently (Neimanis, 2012: 108). Wrecked driftwood certainly mattered differently when it came to land on Woodstock Beach. As early as 1685, the collection of wrecked materials, including wood, is regulated by the Dutch East India Company: free burgers (independent farmers) and the Goringhuaga must register salvaged goods with the company to determine their value (Plant, 1961: 167-168). Lawrence Green writes that the Dutch East India Company reacted quickly to the ‘looting’ of washed-up bales, boxes, and bodies, and set up gallows on the beach. Offenders were hanged on the spot (1981: 146). Shipwrecks increasingly became a source of financial speculation, with people vying to procure wrecked ships at bargain prices, and then selling whatever could be salvaged at a profit.

In 1722, the “Free Blacks” of Cape Town – those who had been freed from slavery – were organized into a militia to prevent the ‘looting’ of shipwrecks. Having the Free Blacks do this policing was a social mechanism as much as a financial one; it was often believed that enslaved people were the main looters. Putting former slaves in this position is a tactic of divide and rule, as well as a powerful form of “symbolic inversion”, where ‘free blacks’ “had to justify their freedom, as it were, by combatting the efforts of their former fellows in bondage” (Ross, 1980: 34). The maintenance of the political order on land requires control over how sea-borne things figure upon arrival. Goods, loot, people, slaves. The management of wrecked material as it lands holds social, political, and economic valence.

Wrecked materials are still managed in the space today in tensions around recycling, informal waste pickers, and the presence of homes – often of stowaways – made using scraps and cutoffs. The engagement with wrecked material has resonances across time that I explore later. Stories of the beach – both political and mundane – emerge through material, across time.

Woodstock Beach’s continued presence in Woodstock and in memory is evidence of process and contact. Beaches are the ultimate form of encounter. In a sense, land begins where the beach ends – where the sea no longer encounters dry sand – but this is endlessly moveable. This shifting of the beach and the tide, and the sand that stretches between them, becomes important in defining land.

Almost all maps of Woodstock Beach include the high and low water tide marks. The sand that stretched from the intertidal zone, up to the beginning of formal roads is variously called “Crown Land”, “Waste Land”, and “Vacant Land” – sometimes within the same document (*Re Control of Woodstock Beach Between High and Low Water Mark*. Correspondence File, 1910. JUS 104 22776/10. WCA). The latter labels suggest land that is unowned, unwanted, empty, and disposable. ‘Crown Land’ invokes an unseen, untouchable owner, but also suggests that the land is held in common. The meaning, value and understanding of this space is unclear and shifting. What is clear however, is that Woodstock Beach is increasingly drawn into legislative processes which affect the ways that the beach is encountered and understood, and land is imagined. In the 1920s, encounters with the beach are increasingly managed. In 1922, a Constable Palmer of Woodstock police station writes to ask about restrictions on and penalties for gathering shells on the beach. The tone of the letter suggests a personal grudge. The reply comes that there are no known restrictions, but that the land is subject to the rule of the Crown (*Cape Town Divisional Council. Shell Gathering on Woodstock Beach*. Correspondence File, 1922. PAS 4/73 19/A.214. WCA). Here we see the beach under regulation. This kind of policing would suggest that the land was held less in ‘common’ than it should be. These shells were probably being harvested to be burnt in kilns for lime, a key ingredient in cement.

Cement, of course, makes buildings and roads. Sand from Woodstock Beach is used in the construction and tarring of Maitland Road in 1919 (*Maitland Main Road. Sand Supplies from Woodstock Beach*. Correspondence File, 1919. 4/CT 4/1/29 61/6. WCA). The beach here makes land elsewhere. The disappearing of the beach in the creation of land has important implications.

The phrase ‘reclaiming land’ to describe filling in the beach suggests that the beach is an intruder on our space, and that we are reclaiming something that is rightfully ours (‘ours’ = people-living-on-land). The process might be more interestingly described as land-grabbing. The beach at Woodstock makes place elsewhere (it tars Maitland Road) as well as at the site (the foreshore development). The overwhelming erasure of Woodstock Beach in memory and material creates the impression that this land came from nowhere. The idea of the ‘land from nowhere’ is, as Brigstocke points out, the biggest myth that underpins and supports colonialism (2020). ‘Land from nowhere’ is the power of maps, and it is the power of erasing all traces of encounter. Texturing encounter – between engineering, capital, race, beach, place, waves and sand – highlights the documents, grudges and technologies that are allowed to accumulate or are made to disappear in the creation of land.

Jane Bennett, writing in *Vibrant Matter* (2010), speaks to the importance of the verbs we use when describing the actions, affects and effects of things. The beach – the sea and its sands – creates land. In fact, the root of the verb form of land – *lendan* – in its intransitive form means to “come to shore, go ashore, disembark” (c. 1200)... originally of ships; of fish (Harper, n.d.). Land, as a verb, speaks to a view from the water, a shifting moment of arrival and accrual, as well as departure and loss. The term *the lay of the land* – is a nautical term. In 1657 Jan Van Riebeeck charts the coast of the Cape Peninsular from a whaling boat (*ed. Leibbrant*). The point being, that the land – as a word, and as a concept – on paper and in minds, is initially oriented by the sea, at a moment of encounter with the beach.

For Tobias Doring (2016), tying 'land' to the moment of coastal arrival reveals a colonial orientation, in which the local, indigenous point of view is absent. In this understanding, land always emerges as something new to discover, instead of something that is already lived with. Understanding land as evidence of a moment of contact with the beach, and its potential colonial orientation requires that we ask: contact, between what, with what effect, on what terms? Texturing encounters at Woodstock Beach reveals that the orientations and relations of land are tied to those of the sea and the sand.

All in all

This chapter (*'Encounter'*) has illustrated how traces of encounter can reveal hidden histories and processes that have shaped contemporary socio-political and material worlds. *Encounter* expands the site and temporality of critical inquiry to follow gestures and traces of uncertain and shaded histories. It charts the complexities, contexts and far-flung connections that are present in any one thing or moment in time.

The chapter began with an encounter with the treaty tree. Texturing the treaty tree, as a living witness on the site of the now-disappeared Woodstock Beach, brings the past into the present in a very tangible way. As with the sand, fence and fig in the previous chapter, the possibility of touch with this tree – of encounter – creates an intimacy across time, and reiterates that its being (and my being with it) in this moment is the culmination and expression of all the things that came before – and are still to come. The treaty tree is a powerful marker on site and also has an impressive ability to travel across space and time, drawing histories together, curating similarities, and engaging critical imaginings. The stories and connections it traces affirms the importance of context – of making, together – both in the method of texturing and in understanding how place comes to be.

Revealing context was also an important theme in engaging maps in the second section of *Encounter*. Much like the gravel around the treaty tree, the texture of maps is often one of containment and denial, where one story is positioned as the only story. This texture obscures realities of process, contact and encounter, and creates the materiality of the map as inherently true, as opposed to one kind of story, text, context, possibility, or argument. While these obscured encounters – of shipwrecks, sugar and slavery – do not appear on the map, they do structure its world. Texture as method reveals the complicated relations that lie behind the map, the relations that issue from the map. It also reveals the relations that form when this process is obscured. Reading maps and other textures as histories of encounter reasserts the social, political, environmental, chemical and geographical processes that underly any one moment in time, and in the creation of place.

Finally, land was explored as a form of encounter. I encountered the beach on and in land in excess once I had attuned myself to its presence, and these encounters asserted the beach's ongoing relevance in the creation of place and land today. Material encounters in the present were enlivened by memories from the past, and the intimacy of shared experiences across time highlighted socio-political continuities, setting up relations of connection and understanding. Woodstock Beach makes land. It makes land when its sands and shells are used in construction, and it makes land when its liminal, shifting, beachy space of encounter acts as a moveable boundary in legally defining place and power. It also makes land as the site of political control of things as they arrive on the shore, as they 'land'. The beach as a liminal space allows us to explore how matter comes to mater differently in moments of encounter, of arrival, of contact. Understanding land as a culmination of moments of encounter highlights the shifting, contingent and produced – rather than natural – nature of land.

Chapter Four: Trajectory

Kelp – Rail – Concrete

In this final section, I draw on texture to show how materials themselves have processes and generative abilities which produce social, political, environmental, and affective worlds. I explore the alter/after-lives of textures of Woodstock Beach and show how they enable social and material configurations – good, bad, and mundane. Overall, this chapter argues that attending to the various trajectories of material – in time and space – reveals possibility. The multiple configurations of the beach and its materials unsettles any veneer of inevitability, and is a reminder of alternatives.

Kelp

It's the hottest weekend of the year so far, and families are flocking to beaches all over Cape Town. A large deposit of kelp washed up a few days before, so the beaches are cramped and smelly. I worry about the racist comments that unfortunately, but seemingly inevitably, emerge when the whole city is at the beach. At Smits, my aunt suggests clearing the kelp to make more space for beachgoers. Zip later tells me that they saw a huge municipal truck carting off a mass of seaweed – presumably to the dump. Discussing coastal foraging, a friend asks which seaweeds are edible.

I'm snorkeling at Windmill, rolling in the kelp and loving it, its arms embracing me, its mass keeping me afloat, light rippling – amber and brown and black. My mom once told me that the seaweed keeps the sharks away, the seaweed keeps us safe. Down on the ocean floor trunks have been gnawed off at the base. The work of too many urchins, a result of too few otters. The first and only otter I've seen; dead on Scarborough beach.

Jacana and I throw ourselves into the waves at Muizenberg. The wind has wedged sand between my teeth and in my eyelashes. We fight with the sea and come out with armfuls of kelp. At home, I cover it with fresh water, gushing out warm from our garden tap, and put it aside to create seaweed tea, one of the best all-round fertilizers. This all in early 2022. As winter draws in, the beach is again covered in seaweed. It stinks, and tiny insects hover all along the catwalk. Nutrients from sea to land. A man prays on the sand, up, bowing down, again. A group of women clear the kelp off the beach. I ask them where it goes. They explain that the seaweed they put in the bags goes to the dump, and the rest, they don't know. Do I want it?

In 1927 a Sir David Graaf writes to the city about the possibility of experimenting with seaweed for 'manurial purposes'. He suggests that he be allowed to clear kelp off the beaches – a winwin situation, as he can use the kelp for free, and it will relieve the city of some of the expenses associated with this task. The seaweed deposits under discussion run from Adderley street down to Woodstock Beach. In the end, Sir Graaf is advised of the considerable expense incurred in transporting the seaweed, and of the seasonal nature of the deposits: most of the seaweed is washed up in rough winter weather. Nothing comes of the plan.

(Disposal of Sea-Weed, Woodstock Beach. Correspondence File, 1927. 3/CT 4/2/1/1/550 131/27. WCA.)

In 1929, an 'unusually large' deposit of seaweed is washed up on Woodstock beach. In places, the beach is covered by seaweed between 6 and 8 feet deep. A total of 2393 cubic meters of seaweed is carted away to the Salt River dump. The pictures below show the deposit (1 and 2) and the dump (3 and 4).

(Foreshore Reclamations: Seaweed on Woodstock Beach. Correspondence File, 1929. 3/Ct 4/1/5/292 C1304/5. WCA)



Figure 35 & 36: Unusually large kelp deposit at Woodstock Beach (above and below).





Figures 37 & 38: Kelp removed from Woodstock Beach offloaded at Salt River dump.

It is noted in two separate letters in the late 1920s that the issue of seaweed seems to be related to the foreshore and harbour development, and that the situation will probably worsen over the years. The tides which usually would have washed the seaweed away are no longer able to get in – concrete dolosse and piles of rubble (land) block it. The seaweed stinks, and a medical officer notes that in the interest of public health it ought to be dealt with as quickly as possible. Carting it away is expensive – it's cheaper to bury it (*Disposal of Sea-Weed*, CF 1927, WCA). These photographs chronicle a fairly spectacular event, and they bristle with texture. The politics of kelp on beaches, and its removal from beaches remains relevant today.

In the archives, kelp is cleared from the beach. I can't help but think of the other brown bodies cleared off the beach at this time too. The letters in the archives reveal a particular rhetoric surrounding the development of Woodstock Beach; undesirables are to be kept out, roads need to be widened repeatedly, kelp removed, and the area is to be beautified with plants – specifically pines and palms – both colonial imports (*Foreshore Reclamations*, CF 1929, WCA and *Proposed Warm Water Swimming Baths*, CF 1930, WCA). Constant management and (re)engineering is required on all fronts. The Sea Shore Act of 1935 determined that all seashore land was owned by the governor general – in this case, the king of England. By 1970, all South African beaches were segregated.

In more than one way, Woodstock Beach was meant to be an expanse of 'pristine, white sands'. The relations that wrapped around kelp on Woodstock Beach continue to wrap around other beaches now. According to the Two Oceans Aquarium (2021) website:

The word "kelp" comes from one of its earliest uses - being burnt to make soda ash, a component in glass. Because the ash produced by this brown seaweed contained lots of iodine, it would often produce undesirable colour tints in the glass - so this type of ash was given the name "faulty", or as they said in Latin, culpe (think culprit or culpable). This name eventually morphed into "kelp" for the ash, and soon people started using the word to describe the seaweed too!

Undesirable color tints. Culpable. Kelp.

Reading the Water issue of *Wasafiri*, I come across an article written by Phindezwa Mnyaka (2021) on photography and the ocean. In it, she returns again and again to the photo taken by Daniel Morolong below:



Figure 39: Daniel Morolong's photo of a group of beachgoers in Durban.

The photo is taken on a beach in Durban in the 1960s, several thousands of kilometers away from my Woodstock Beach, but the picture felt planted, for me, in my search for kelp. In the article, Mnyaka likens the poses of the six people in the pictures to that of a water fountain in Rome. Fountains create publics, and they make power visible (Ballesterro, 2019 & Illich, 1985). So too, it seems, do beaches.

I can remember so many beach visits where I too draped myself in seaweed – fashioning clothes, limbs, hair. I can imagine the sticky-slick strands clinging to my skin, dustings of sand too. The kelp wrapped around these brown bodies, on a beach, is also wrapped around politics. This picture is one of hundreds that were submitted as evidence in the post-apartheid land claim process for those who had been forcibly removed. This kelp and this beach, on this day, may have unwittingly tied a body to a place in a way that allowed for return (Mnyaka, 2021). The beach as and in kelp reasserts the presence of brown bodies on beaches in relations of joy and leisure, and not just as cargo, labor, or shallow water fisherfolk (Hofmeyer, 2016 & Wallis, 2021).

Woodstock Beach was constructed – materially and discursively – as an expanse of pristine white sands. This construction of pristine versus pollution, and nature versus culture is bound up in ideas of race and class. Many of the *bodily* experiences of Woodstock Beach (as recalled in Facebook comments) speak to the lingering presence of the beach, of matter in and out of place, of transgression of some kind.

Hair flies around out of control:

Only Three Flowers Brilliantine could protect your hair from the Southeaster. Then came Brylcreem, which was useless in this regard.
(Comment on Facebook Post).

Shoes are dirtied:

There was an occasion that my brother and I bunked Sunday school and went to Woodstock Beach instead. We were caught out when our mother noticed that our shoes had changed colour from black to grey. Boy, were we in trouble!

(Comment on Facebook Post).

Innocence is lost:

Had my first cigarette on that beach age. 9

(Mc Broom, R. Comment on Valentine, H. 2021 Facebook Post).

A rhyme well-known to Woodstock residents at the time seems to sum up these sentiments:

*Mary had a little lamb
Whose fleece was white as snow
She took him down to Woodstock Beach
En kyk hoe lyk hy nou!*
[and see how he looks now]

(Phil, W. Comment on Davey, B. 2021 Facebook Post).

As much as the authorities initially tried to create and maintain Woodstock Beach as pristine and white, the reality was more complex. The beach was a lovely wide expanse to walk and fish on, and it was also dirty and polluted by increasing industrialization in the area. The themes of dirt and respectability in relation to appearance speaks to the long and meandering history of the creation of race and class in South Africa. Many of the early pictures of Woodstock beach feature brown people. The picture below is of the scene of a beached whale on Woodstock Beach (but note the sunken ship in the background on the right as well). In it, brown and black children look on and help while fishermen cut up the beached whale. The child in the center wears full Victorian garb. The children to the right hold baskets. One of the boys looks directly at us. Many of them wear hats.

In the picture below, people promenade and play on Woodstock Beach in the early 19th century.



Figure 40: Details of 'A beached whale, Woodstock Beach'. 1905 Photograph, Morrison Collection M350 WCA.



Figure 41: People promenade on Woodstock Beach in the early nineteenth century.

In another picture, a crowd in coats and hats watches on as people are rescued from a wreck. Some dirty petticoats can be seen. The sand appears patterned by many trampling feet.



Figure 42: Detail from "Crowd watching crew being rescued from unidentified wreck on Woodstock beach by means of rope and pulley. Photograph, date unknown. Jeffreys Collection, J10321 WCA.

Woodstock beach is a now-disappeared place that witnessed and engaged many now-disappeared people and stories, many of them mundane. The photographs draw on the materiality of kelp and beach in the act of witnessing. Photographs – as assemblages of chemicals, materials, moments, and light – are also the kelp, and the beach, just figured differently, elsewhere. Morolong (and countless others) took photographs using a silver-gelatin process. This gelatin is found in collagen from animal bones, or agar from seaweed. Kelp, in the picture, possibly. Mnyaka (2021) provides a thorough overview of the ways in which the ocean figures in photography – from the waves of the water bath in the dark room, to the pearls and oyster shells used in early photographic experiments. Eventually, Mnyaka comes to ask: “In our encounters with photographs, then, are we not always returning to the beach?” (2021: 20). Materially, kelp is present in these photographs of Woodstock Beach. The beach bears witness to itself. That excess of kelp – removed from the beaches – remains with us today, reminding us that the other brown bodies removed from beaches remain with us too; their stories structure the world.

I wonder about the cultural life of kelp beyond the beach in South Africa. Not much is written. In an odd book, written by Lawrence Green in 1981, a chapter called *Neptune's Garden* suggests that seaweed jelly was made in Cape Malay kitchens, where seaweed-rich cuisines collided with Cape Town kelp through trade and slavery. In the 1950s, seaweed was used in toothpastes and laxatives, in jams, ice-creams, custards and jelly, in baked goods and canned soups. It was even used to clarify wine.

A recipe for sweet seaweed jelly:

1 handful of red seaweed – about the size of a tennis ball when squeezed – washed and boiled in 3-4 pints of water.

Boil, allow to reduce, strain through a cloth and add sugar (about 1 pint), orange or lemon juice, ginger, brandy or sherry (Green, 1981: 135).

I want to turn from the brown and the 'culpable' in kelp (iodine), and look to where these 'imperfections' originated, in glass. In 1878, the South African Glass Company (Ltd) – soon to become known as Woodstock Glass – opened in area that now falls under Observatory. Kelp is burnt to make soda ash, and sand is mined for silica. Together with heat and some skill, they make glass. The beach, in glass, in vessels, in homes and at celebrations. I was taught to identify Woodstock glass by my grandmother, who collects it. There should be a bubble, where the stem meets the cup.

The glass initially produced by the Woodstock glass company was of a relatively poor standard, and the company struggled with financial issues from the outset. Most of the glass – especially in the beginning – would have been used by breweries and pharmacies, where the quality and perfection in shape was less important. The hope was that producing glass locally would reduce the reliance on expensive imported glass.

D Hodgkiss (1971), in a book about Woodstock Glass asserts that Papendorp (the initial name for Woodstock) was "hardly the ideal site for a glass-house" (1971: 35). According to his research, it was a 'wild and wooly place', with 'maurading bands' of (black) 'local layabouts' and dock laborers, who apparently carried out an "almost continual tribal war" (*Ibid.*). There were no lights at night, and it was far away from sources of coal and the market to which the fragile glass would have to travel. There are rumors that the location was chosen for its proximity to a pile of sand dumped on the beach. The story of Woodstock glass isn't very interesting really, but the material legacies might be.

I tried to find this book for months; UCT had lost its two copies in the 2019 fire, and being a rare book, it was expensive to buy second hand. Eventually, I found a copy in a municipal library. It's quite something, opening a book to learn about glass to come away with more of an impression of the casual racism of the 1970s (the time of writing) than anything else. In a similar experience, the prettiest handwriting normalizes racial categories and segregation in repeated financial accounts for the Woodstock Bathing Pavilion (*Bathing Shelters for Non Europeans*. CF 1933, 3/CT 4/1/5/116 B530/5. WCA). The handwriting is beautiful as texture, its contents ugly. The plans for the new and improved Woodstock baths are the same – it is a beautiful object in terms of color and form and patina, *and it also* beautifies violence and hurt by wrapping them up in watercolors and curling letters (*Woodstock Beach*. CF 1928-1934. 3/CT 4/1/5/148 B836/5. WCA). Much like the afterlives of the Morolong photographs, these objects do work beyond their surface objectives. These are the sources I have at my disposal,

and many of them are violent. The method of texturing attends to the actions of my texts; the lines and grains that make the marks in the world. A poetics of detail, at scale. Perhaps this book about Woodstock and sand and kelp and the beach is better read as a book about arrogance and prejudice. But in this far and wide search for the beach, through time and sand and glass, we find the beach in places as varied as a fig tree, a scrap of paper, a park, the assumptions of a disgruntled white man, and in the search for my grandmothers Christmas presents.

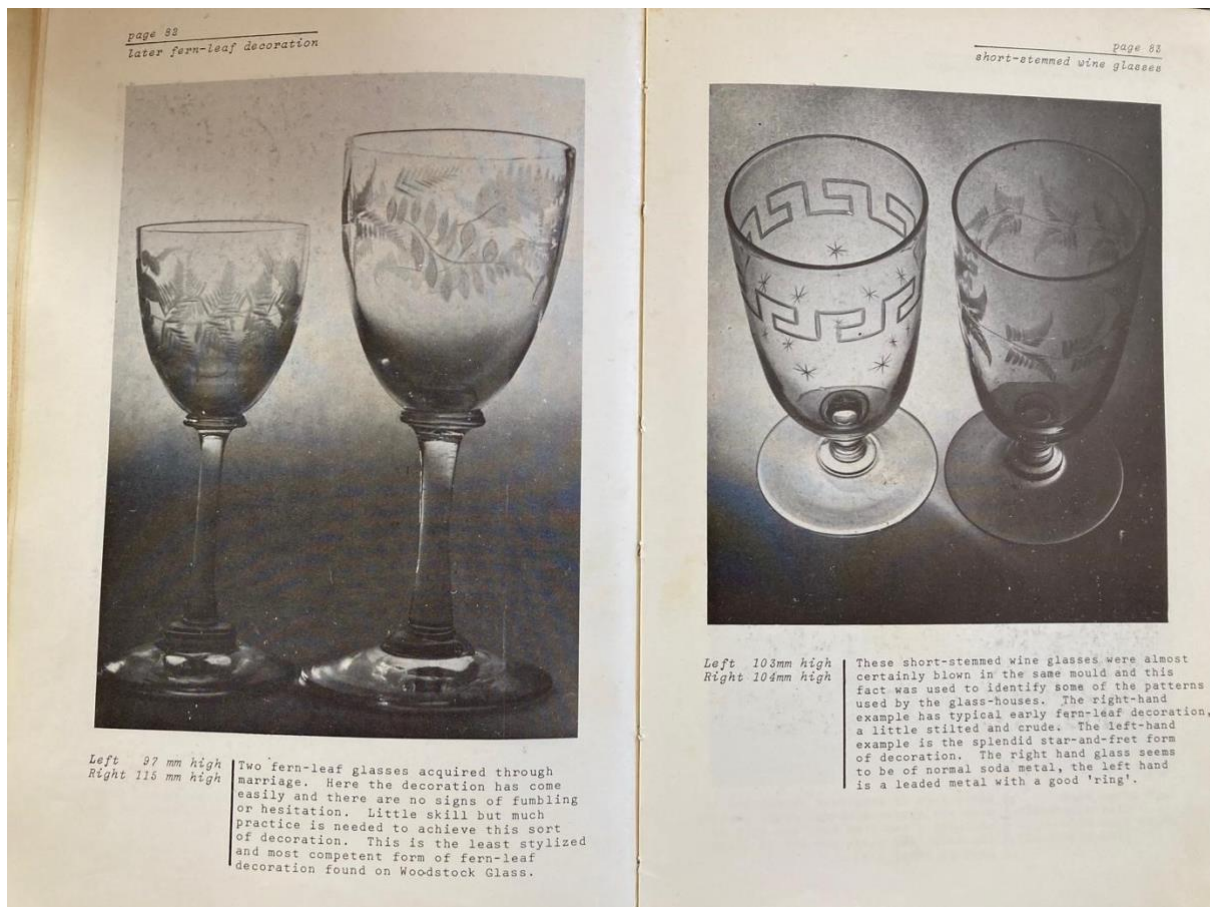


Figure 43: Images and Descriptions of Woodstock Glass patterns and form in Hodgkiss, 1971.

In a recent interaction with kelp, Tom slices through the kelp's trunk with just a finger. It's immensely satisfying to watch, how this thick tubing slides open so willingly with so little persuasion. I remember my mom told me a story about a slave who ran away and hid under the sand at St James, using a piece of partially buried kelp as a breathing tube. She corrects me – it was actually a prisoner of war. They say that we should read kelp washed up on the shore as proof of life elsewhere, life underwater (Compton, 2021). Its forests sway in testimony to that slow, slow drift of continents, of how the world came to be. The beach, the shells, the kelp show us the lives and politics of elsewhere. They show us how, refigured as books and glass and photographs, the beach acts on the world.

Rail

The lines of rail are strange in this country, being as they are so often without the movement of trains to make them make sense. They make sense in other ways of course, as lines connecting industry to markets to labor. They make order also, cutting through space separating, slicing.

The rail and harbor developments in Cape Town are two of the line-makers that most impacted Woodstock Beach. The initial infilling of Woodstock Beach was for railway use. It was the extension of the railway line to Muizenberg Beach that enabled the final disappearance of Woodstock Beach; Muizenberg was popular, it was now accessible, and so Woodstock Beach was no longer ‘needed’.

There are many ways to read the railway lines of Woodstock Beach. Remember those treaties signed under trees? And the whispers – but only ever whispers – of the Mfecane? Displaced amaXhosa people – convicts, prisoners of war and indentured laborers escaping the conflicts of ‘treaty’ – were the ones who laid the railways lines (Badham, 1987). The (re)construction of the railways over the past few centuries has concealed and revealed some of these histories, sometimes. Trajectories of histories, determined by the railway, obscured by the railway, revealed by the railway. It was railway workers who discovered the human remains from the wreck of the *Pacquet Real* in the 1950s (Worden et al., 1998). It was during the excavations for the new Cape Town central station that scores of seashells, anchors, planks of wood and other beach-related items were discovered. Apparently, a section of this strata is still there, encased in a pane of glass. A bust of Verwoerd, the man killed by Tsafendas of the Luckystar pilchards, stands in a forgotten station corridor, below what would have once been ocean floor.

For Jacob Dlamini, railways in South Africa were crucial sites in the creation of race, and also in resisting race. In his book *Safari Nation* (2020), Dlamini chronicles the difficulties experienced when travelling by train as a black person in South Africa – not being allowed to eat on trains, being harassed for travelling etc. But crucially, he also documents the presence of black and brown people on trains (as well as in natural spaces and reserves – which is the main concern of the book). Inserting these experiences and stories along these lines is important in complicating the narrative of railways as a colonial force.

I read the railway lines as texture, instead of purely as transport. For Ingold, transport happens when a passive passenger *is moved* to a destination. When you are transported, the relationship between movement and perception is severed (Ingold, 2016: 161). That is, the relationship between how you engage with the world is severed from how you understand the world; experience and knowledge are separated. Remember Toni Morrison on the distinction between truth and fact; the former requires intelligence, the latter does not (1990). Of course, the railways are and were a means of transport. But the production of a mode of transport goes beyond movement and perception. Attending to the texture of railways allows us to explore how these lines were produced as ‘transport’, as technologies supposedly innocent to and separate from the social relations they produced. Reading the lines of railway as texture before transport highlights the politics in movement and making.

The lines of the railway exist beyond the steel veins that stretch across the country. They also exist as lines of text. The South African Railways and Harbors Association had a magazine that

ran from 1906 until 1967. The magazine included news articles, humor and opinion pieces, a ‘children’s corner’ and writings on technical and scientific advancements in rail, shipping, construction and engineering more broadly. It ran historical pieces and chronicled the movement of railway staff within the country (promotions) as well as abroad (serving in the war). It also ran obituaries and notices of congratulations for railway staff. This varied content, as well as the sheer number of publications provides insight into this very important linemaking technology in a way that is intimate and detailed while also part of a bigger narrative of nation and place-making. These magazines allow us to trace the ways in which the railways (and harbors) both imagined and made the world.

We begin with an obvious and important example; the creation of place, of markers of in- and out-of-place-ness, and race. In 1907, in a section titled *Some Humors of the Booking Office*, a W. Parkinson writes:

A booking clerk must be well acquainted with the geography of the country, and be constituted so as to recognize, sometimes from a slight phonetic peculiarity, some names accorded to well-known stations by the numerous colored element in our midst, whose acquaintance with geographical pronunciation is of the most primitive kind.

A few of the names are shown in the following list: –

Cape Town, often called Kap, Kuptoo.

Woodstock, often called Woodeestock, Papdorp.

Observatory, often called Yebbitree.

Mowbray, often called Moberry.

Newlands, often called Nulant.

Wynberg, often called Vinburg.

Etcetera (*SAR Magazine*, 1907 1(7): 394).

The ‘humor’ here is one of ridicule. Presumably, the audience is a white one, and so the writing disparages colored pronunciation and historic names. The point here is that this supposedly humorous section very directly creates certain languages and dialects *for* place, as out of place. Discrediting the words people use in their navigation of daily life severs the link between place and lived experience. Ingold notes that ‘journeys are eliminated’ and ‘language is silenced’ in the production of the map-as-object and the text-as-object (2016: 234). We have discussed the ways in which maps enable a kind of forgetting – a silencing – as well as how maps come to be seen as truth derived directly from reality. This ‘humor piece’ shows how rail is being slowly co-constituted in tandem with lines of map and text, in a process which is also making place.

Crucial here is the fact that this place (and out-of-place) making is clearly tied to racial categories. This ‘humor’ can be seen as a clear attempt at creating and maintaining racial categories. The author appeals to an imagined ‘we’ to discuss an emerging ‘other’ whose difference is set in place-based pronunciation. We anchor lines to words to give them meaning. A railway line is random until it is given points to begin at, go through, and end at. Naming these points, giving them identities, makes them real. In the colonial project, much of the power of lines comes from the fact that they were drawn onto spaces and papers imagined as empty. Presenting a place name (identities, stories, experiences) as *wrong* asserts the existence of the

empty plane, the blank slate. It is less the lines, necessarily, than the infrastructures of texts and words and metals and monies that we wrap around them that make them make sense. Drawing a line through someone's land is one thing; but at least you acknowledge that it is someone's land. Drawing a line onto an enforced blank slate is a different thing all together. Much of the power of the (drawn) line is in its ability to erase all other traces and lines that were involved in its creation. In effect, lines erase the textures – of contact and conflict – that wrap around place.

Another 'humorous' line around place and race:

There is no doubt that Railway men who are of an observant nature find many amusing incidents in their round of duty. Some time ago a very fat, old colored person living at Woodstock, had been to Cape Town, charring. On her return to Woodstock she could not get the door of a second class carriage open; she had the same experiences at Salt River and Observatory. At Mowbray, just as the train was about to start the door suddenly yielded to her efforts to open it. She threw out a bundle, a broom, then a bucket, and at last fell out herself backwards, like a bundle of washing, as the train was moving...

... and so it continues, with the author finally concluding that this was one of the funniest things he had seen (SAR Magazine, 1907 1(3): 232). Controlling how people, and particularly black and brown people, used the railways is another important element of power that these lines held. They not only determined paths of movement, but they also required and produced particular forms of behavior (pronunciation, boarding, eating etc) as appropriate and respectable, and made place and out-of-place. Here the lines of and from Woodstock Beach wrap around greater place-and-person-making narratives and technologies.

The railway was one of the lines and layers which disappeared the beach. Texturing the railway line beyond its physical materiality reveals the compounded infrastructures and words which created and maintained the railways' power over people and place. It shows how things exist in multiple forms, across multiple scales, with multiple effects. Texture, in revealing these multiplicities, reveals politics and possibilities by reminding us that things can matter in more than one way.



Combing through the archives, I come across reams of signatures, names and addresses petitioning for better facilities at Woodstock Beach. There are names and addresses from District Six, and from Beach and Tide streets. These are disappeared places, but the flowing browned ink gestures to lives lived there, with the beach. The processes that destroyed Woodstock Beach and District Six are in many ways incomparable, except in that they were both part of the Afrikaner Nationalist State's modernist vision for the future. This vision emerged from a techno-nationalism that increasingly emphasized self-sufficiency and innovation, with a strong focus on infrastructure, science, data and research. One material emerges across these processes and ideologies: concrete.

Concrete stands testament to much of apartheid's architecture – the various roads, bridges and railways laid down in the engineering of spatial apartheid; the rubble of houses destroyed by forced removals; and the mind-numbing monotony of the concrete barracks found in mining compounds and 'homelands' (Brink, 2012). Concrete's magic is its ability to harden under water and Jonathan Cane's work on the wave-taming infrastructure, *dollose* (2021), as well as Isabel Hofmeyr's work on ports and harbors (2016, 2020), both illustrate concrete's role in inscribing colonial ideologies of control and domination on the ocean: it 'breaks' waters and 'conquers' waves. Concrete stands testimony to these violent histories, and it also suggests

violent futures. The concrete industry emits more CO₂ than the whole of India, which has the third largest carbon footprint in the world. Concrete's weight on the earth is greater than that of every tree, bush or other green thing combined. Concrete is central in driving climate change, in destroying and displacing homes and ecosystems, and in creating and exacerbating vulnerability on a massive scale (Watts, 2019). Concrete puts much-needed roofs over heads, but it is also making our home uninhabitable. This material has an ethical orientation.

Concrete took away the beach at Woodstock, but it also still reveals the beach. Although concrete is often accompanied by promises of forever, most concrete lasts only decades (Carruthers & Dakkak, 2020: 395). The beach in the concrete – the sand and shell and lime – is only momentarily captured, and even then, concrete is a canvas that seems to invite the beach back in – sand calling sand perhaps. The persistent resurfacing of the beach as and in the ruins of concrete allows us to revisit the futures promised and not delivered (Larkin, 2013; Levenson, 2017; Anand & Gupta, 2018 and Carruthers & Dakkak, 2020). It's a funny thing, having to reconcile the fact that this odd space that once was Woodstock Beach stands testament to the designs (and failure, in ways) of apartheid, while also holding that this space remains (if even) a ruin.

The beach's presence in ruination creates possibility. For Rebecca Solnit, "a city is built to resemble a conscious mind, a network that can calculate, administrate, manufacture. Ruins become the unconscious of the city, its memory, unknown, darkness, lost lands, and in this truly bring it to life. With ruins a city springs free of its plans into something as intricate as life, something that can be explored but perhaps not mapped" (2006: 89). Woodstock Beach is a ruin of the city – unmappable in the traditional sense due to its ephemeral shifting nature, but certainly explorable. I wonder about ruins, about sand as a ruin of cement; about what it archives, and what futures it holds.

In Cape Town all concrete is storied by the ocean. In Barron Street, previously a source of pollution on Woodstock Beach, I find the beach in the image of a surfing Zulu on a run-down house.



Figure 45: Graffiti of a surfing Zulu on Barron Street, one source of pollution on Woodstock Beach (above).



Figure 46: Wall mural of a boat above Tide Street (above).

On my way to the Slave Lodge, driving along, one road up from Beach Road, I find a mural of a figure in a boat. Her boat sails across a green sea which morphs into the roofs of thousands

of shacks. One building on Tide Street is branded with green fish, while the corner of Selwyn and New Market Street makes the call to “bring back the beach”. In an old storehouse in the docklands, a cast of a whale lies heavy on the floor. Concrete, telling the histories of this place, of the beach, in different ways.



Figure 47: Fish on the walls in Tide Street (left) and Concrete cast of a whale (right).

Engaging the concrete world that is now Woodstock Beach, I’m reminded of the situationist slogan, “*beneath the streets, the beach*” or, in French: *Sous les pavés, la plage*. Its origin lies in the 1968 student movement in France, which – within a few weeks – was joined by 9 million people, interrupting service delivery and effectively shutting down the country. This was a complete departure from the normal. In clashes with police, student protesters pulled up cobbles revealing the sand which lay beneath them; literally, the ‘beach’ beneath the streets. Figuratively, the slogan called for alternatives and demanded change, for a new world to be created (Andersen, 2020).

The beach beneath the streets is the substrate, the hidden, the structural – all of which supports the creation of everyday life. The beach beneath the streets emerges as a political space – one which challenges the basis of everything – of power, of ‘cemented’ structures, of the taken-for-granted city ‘as is’. Instead, the beach reveals our histories, our vulnerabilities, our points of departure. Attending to the beach beneath the streets is to attend to how things come to be. The beach beneath the streets demands constant questioning, not just of how things are, but also of how they could be. In this section I highlight how texturing the trajectories of Woodstock Beach undermines any veneer of inevitability.

Much of the beach beneath the streets is made up of lines. Texturing these lines – as fault lines as well as lines of power – highlights that the disappearance of Woodstock Beach into concrete is neither inevitable nor necessarily permanent. The lines of pipes and drainage systems, so crucial in keeping the beach beneath the streets, are consistently the most expensive items on the council’s budget. The lines of the road and rail – those which covered the beach – are constantly undermined, eroded, and refigured by water and sand. In 1924, the Woodstock wind blows a train off the tracks and demolishes a wall in the process. This is not an uncommon occurrence. The lines of the tide determine where the rule of the Crown ends. The lines of the tide dictate the pace of beachfront developments (*Hauling up Cutter*, CF 1913 3CT/934/12. WCA.). The beach, as material, does not go gently, or without a fight.

There are other cemented structures on the beach – other lines of power – that were similarly resisted and undermined. Several scholars have suggested that the earliest built lines of Dutch settlement – and particularly those of its forts, which lie on the beach – are suggestive more of desperation than power. Here, the defensive lines of the fort, the Salt River watch towers, and the bitter-almond hedge all gesture to desperate attempts by terrified people to – above and before anything else – protect themselves from the outside world, with its lions, howling gales, floods, crashing waves, unfertile soils and ‘unyielding natives’ (Twidle, 2010 and Worden et al., 1998). One particular interaction recorded in the *Journal of Jan Van Riebeeck, 1651-1655* (ed. Thom, 1952: 293) is often quoted to make this point:

“it happened that about 50 of these natives wanted to put up their huts close to the banks of the moat of our fortress, and when told in a friendly manner by our men to go a little further away, they declared boldly that this was not our land but theirs and that they would place their huts wherever they chose. If we were not disposed to permit them to do so they would attack us with the aid of a large number of people from the interior and kill us, pointing out that the ramparts were only constructed of earth and scum and could easily be surmounted by them and that they also knew how to break down the palisades”

Here, the Khoi refuse to acknowledge the (assumed) power of the Castle’s cemented lines (Worden et al, 1998: 22, Twidle, 2010). The castle is not seen as inevitable, unshakeable, immovable, or static, and stronger power is found in knowledge and relationships. Some years later, in 1656, the company reports that:

“Herry [Chief Autshumao] took careful notes of the walls of the fort and the cattle kraals; he was allowed to do so, but carefully watched. At table he stated, on being asked what he thought of the works, that the Saldanhars could easily take the cattle from the kraal at night (each one having 12 assegays) by cutting the cord with which the gate is fastened: but he did not know and was not told that at night the gate was closed with a good lock” (Leibbrandt, 1896: 2).

I’m reminded of these performances of subversion and power when, in the winter of 2022, the City of Cape Town hands out fines to people who are unhoused and living outside the castle (Ntseku, 2022). The situation has uncanny resonances, and I spend weeks pondering the usefulness of previous forms of resistance in the present. I think about the fact that the lock on the fence at Beach Road is branded ‘Master’. I think about the first ‘official’ environmental

protections enforced by the VOC, which prohibited the removal of any vegetation that bordered the Liesbeek River to maintain its natural defensive line. I think about the fact that once, even if briefly, it was possible to refuse the premise of the castle's spatial power. I think about how fences are required to produce scarcity and value. I think about how, for some people, the texture of lines requiring resistance is thick and fast.



Figure 48: Headline from the Cape Times, 21 April, 1967.

In 1938, a Ralph Bunche (quoted in Bickford-Smith et al., 1999) writes that he “saw a native group of about 25 in baptism ceremonies in sea at Woodstock Beach. Christ of Church group. Cold, raw, windy day. Singing hymns (strange) and Bible printed in Xhosa. Weird harmony. Only three women; one with a baby on her back” (1999: 90). He goes on to note that the pastor, standing on that beach with his flock from Langa, “stated that the scriptures and religion made no provision for the color bar” (*Ibid.*). Here, the beach is a site of spiritual and political connection. In the 1960s, continued resistance by residents meant that Cape Town beaches were not subject to the Beach-Sign Bill, which prevented ‘Whites-Only’ signs from officially and visibly segregating all beaches. These stories are important. They show us that the beach was a site of contestation, that the processes the beach witnessed and was part of – segregation, industrialisation, colonialism – were always resisted. Resurfacing this beach beneath the streets, the beach that exists on, under, and in concrete, highlights that our cities could have been otherwise; that there is space to imagine them anew.

In May 2022, a local activist, Tracy Kwaai, calls attention to the fact that a landowner in Kalk Bay, a coastal suburb in Cape Town, has begun to build over a public beach and tidal pool. The landowner, Barry White, plans to build a ‘sunbathing area’ next to his restaurant, the Brass Bell. In an Instagram post, Kwaai highlighted that this tidal pool – like many others – is in fact the remains (ruins?) of ancient fish traps. She points to the histories of apartheid segregation on these beaches, and its legacy in the policing of who may or may not swim – without being harassed – at these pools. She posts a picture of the earthworks (sandworks, really), with images of Khoi and colonial interactions superimposed on them (this image has been removed from the original post @thefisherchild, 2022). The message is clear: same colonisers, different ships. The land in question is ‘owned’ and leased out by PRASA, the current form of South Africa’s rail association. The city is currently trying to find evidence of the lease. The resonance with this case and that of Woodstock Beach again strike deep. A beach that has been regulated (and

cut up) by railway lines, been turned into a space of leisure and recreation (rather than subsistence), segregated, and finally, built over. Grains and lines.

The materials of Woodstock Beach and the histories they evidence do not just speak to the past. They speak to a future that in some ways seems predetermined, and in others is clearly based on shifting sands and tides. Woodstock Beach is a ruin of the city. It remains unmappable, existing in disappearance, surfacing beneath the streets. Its impermanence suggests possibility.

All in all

This chapter (*Trajectory*) has illustrated how Woodstock Beach lives on in the world today, and how it figures in lesser-known stories of resistance. Knowing the stories of the beach – that it existed, that people lived with it, that people buried it – brings an alternative world into contact with the one we inhabit now. The process of disappearing the beach and related world-building activities need to be seen for what they are: constructions, not inevitabilities. *Trajectory* reminds us that alternatives exist, already.

Texturing kelp in the first section of *Trajectory* illustrated that materials have afterlives, and that Woodstock Beach – refigured as kelp or glass or photographs – continues to act in the world. Texture as method attends to the ways texts and materials act beyond their surface objectives. Kelp on the beach, refigured as correspondence, as files, as photographs, as ash, as glass, and as a racist book. Following the trajectory of kelp reveals the politics that act beyond surface inscriptions: curling handwriting legitimates racism, photographs allow for return, colorful plans beautify segregation, pristine white beaches require engineering, and raised glasses toast in celebration. Kelp – the beach – exists and acts in all these forms.

The railways explored in the second section of this chapter were also shown to exist and act in multiple forms. Texturing the railway line beyond its physical materiality reveals the compounded infrastructures and words which created and maintained the railways' power over people and place. Here again, the material exists in multiple forms, across multiple scales, with multiple effects. Following the multiple trajectories and forms of the railway at Woodstock Beach reveals the histories and political valence of rail – as text, as policing tool, as nation building project, as archeological site – in creating and maintaining ideas of place and race.

Finally, the trajectories of concrete affirm the multiplicities of the beach, and its role in creating place. Texturing concrete reminds us that the afterlives of materials (as explored above) can be future-facing, and have an ethical orientation. The refiguring of Woodstock Beach through concrete reveals processes of destruction – of homes and our environment – as well as processes of ruination – of concrete returning to sand, of possibilities emerging from unmappable edges. The concrete of Woodstock Beach is inscribed with stories of destruction, but also with stories of political and spiritual resistance. Resurfacing the concrete beach, the beach beneath the streets, highlights that our cities could have been otherwise, and that there is space to imagine them anew.

One kind of ending

This thesis has chartered how Woodstock Beach figures in significant and mundane histories of people, place and power in South Africa. The beach appeared in archives, in materials, in memories and in futures. The method of texturing, here proposed, enabled a thorough exploration of its presence in metaphor, history and politics across temporal and spatial scale. Attending to Woodstock Beach has surfaced a set of place-based stories, connections and analytic attunements which complicate and enrich our understandings of current city forms by inserting and asserting the importance of forgotten, mundane and incomplete histories. In so doing, this thesis contributes a more nuanced approach to understanding southern cities and their geographies. Overall, this thesis offers an expanded geography which draws on critical and creative practices to engage memory, incoherency and absence as thoroughly as material, context, and presence in the understanding of place.

Throughout this thesis, I have explored and theorized stories of Woodstock Beach differently, at different scales. These stories are important in and of themselves. Surfacing these stories of the beach – of fishing and shipwrecks, of slaves and Sundays – reinserts and foregrounds the presence of these histories and people in the making of the city. These stories are testament to the richness of life as read through arbitrary objects and mundane traces, and this richness acts as a reminder to tread lightly, and with care, in this place brimming with lived-in-ness. In encounters with these stories and traces, I propose an understanding of place that draws its strength from an appreciation of multiplicities – of scholarship, histories, scales, futures, absences – and their roles in the creation of place. This approach is informed by geographies of memory (Till, ErNSTen), creative geographies (Hawkins, DeSilvey), vital and (im)material geographies (Stoler, Rigney, Thrift) and political ecologies and geologies (Yusuf, McKittrick). I ground this approach in the materiality of place, engaging the expansive reach and scalar flexibility of memory and imagination. This enriches the work of the geographies outlined above by expanding the scope of critical inquiry to include traces of connection, absence, degrees of relevance, and forms of representation. I have used this extended rigor to explore the histories and politics that are revealed when working with, instead of against, the contingent, emergent, affective, and ever-shifting nature of place and its stories.

The richness of these stories that emerge in arbitrary, mundane, everyday spaces creates an attunement to possibilities, alternatives, and importantly, to moments of connection (Stewart, 2011; Rigney, 2017; McKittrick, 2006 & Stoler, 2013). These stories need to be read and represented in ways that unlock this richness. I have illustrated how, when charged with the expansive reach and critical imagination required by texturing, these stories can draw other places and histories together into new alignments. These new alignments connect the intimacy of the material to the expansive possibilities of its metaphoric and analytical frameworks. Through texture, these alignments have followed traces to connect different spaces and times, allowing for new insights, scales, and degrees of relevance.

Texture is the result of things coming together, and so it is an appropriate lens when so many of these stories speak to forms of contact: the unexpected intimacy of the shared experience of sand under foot, or fish caught and cooked on the beach; or encountering edges, where things coalesce and begin and end. These moments of contact draw ever-entangling lines of connection and relation which tug at understandings of personhood and place. Slowly, slightly,

relationships to place and its histories change and – slowly, slightly – relationships to place and its futures change too. In the case of Woodstock Beach, I argue that new alignments of these moments of contact – of colonial encounter, resistance, leisure, violence and development – suggest a different kind of relevance, at different scales. This relevance is one of multiplicities, and so Woodstock Beach is relevant in the making of place and the city, and it is also relevant in understanding histories of slavery and segregation, of transport, urbanisation, and industrialization – and all their material and social effects. Highlighting this multiscale relevance enables a more dexterous response-ability to overlapping systems and scales of oppression and resistance in the making of place.

Reading and representing such multiplicity across varying scales and spaces requires an approach that is flexible, rigorous, creative, and grounded. The methodological and theoretical strength of texture as method has been crucial in tracing stories of Woodstock Beach and all its histories and politics. In *Texture*, I drew on the affective, evocative and critically imaginative writing of thinkers like Kathleen Stewart, Toni Morrison, Rebecca Solnit and Katherine McKittrick to situate the work of gestural and creative writing as critically and theoretically generative. This writing is creative, contextually grounded, expansive, slow in description, and sometimes urgent in content. This thesis illustrated the value of these characteristics and registers in allowing for gaps and sensibilities from which emotional and intellectual contributions emerge. The creative approach of texture also drew on the place-based creative practices of Karen Till, Caitlin DeSilvey, Harriet Hawkins, and Giuliana Bruno, as well as the extended materialisms of Anne Rigney, Steinberg and Peters, and Ann Stoler to explore the vital reconfigurations of things in place – in ruins, memories, debris – and what these things continue to do in place, for place. This thesis has illustrated the critical contributions of texture – curiosity, scalar flexibility, critical patience, an appreciation of absence, a poetics of detail, slow description and creative figurations – all of which provide useful approaches for geographies interested in engaging across mediums and disciplines, while still maintaining critical and creative rigour.

I began this thesis contemplating a series of seemingly incongruous fragments, and the challenge of making them makes sense. The south easter wind, a piece of graffiti, and the policing of shells sat side by side. Photographs of a fence, a shipwreck rescue operation, and an enormous seaweed deposit emerged across archival files. Penguin eggs and pools, fish suppers and pony-rides. These stories offered glimpses of Woodstock Beach and suggested a sensibility of place, and I textured them – gaps and all – to see what resonated and connected, and what histories emerged. Drawing on DeSilvey's (2006) engagement with 'ambiguous matter' and critical appreciation of incompleteness and absence, it soon became clear that the fragments and gaps *are* the story, as opposed to issues to resolve in the story. In this thesis, I work with texture and absence to usefully extend the scope of Rigney's accidental archives (2017) and De Certeau's 'ancient revolutions' (2007) to engage both what is present in the material, and what it gestures to; what is absent. This approach draws on the insights that the material fragments themselves provided. Material qualities of lack – holes, gaps, blurriness, rips, and cracks – were refigured as generative spaces of possibility, as invitations to further inquiry. Yes, these edges are blurry, yes there are holes, yes this thing cut me... and so; what other connections emerge in these blurred edges, gaps, and wounded spaces.

Attending to the material refigured qualities of lack as spaces of opportunity, and it also emphasized the importance of the material informing its own analysis. In Chapter Two,

'Ground', material manifestations of the beach in sand, fence and fig were shown to provide contextually grounded metaphors and analytic lenses. After Solnit (2010), metaphors are lines drawn between things, a mapping of the world by affinities and patterns. The metaphors that spring from these materials – of sand's blurred edges and never-ending story, of fence's metal snags, of fig's stickiness and contained expansion, of keystone species and ecological roles, a feeling of wrongness, general frustrations, friction – all provided an approach that was grounded in the immediate context, but also acted as a map to relevant stories, elsewhere. This approach increases the scope of critical inquiry by expanding the scale at which things matter, and doing so with flexibility. Engaging the materiality of these objects means that the analytical framework takes its cue from the material frame, and that stories are read and understood on their own terms. Following the connections outlined by metaphor and material, *Ground* delved into histories and ecologies of sand in building and colonial conquest, of fences in creating race, wealth and land, and of figs in slavery, dispossession, and freedom. This intimate and grounded engagement allows disappeared politics that live in the material – those ancient revolutions – to re-emerge. Surfacing the expansive stories of materials in place is critical in understanding the various politics, processes and relations that constitute place.

Building on the importance of grounding with the immediate context and material form, in Chapter Three, '*Encounter*', I argued for traces of and moments with the beach to be understood as evidence of encounter, of context; of how things come together and fall apart. I examined the treaty tree, maps, and the creation of land to highlight how histories overlap and contradict, and how these complicated histories (and all they contain) are often obscured. In *Encounter* I broaden critical inquiry to explore multiple histories, possibilities, and lines of inquiry. This kind of extended rigor is useful when encountering the extended and abundant materialisms of a beach always beyond itself, of maps making the world and maps in a word, and the photographs, nursery rhymes, memories, sea-shore landings and laws which are all part of 'land' and how it figures. Reading for encounter and all its possibilities animates previously mute textures and texts by engaging the multiple histories that coalesce around any particular moment in time (Ernsten, 2019 & DeSilvey, 2010). When read for encounter, the treaty-tree gestures to indigenous histories and draws connections across the country, through time, and between socio-economic states. When textured for encounter, maps tell stories of contact and relations; of the experiences that allowed the map to come to be. Land, when figured as encounter, animates liminal beachy spaces to reveal their importance as spaces of arrival and control, as spaces where the lay of the land is decided and enacted. After McKittrick (2006), Morrison (1990) and Ilich (1985), much of the work of telling 'disappeared' histories that reside in 'mute' texts is to tell the story with a sensibility that is evocative of some kind of truth. The extended rigor and creativity, as well as the expansive writing that characterises texture as method is again crucial in exploring how to better tell these stories.

Finally, the intimate moments and extended materialities, the metaphors, close inquiry, and loose associations explored in this thesis come together in Chapter Four, '*Trajectory*'. This final chapter expanded on the presence of Woodstock Beach in the world today, and illustrated its role in lesser-known stories of resistance. I showed how threads and traces of the beach in kelp, rail, and concrete acts in and on the world beyond its initial material existence – threads weave, traces mark, and grains sediment and accrue. Following these textures of the beach, I revealed the ways that politics disappear and re-emerge in different materials, times, and places. Attending to kelp, I demonstrated how the beach re-emerges in photographs and glass, while attending to rail highlighted the various ways in which the beach was subsumed: by physical

railways, but also by texts which espoused – and eventually materialized – techno-ideologies of racial discrimination and segregation. The trajectory of concrete very clearly illustrates both the disappearance and re-emergence of the beach: concrete took away the beach, and concrete’s sandy substrate reveals the beach through graffiti. In all these cases, the trajectories of materials into the past and across the present reveal the beach as a space of possibility. The beach was a site of enjoyment and recreation, of spiritual importance, and of political resistance. The beach, figured as kelp, as gelatin, as a photograph of another beach, allowed for land restitution post apartheid. The beach, figured as graffiti makes the call to “bring back the beach” – to re-engage the shifting, uncertain and political space of the ‘beach beneath the streets’. Knowing the multiple stories of the beach – of resistance and domination, of violence and joy – reveals multiple pre-existing alternative worlds and opens up space to imagine anew.


It is clear that Woodstock Beach holds many stories. To tie these stories up neatly is not possible, and it is also not the intention of this piece. Instead, I gently hold together the fragments and gestures of Woodstock Beach, its submersions, glimpses, cracks, and reappearances, to allow room for possibilities and connections to emerge. Attuning myself to Woodstock Beach through texture has allowed these multiple stories, across multiple scales, to emerge through material and memory. Figuring these different stories, differently, highlights the multiple pasts, politics and possibilities that lie within this place. It expands what is possible.


On the dashboard of my car lies a shell, caked in clay, collected from the walls of *Paradise*, a colonial home built in Newlands Forest. This shell was taken from Woodstock Beach more than 200 years ago to build this house, now in ruin. Its presence invokes wonder: at what was, and what could be, and suggests that all that is gathered here is – and can only be – one kind of ending.

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