

**Designed to Divide:
Public Toilets in Cape Town, 1880-1940**

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to explore the frequently overlooked site of public toilets in relation to the politics of production and maintenance of social hierarchies in Cape Town between 1880 and 1940. In particular, it examines how public toilets both reflected and operationalised new understandings of demarcation of space, and disciplining and distribution of bodily functions. Rather than providing a comprehensive history of this municipally provided facility, this dissertation aims at exploring the ways in which the scanty, scattered and seemingly technical archive on public toilets can be used to understand the co-production of the built environment and social values. The emphasis on the spatial and the corporeal aspects of this history not only allows us to challenge the abstraction of the 'public' with which historians usually operate, but also to recognize how, for the city officials, the human body's capacity to generate waste was both a source of anxiety and a means of constructing "inferiority" among particular groups of people. The dissertation consists of a chapter-length introduction, followed by three chapters based on primary research.

In conversation with a range of conceptual and comparative academic literature, the introductory chapter identifies and examines the key theoretical questions underlying a possible history of public toilets in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Cape Town. Chapter One interrogates the public-ness of the so-called public toilets, by

critically engaging the intersections of race, class and gender, and by calling attention to their role in the maintenance of social hierarchies. Chapter Two focuses primarily on the question of infrastructure and design, trying to place the relationship between material designs and physical bodies at the centre of a history of practices. Chapter Three is concerned with the use and control of public toilets, and traces the ways in which both toilet users and attendants negotiated the values and habits that city officials tried to enforce in and through this institution. This research has drawn on a variety of archival sources, including Mayor's Minutes, Reports of the Medical Officers of Health, correspondence between the city council and members of the public, Select Committee Reports, articles in and letters to the press, maps of the city, architect's plans, as well as contemporary fictional literature.

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Abbreviations

AGM of SARH	Assistant General Manager of South African Railway and Harbours
ANC	African National Congress
DA	Democratic Alliance
DCUCT	Digital Collection, University of Cape Town
EHRIC	Environmental and Heritage Resource Information Centre, City of Cape Town
GPUCT	Government Publications, University of Cape Town Libraries
HBRC	Health and Building Regulation Committee
KAB	Cape Town Archives Repository
NCWSA	National Council of Women of South Africa
RMO	Railway Medical Officer
SCUCT	Special Collections, University of Cape Town Libraries
UCT	University of Cape Town
WC	Water closet
WMA	Women's Municipal Association
WSRRA	Woodstock and Salt River Ratepayers Association

Introduction

toilet poem

things of course about which one would never write a poem
force their way into the territory of poetic themes
such as changing tampon and pad to pee in toilets
of townships where one comes

on the floor water and effluent almost ankle deep
I wade on adidas soles like a cat

no moveable equipment available
like toilet seats bins hooks locks doors

my jacket hangs around my neck in blanket folds
handbag clutched between teeth

tampon-swollen red mouse, stained pad
wrapped in bank counterfoils

I piss shuddering rigid half squatting
between my legs

into a toilet bowl heaped half way up
with at least four different colours of shit

every nerve ending erect with revulsion, poised to go mad
if just one drop should splash against me

: Antjie Krog¹

“toilet poem” was written by Antjie Krog in 1995, at a period when she was employed as a radio journalist in South Africa.² From the second stanza, Krog takes the reader with her as she moves through the public toilet, recounting elements of the experience that are out of the ordinary for her. Likening herself to a cat, she describes the way she has had to navigate the “water and effluent almost ankle deep,” before even reaching the cubicle. The lack of “moveable equipment,” such as “locks” or “doors,” that she encounters leaves Krog uncomfortable, because she cannot close herself in a cubicle, away from the gaze of the public. Furthermore, with no seat to rest on, she is forced to take the unaccustomed position of a squat, in order to avoid getting any effluence on herself. Having managed to remove her tampon, Krog describes how she urinates, “rigid half squatting between [her] legs.”

According to Jackson et al, “effective infrastructures appear as timeless, unthought, even natural features of contemporary life.” Often it is only when there is a break down in the system – when we cannot find a toilet in our vicinity, or the facility does not meet our expectations - that they enter our consciousness.³ By describing in great detail what happens when toilets do

¹ Antjie Krog. “toilet poem”, in *Skinned: A Selection of Translated Poems*, trans. Karen Press (Cape Town: Umuzi, 2013), 121 [Originally published in *Gedigte: 1989-1995*. (Groenkloof: HOND, 1995), 15].

² Marisa Botha, “Skinned by Antjie Krog (review).” *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*. Vol. 44, No.1 (2014), 223

³ Steven J. Jackson, Paul N. Edwards, Geoffrey C. Bowker, and Cory P. Knobel, “Understanding Infrastructure: History, Heuristics, and Cyberinfrastructure Policy”, *First Monday*, Vol. 12, No. 6 (2007), 1.

not flush and seats are missing, Krog's poem forces the reader to engage with the unspoken and naturalised expectations underlying "modern" flush toilets in South Africa: that waste should be contained and sealed off by water and porcelain; that it should be removed from sight with a single flush; that people should be able to tend to their bodies in privacy; and that people should be able to relieve themselves in a seated position – just to mention a few.⁴ In highlighting these assumptions, Krog reminds us that waste management infrastructure is "not merely a technological response to a physical need," but that it is shaped by particular social values.⁵

This dissertation is based on the premise that public toilets are not only shaped by particular values and attitudes towards waste, space and bodies, but that these values and attitudes are socially, spatially and historically contingent.⁶ It is also based on a second, connected premise, that ordinary spaces such as public toilets do not merely reflect the values of a particular time, place and society, but that they are also actively involved in shaping and reproducing those values, and impressing them on the bodies that use the space, as well as providing a site for occasional contestations and transgressions.⁷

The objectives of this dissertation are threefold. On one level, it attempts to trace the evolution of public toilet provision in the city of Cape Town, from

⁴ In a public setting, other common expectations are separate sections for men and women, that toilet paper will be provided, bins in the women's section for tampons and pads, and that there will be soap, water and some kind of towel, so that people can wash and dry their hands after using the facility.

⁵ Barbara Penner, "A World of Unmentionable Suffering", *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2001), 36. By 'social values' I mean those assumptions, concepts and practices, which a society uses to order and guide its conduct; notwithstanding that there may be contestation within a society over what these are.

⁶ Penner, "A World of Unmentionable Suffering," 36; David Inglis, "Dirt and Denigration: The Faecal Imagery and Rhetorics of Abuse", *Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 5, No 2. (2002), 209; Sarah Jewitt, "Geographies of Shit: Spatial and Temporal Variations in Attitudes towards Human Waste", *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol. 35, No. 608 (2011), 612; Barbara Penner. "We Shall Deal Here with Humble Things." *Places Journal* (2012), 10 and 14. <https://placesjournal.org/article/we-shall-deal-here-with-humble-things/> [Last accessed 14 February 2017].

⁷ Penner, "A World of Unmentionable Suffering," 37; Tom Crook. "Power, Privacy and Pleasure: Liberalism and the Modern Cubicle." *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4-5 (2007), 550; Penner, "We Shall Deal Here with Humble Things," 14; Antina Von Schnitzler. *Democracy's Infrastructure: Techno-Politics and Protest after Apartheid* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 7, 113.

1893, when they were first introduced in the city, to the eve of the Second World War. It seeks to establish the main elements of this process: the number and location of construction, the design and aesthetics of the facilities, the mechanisms of control embedded in the facilities, as well as the ways in which they were received and used by different residents of the city. These elements shaped the structure for the three main chapters, which respectively consider provision, design, and use and control.

But rather than providing a mere chronology of public toilet provision, this dissertation also intends to use this process as an analytical optic for exploring the reciprocal relationship between the built environment and the conflicted social values of Cape Town. Making use of a scanty and scattered archive, it seeks to understand how public toilets became the only acceptable place in which residents of Cape Town could relieve themselves in the public realm, as well as the role they played in creating and upholding social structures: What factors influenced the shift away from existing modes of dealing with waste? What social values were implicated in new approaches to waste management, and how were these reflected in the infrastructure? And how did the particular pattern of toilet provision and maintenance in the city reflect and reinforce attitudes regarding gender, race, class and the intersections between these categories?

On a third level, it attempts to grapple with the ways in which historians can make use of an incomplete and haphazard archive to explore the daily routines and bodily practices of ordinary people. Is it possible to find authentic glimpses of ordinary people in the records of an elite colonial class? How do we capture the heterogeneous nature of a society when the records have homogenised and stereotyped them? What ethical questions are entailed in an academic attempt at reconstructing the intimate nature of their waste related practices? Is it helpful to speculate about what toilet-related behaviour

might reveal about one's intentions and values, or does this merely reproduce colonial narratives of power and prejudice?

TOILETS IN PUBLIC DEBATES

In the last decade or so, a number of events across South Africa have brought public toilets into focus in the local and national media, calling into question a variety of assumptions underlying current waste management systems. On several occasions between 2010 and 2013, the so-called "poo protest" activists from Khayelitsha, a township on the outskirts of Cape Town, drew attention to the state of the communal toilets provided by the Democratic Alliance (DA)-run government in what soon became known as the "toilet wars".⁸ Activists in Cape Town were initially protesting the lack of enclosure around toilets, which left toilet users in full view of the N2 highway.⁹ In a hurried attempt to manage an imploding political situation, the DA government erected corrugated iron enclosures around the toilets. But residents tore these down, dissatisfied with the impermanent materials.¹⁰ Over the next few years, protests grew to include the lack of maintenance at these facilities, the

⁸ These protests were especially pronounced in the run up to the 2011 elections, when both the African National Congress (ANC) and the DA were implicated in outrages regarding the state of municipally provided toilets in their respective provinces, and again in 2013, when protestors flung faeces at strategic points around the city, including the N2 highway, the steps of legislature, the international airport and on DA premiere Helen Zille's car. Johann W. N. Tempelhoff, "From Makhaza to Rammulotsi: Reflections on South Africa's "Toilet Election" of 2011", *Historia*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (May 2012), 83; Steven Robins. "Poo Wars as Matter out of Place: 'Toilets for Africa' in Cape Town, *At Anthropology Today*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2014) 1.

⁹ There was much debate around this matter, as DA premier, Helen Zille, claimed that government had decided not to enclose the toilets in conversation with the local community, so that residents might incorporate them into their own homes in time, and that the ANC Youth League were merely pushing a political agenda to discredit the DA. While there is little doubt that this was the ANC Youth League agenda, the Human Rights Commission ruled the matter as unconstitutional when it was taken to court, as it violated the dignity of township residents. For the 2010-11 protests, see <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Zille-Truth-behind-toilet-saga-20100705>; <https://www.zapiro.com/100608tt>; <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/CT-toilets-violated-right-to-dignity-20100604>; For the 2013 protests, see <https://www.enca.com/south-africa/poo-protest-backs-cape-town-highway>; <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Poo-protesters-target-WC-legislature-20130805>; <https://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/opinion/how-poo-became-a-political-issue-1541126#.Ukv1KYYmvNE>

¹⁰ Penner. "We Shall Deal Here with Humble Things," 8; Tempelhoff, "From Makhaza to Rammulotsi," 86-88.

provision of portable toilets rather than “proper, permanent, modern flush toilets,” as well as the general discrepancies in basic service provision in the city, which remain deeply unequal in terms of race and class.¹¹ The image of the porcelain toilet was fast becoming a symbol of modernity and first-class citizenship, from which Khayelitsha residents felt excluded, and which resonated strongly with the experiences of structural discrimination under Apartheid. Commentators such as Steven Robins and Barbara Penner have already drawn attention to these points.¹²

In the past few years, student activists from various universities around the country have also vocalised concerns around the gender segregation of toilets on campus, which, they argue, is an archaic design feature that excludes transgender people, and those who identify as gender-non-binary. These conversations culminated in the first gender-neutral toilets being provided at the University of Cape Town in 2014 and at the University of Witwatersrand in 2017.¹³ Nigel Patel’s study, “Violent Cisterns: Trans Experience of Bathroom Space,” provides a more in depth exploration of the multiple ways in which transgender people experience violence in relation to the toilet space in Cape Town.¹⁴

Most recently, the Western Cape province has been experiencing the worst drought in a century. In an effort to save water, the city of Cape Town has

¹¹ Robins, “Poo Wars as Matter out of Place,” 1; see also Steven Robins, “The 2011 Toilet Wars in South Africa: Justice and Transition between the Exceptional and the Everyday after Apartheid.” *Development and Change*, Vol. 45, No. 3. (2014), 479-480. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2010-06-05-western-cape-toilet-wars-heat-up-with-more-mudslinging/#.WjFIZ7T1VE4>

¹² Barbara Penner, “Flush with Inequality: Sanitation in South Africa.” *Places Journal* (2010), 10-11 <https://placesjournal.org/article/flush-with-inequality-sanitation-in-south-africa/> [Last accessed 14 February 2018]; Penner, “We Shall Deal here with Humble Things,” 25; Robins, “Poo Wars as Matter out of Place,” 3.

¹³ For events at UCT, see <http://www.thedailyvox.co.za/mixed-reactions-to-ucts-mixed-bathrooms/>; Wits: <http://witsvuvuzela.com/2017/03/19/gender-neutral-bathrooms/>. Similar events were happening, and continue to happen, at prominent universities in the United States (USA): Stanford: <https://news.stanford.edu/2017/05/12/stanford-increases-number-gender-restrooms-campus/>; Yale: <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2016/05/22/yale-university-introduces-23-gender-neutral-bathrooms-to-campus.html>

¹⁴ Nigel Patel. “Violent Cisterns: Trans Experiences of Bathroom Space.” *Agenda*, Vol. 31, No.1. (2017), 51, 56-61.

implemented “level 6B water restrictions,” limiting residents to 50L per day, along with increased water tariffs to enforce these regulations.¹⁵ The crisis has catalysed heated debate around who is to blame for the crisis, and how best to manage it, and has highlighted the stark disparities that still exist in the city in terms of access to resources and services. The socially contested nature of toilet use has once again come under closer scrutiny in this climate of crisis.

These events and the voices of activists, among others, have raised pressing questions about our current public toilets, and about our wider waste management system, which most of us have been taught to take for granted.¹⁶

These questions reverberate with the academic concerns of a number of contemporary scholars.¹⁷ Is the era of institutional racism and apartheid really over when black people in this city are forced to tend their bodily needs in full view of the N2 highway, or risk sexual assault by waiting until dark to use communal facilities?¹⁸ Is it appropriate to segregate public toilets by gender in a society that is starting to recognise the limits of the gender

¹⁵ <http://www.capetown.gov.za/Family%20and%20home/residential-utility-services/residential-water-and-sanitation-services/Residential-water-restrictions-explained>; <https://citizen.co.za/news/cpt-day-zero/1809337/cape-town-residents-must-brace-themselves-for-water-tariff-increases/>

¹⁶ These are not the particular questions that this dissertation seeks to answer – they merely serve to highlight current conversations around toilets, and to emphasize the variety of domains that toilets connect, and consequently, the variety of values that they implicate.

¹⁷ Over the last thirty years, scholars from the global community have started to recognise the lack of engagement with waste management systems as a lacuna, and the topic has attracted interest from a range of disciplines - geographers, sociologists, anthropologists, urban planners, scholars of gender, culture, the postcolonial and queer theory, filmmakers, as well as historians. Within the discipline of history alone, there has been interest from a range of ‘fields’ - urban, architectural, social, environmental and even global. It is interesting to note, as Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner point out in their collection, *The Private life of Public Conveniences*, that many of these scholars seem to be unaware of working within a ‘field,’ believing themselves to be the only ones working on it. But thanks to the collection of essays put together by Gershenson and Penner, and Harvey Molotch and Lauren Noren in 2009 and 2010 respectively, this seems to be changing. Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner, “Introduction: The Private Life of Public Conveniences,” in Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner (ed.) *Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009). Harvey Molotch and Lauren Noren (eds.). *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2010) .

¹⁸ <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2016-07-05-groundup-cape-town-taken-to-court-over-toilets/#.Wjn9lrT1VE5>; Jewitt. “Geographies of Shit,” 616; Penner, “Flush with Inequality,” 3-4. Claudia Mitchell has focused on the site of public toilets at schools in South Africa, to explore questions around gender based violence. See Claudia Mitchell. “Geographies of Danger: School Toilets in Sub Saharan Africa,” in Gershenson and Penner (eds.), *Ladies and Gents*.

binary?¹⁹ Is a water-borne sewage system really the best system available, when residents of Cape Town may soon be short on fresh water just for drinking and cooking?²⁰ I do not highlight these questions merely to emphasise how “topical” the issue of access to toilets is, but rather to indicate the pervasiveness of the issue, and how it relates to larger questions around public-ness and access – questions that are worthy of serious conceptual and historical engagement.

Taking a historical view of this topic helps us understand how and why particular elements of toilet practice came to be, and realise “that there is nothing inevitable about the ways in which this important public space is currently organised.”²¹ For example, Terry Kogan has challenged the perception that the gendered divisions that characterise modern public toilets is a “benign recognition of natural anatomical differences between men and women,” by delving into nineteenth-century America, and locating this design feature in social anxiety around shifting roles for women.²² If we understand the processes that shaped this infrastructure, it is easier for us to reflect on our current infrastructure, and also helps us to imagine alternative systems.²³

But public toilets also open up important questions about how we understand our past; especially if we take seriously the premise that infrastructure also plays a role in shaping values, hierarchies and experiences.²⁴ In the context of South Africa, understanding the co-production of infrastructure and social

¹⁹ Terry S. Kogan. “Sex Separation in Public Restrooms: Law, Architecture, and Gender.” *Michigan Journal of Gender and Law*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2007-2008), 56; Olga Gershenson. “The Restroom Revolution: Unisex Toilets and Campus Politics,” in Molotch and Noren (eds.), *Toilet*, 192

²⁰ Penner, “Flush with Inequality,” 10-11; Jewitt, “Geographies of Shit,” 612; Penner. “We Shall Deal Here with Humble Things,” 20-21.

²¹ Kogan, “Sex Separation in Public Restrooms,” 57

²² *Ibid.*, 3; Terry S. Kogan. “Sex separation: The Cure-All for Victorian Social Anxiety,” in Molotch and Noren (eds.), *Toilet*, 144-145.

²³ Penner, “We Shall Deal Here with Humble Things,” 21.

²⁴ Harvey Molotch, “Introduction,” in Molotch and Noren (eds.), *Toilet*, 4, 10; Kogan. “Sex Separation in Public Restrooms,” 56.

value is crucial to understanding a history steeped in social differentiation and oppression.

TOILETS IN URBAN HISTORIES OF SOUTH AFRICA

Understanding the origins of the Apartheid city has been a major concern for historians of South African urbanism, and considerable efforts have been put into tracing the roots of segregation, identifying the imperatives behind it, and the mechanisms through which it was operationalised.²⁵ And yet the role of infrastructure in general and waste management infrastructure in particular in this process has largely been overlooked. But perhaps more revealing than the lack of interest shown in public toilets by these authors, is the problematic ways in which waste management infrastructure *has* in fact featured, albeit implicitly, in the literature.

The commonest way in which waste management infrastructure has featured in South African historiography can be best described as an un-interrogated element in the “modernisation” narrative. For example, in their seminal text, *Cape Town: The Making of the City*, Nigel Worden, Elizabeth Van Heyningen, and Vivian Bickford-Smith spend some time emphasising the centrality of “sanitation” to the political landscape of the Cape at the turn of the century, the period in which the “modern” city was emerging. The debates regarding the means of ensuring an adequate water supply, and the modes of management of the increasing volume of waste generated by a growing population were so polarising, according to Worden et al, that the two main political parties in the 1882 elections were dubbed the “Clean” and the

²⁵ Paul Maylam, “Explaining the Apartheid City: 20 Years of South African Urban Historiography”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1. (1995), 19.

“Dirty” parties, in reference to where they sat on these issues.²⁶ Furthermore, the victory of the “Clean” party over the “Dirty” party ushered in a period of sanitary reforms that were directly shaped by the British template, and in turn helped solidify British cultural dominance at the Cape. However, after concluding that by 1899, “many of the amenities of a modern city, including a professional bureaucracy...an adequate water supply, water-borne sanitation and efficient drainage” had been implemented, Worden et al hardly mention the matter again.²⁷ Despite acknowledging the connection between cultural dominance and waste management infrastructure, the authors do not interrogate the underlying assumptions and values that came with water-borne sanitation, nor do they engage with how this new system interacted with or challenged pre-existing, and potentially conflicting, views on how to manage bodies and bodily waste in the public realm.

Worden et al also mention that the unequal provision of sanitary infrastructure increased the material discrepancies that already existed between white people and those of colour in the city in particular.²⁸ However, because they have taken the neutrality of infrastructure for granted, there is no interrogation of how the management of waste was implicated in the very construction of the specific power configurations in the city. This assumption is symptomatic of much mainstream urban history of the period.

Their book provides a comprehensive overview of the multiple changes that were happening in the Cape at the turn of the century, and it is particularly helpful for readers trying to imagine what the town might have looked, smelled and sounded like on a street level at the time. But the lack of attention paid to the power of the built environment to impose particular values onto

²⁶ “Clean” and “Dirty” politics will be explored more in chapter one. Cf. Nigel Worden, Elizabeth Van Heyningen and Vivian Bickford-Smith. *Cape Town: The Making of a City: An Illustrated Social History*. (Cape Town: David Philip, 1998), 225.

²⁷ Worden et al, *Cape Town*, 227.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 226.

bodies precludes a deeper interrogation of the way in which social hierarchies were shaped and reproduced.

Waste management infrastructure has also featured in South African urban historiography under the rubric of “Sanitation Syndrome” – a social metaphor that has been utilised by a number of historians to describe Cape society during the period under consideration.²⁹ According to Maynard Swanson, who coined the term “sanitation syndrome,” medical and colonial officials in South Africa at the turn of the century were increasingly influenced by theories linking the physical and moral health of the population, and these concerns compounded with already-existing racial prejudice. Urban concerns such as “overcrowding, slums, public health and safety, often seen in the light of class and ethnic differences in industrial societies, were in the colonial context perceived largely in terms of colour differences.”³⁰ Thus the very presence of black people in the city came to be viewed as contaminating, on a physical and moral level. In this context, segregationist ideology found a firm foothold, writes Swanson.³¹ With the arrival of bubonic plague in Cape Town in 1901, health officials capitalised on this social perception. By exploiting the demographics of this epidemic, officials engineered the first forced removal of black residents from the city centre to its fringes at Uitvlugt.³²

The “sanitation syndrome” approach has undoubtedly enriched our understanding of one of the most fundamental aspects of the twentieth-

²⁹ Maynard W. Swanson. “The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909.” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1977), 387; Maylam, “Explaining the Apartheid City,” 24.

³⁰ Swanson, “The Sanitation Syndrome,” 387.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*; Vivian Bickford-Smith. “Mapping Cape Town: From Slavery to Apartheid,” in Sean Field (ed.), *Lost Communities, Living Memories: Remembering Forced Removals in Cape Town* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2001), 16: Ships carrying hay for British horses docked in Cape Town, unknowingly carrying rats afflicted with fleas. These fleas brought the plague from Britain. As the majority of dockworkers at the time were black, they were naturally some of the first victims of the plague. But the authorities failed to see this connection, blaming the black population for the spread of the plague. This formed the justification for their removal from the city.

century South African city.³³ Furthermore, it emphasises how perceptions of cleanliness and racial difference interacted and influenced the spatial configuration of the Apartheid city. However, it is limited in several ways. Firstly, “sanitation” is used largely to refer to infectious diseases, and there is no attention paid to waste-related bodily practices or waste management – which were certainly bound up in conceptions of health and cleanliness.³⁴ Secondly, the “sanitation syndrome” theory has not taken into account the overlapping and intersecting elements of class and gender, along with race, which overlooks the way that sanitation rhetoric and infrastructure shaped social hierarchies on multiple levels.³⁵ Thirdly, despite the overarching interest in the spatial configuration of the city, the lack of attention paid to waste management infrastructure overlooks the way that different people would have moved through the city, and planned and restricted their mobility based on their bodily needs.³⁶ And finally, by focusing on only big events, such as epidemics, this kind of approach overlooks the mundane but significant matters of everyday life. Alf Lüdtke, one of the central figures in the German tradition of *Alltagsgeschichte*, has argued that it is precisely in the routinised practices of ordinary life that imprints of greater historical processes can be located.³⁷

Significantly, references to toilets do seem to be more common in those histories that focus on townships, or areas that used to be outside of Cape Town’s official municipality. For example, in his master’s thesis, “Aspects of the Social and Political History of Langa Township, Cape Town, 1927-1948,”

³³ It has also helped to disrupt the notion of Cape liberalism before 1948. Maylam, “Explaining the Apartheid City,” 34.

³⁴ For further elaboration of this issue, see Chapter One.

³⁵ Anne Kelk Mager, *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan: A Social History of the Ciskei, 1945-1959* (Portsmouth NH and Oxford: Heinemann, James Curry and David Philip, 1999), 9.

³⁶ Rob Kitchin and Robin Law, “The Socio-Spatial Construction of (In)accessible Public Toilets”, *Urban Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2001), 295.

³⁷ Alf Lüdtke (ed.), *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, trans. William Templer (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 6.

Muchaparara Musemwa described the facilities provided for men in the location:

There were separate ablutions in the quadrangle where men did their washing. Each block served 500 men. The toilets, fixed with some timber rails for the support of the user were communal. Underneath them were uncovered channels in which water ran continuously. Such a plan was naturally fertile ground for unsanitary conditions.³⁸

Julian Jacobs also refers to the centrality of toilets in his master's thesis on activism in Manenberg, highlighting a protest over "broken toilets [and] unpainted homes," by some six hundred residents, as one of the catalysts for the formation of the Duinefontein Tenants Association. This was one of many organizations that formed the civic movement forming in Manenberg the 1980s.³⁹ Jacobs also makes reference to toilets at several other points in his dissertation in the context of the housing provided in the area, showing an awareness of the role of toilets in affecting quality of life, even if this was not his explicit research interest.⁴⁰

It is possible that histories focused on townships, or areas that were designated to accommodate those forced out of the city, are more likely to make references to toilets, precisely because the lack of infrastructure, or poor quality of those provided, was so acutely experienced in these areas. This tendency to conceive of histories of townships as separate from histories of Cape Town, which seems to characterise South African urban historiography, is worth considering more critically. By curtailing studies to one or other of these locations, historians seem to implicitly reinforce the apartheid logic that

³⁸ Roger Granelli and Ronald Levitan, *Urban Black Housing: A Review of Existing Conditions in the Cape Peninsula with some Guidelines for Change* (Cape Town: Urban Problems Research Unit of the University of Cape Town, 1977); Muchaparara Musemwa, "Aspects of the Social and Political History of Langa Township, Cape Town, 1927-1948", Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Cape Town (1993), 37.

³⁹ Article in *Grassroots* Newspaper, March 1980, 5; Julian Jacobs. "Then and Now: Activism in Manenberg, 1980 to 2010", Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of the Western Cape, (2010), 21.

⁴⁰ Jacobs, "Then and Now," 19-23.

viewed cities as white areas, and the areas where most people of colour lived as mere footnotes, or sub-histories, to the official histories of Cape Town.

Considering the city largely in terms of the municipal boundaries of the time is no doubt a limitation of this dissertation as well. In large part, this is an effect of the archival order within which it operates. In my efforts to interrogate the “public-ness” of the earliest public toilets, I do highlight the discrepancies in toilet provision and design between the municipally defined sections of Cape Town and the neighbourhood of Uitvlugt in the first two chapters. However, there is a great need for further in-depth research that challenges this geographical conception of “the city” in more radical and head-on ways.

Antina Von Schnitzler’s *Democracy’s Infrastructure* is not focused on the greater Cape Town area, and therefore does not speak directly to this issue of conceiving of the city. Nor is it concerned particularly with toilets. But through her focus on infrastructures, and on the ubiquitous pre-paid water meter in particular, Von Schnitzler makes a significant contribution to the task of challenging who and what counts as public, and who and what counts as political – a task that Partha Chatterjee argues is crucial for postcolonial historians.⁴¹

Von Schnitzler’s interest in the politics of infrastructure was first piqued by a large-scale protest that occurred in the informal township of Diepsloot, just outside of Johannesburg, in 2004.⁴² The protest was one of many “service delivery protests” that have occurred all over South Africa in the last decade or so, but as one of the first in the post-apartheid period, it left politicians and police unsure of how to conceive of and respond to the residents actions.⁴³

⁴¹ Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 60; Von Schnitzler, *Democracy’s Infrastructure*, 107.

⁴² Von Schnitzler, *Democracy’s Infrastructure*, 1.

⁴³ I use the term “service delivery protests” in inverted commas because, as Von Schnitzler points out, the term has become a blanket term to refer to a wide range of protests, regardless of specific concerns of the protestors. Von Schnitzler, *Democracy’s Infrastructure*, 1-3.

During apartheid, blocking roads, destroying pipes, tanks and prepaid meters and spilling sewage were frequently used tactics to make the cities ungovernable. However, in the post-apartheid period, stripped of a liberation narrative, these kinds of acts were no longer read as political, but reframed, at worst as criminal acts, and best as entitled claims for material resources.⁴⁴

By focusing on the centrality of infrastructure in these protests, and by tracing the history of the pre-paid meter, Von Schnitzler shows that it is precisely in these “less visible locations” that political society is based in the postcolony.⁴⁵ Her book not only offers up a different perspective on the period of “transition” after apartheid, but also opens up space to explore bigger questions around “citizenship and belonging.”⁴⁶ *Democracy’s Infrastructure* is part of a growing trend of historical and anthropological literature that has emerged, especially in the wake of the violent urban restructuring during the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, which understandably shows a much greater sensibility to the politics of infrastructure than earlier histories of Cape Town.

A related, but slightly different issue to consider when writing histories of everyday infrastructure in Cape Town is the language or the terms we use when imagining those that would have used and interacted with these infrastructures. As a result of colonial urban policies, especially the 1923 Urban Areas Act, black people were technically prohibited from residing permanently in the city. Nevertheless, the city relied on black migrant workers, and many people of colour therefore spent long working hours in Cape Town, even if they were forced to sleep in barrack style accommodation on the outskirts of the city at night, initially at Ndabeni, and later at Langa.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 3-4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 107.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 7-10.

⁴⁷ Mamphela Ramphela, *A Bed Called Home: Life in the Migrant Labour Hostels of Cape Town* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1993), 1; Musemwa, “Aspects of the Social and Political History of Langa Township,” 33.

The term “residents” then, needs to be problematised when we think about toilet users, because it potentially excludes and invisibilises a large portion of people who did not technically reside in the city, but would have relied on public toilet facilities such as toilets in the city during the day.

I have tried to be cognisant of this in my research, but this is another area in which I acknowledge this dissertation to be limited, partly due to a lack of better vocabulary, and partly due to the difficulties of accessing information about those who the government were determined to expunge from the official order of the city. Women, people of colour, and women of colour in particular, were largely omitted from official documents, as were most references to bodily-related habits. As I discuss further in a later section, while scattered pieces of information about waste-related infrastructures can be found in the official archive, this information was not systematically recorded, and appears to peter out especially from the 1920s.

The issue here, however, is more than one of historian’s inconvenience. The challenge of locating this kind of information gives us insight into the politics of the governmental archive itself. The omission of particular groups of people, the lack of systematic recording around waste-related infrastructure, and the lack of information regarding bodily-related habits were not accidental to the process of record-keeping, but indeed constitute the very nature of colonial priority. In the following chapters, this dissertation explores, among other things, the hegemonic concerns that informed and shaped the provision, design and control of public toilets. Chief among these concerns was the desire to fashion a white middle-class face of Cape Town, and to formulate a public realm, both as a physical location, and as a particular section of the population, that was removed from and above the basic urges of the body. In the same way, therefore, that these concerns were embedded in the infrastructure, they are also reflected in the way these

processes were recorded by the colonial administration. My efforts to avoid reproducing this logic are outlined later in this chapter.

CONCEPTUALISING PUBLIC TOILETS

My attempt at conceptualising public toilets is heavily indebted to a number of historians, as well as scholars from a variety of other disciplines, who have explored these facilities from a range of perspectives and in a number of contexts.

Matthew Gandy, for example, has used the sewers that were constructed to facilitate water borne sewage in Paris, to explore the tensions and contradictions that underlie the development of the “modern” city.⁴⁸ Rob Kitchin and Robin Law have been more interested in the spatial role of the buildings themselves – i.e. as sites with the potential to impede or facilitate mobility in the public realm. Their study of the experiences of disabled people in Ireland has brought this into stark relief.⁴⁹ Margaret Andrews and Tom Crook have also emphasised the spatial function of public toilets in their work, exploring how they facilitated the ordering of public spaces and regulation of bodies, in the context of Vancouver and Britain respectively.⁵⁰ Other scholars, such as Warwick Anderson and David Inglis, have explored the ideological power of toilets, particularly in colonial contexts, in facilitating social differentiation and the construction of “superior” and “inferior” groups.⁵¹

A key theme that has emerged from this diverse literature is the recognition that public toilets operate as complex systems, connecting a multiplicity of

⁴⁸ Matthew Gandy, “The Paris Sewers and the Rationalization of Urban Space”, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. Vol. 24, No. 1 (1999), 23-44.

⁴⁹ Kitchin and Law, “Socio-Spatial Construction”, 287-298.

⁵⁰ Andrews, “Sanitary Conveniences and the Retreat of the Frontier”, 3-22; Crook, “Power, Privacy and Pleasure”, 549.

⁵¹ Warwick Anderson, “Excremental Colonialism: Public Health and the Poetics of Pollution.” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1995), 640-669; Inglis, “Dirt and Denigration,” 207-221.

elements, both material and discursive. On a material level, they are constituted by plumbing fixtures (such as closets and urinals), waste management infrastructure (potentially involving pipes and sewers), as well as architectural spaces that house these elements, which in turn, are part of a greater urban environment.

Public toilets also connect and interact with a variety of other elements. Barbara Penner articulates this quality well in her article, “We Shall Deal Here with Humble Things:”

I do not consider the bathroom to be a discrete and enclosed site. My aim is to emphasize how the bathroom meets and interacts with the world beyond; how it moves between different sites, scales and conditions; and how it hooks up technology to the body, infrastructure to individuals, public to private realms.⁵²

In addition to threading these disparate elements, toilets are imbued with ideology, ranging from scientific understandings of health and hygiene, to social constructions of gender, race, class and sexuality, as well as notions of decency and order – a list that is by no means exhaustive.⁵³

As a number of historians have argued that it is precisely in the extent and overlap of the material and discursive elements, albeit often invisibilised, that the power of this seemingly mundane facility lies.⁵⁴ I have therefore attempted to convey a sense of the multiplicity of the systems and

⁵² Penner has focused on the site of the bathroom specifically – which usually refers to the room housing and including the toilet (and other plumbing related fixtures) in the private home - but her conception of the space can also be applied to the public version. Penner, “We Shall Deal Here with Humble Things,” 5. Colin McFarlane has also honed in the connecting role in “infrastructure and Sanitation in Colonial and Post-Colonial Bombay,” describing how toilet related infrastructure can “play important and historically specific connective roles across a range of domains ... and materialities ... including the body, social, political, governmental, environmental, technical and more.” Colin McFarlane, “Governing the Contaminated City: Infrastructure and Sanitation in Colonial and Post-Colonial Bombay”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2008), 418.

⁵³ Penner, “We Shall Deal Here with Humble Things,” 11-12; Penner, “A World of Unmentionable Suffering,” 36, 48; Matt Houlbrook, “The Private World of Public Urinals: London 1918-57”, *London Journal*, Vol. 25, No.1 (2000), 55; McFarlane. “Governing the Contaminated City,” 418.

⁵⁴ Crook, “Power, Privacy and Pleasure, 566-567; McFarlane, “Governing the Contaminated City,” 418; Penner, “We Shall Deal Here with Humble Things, 5-7.

connections of public toilets in Cape Town, focusing not only on the various levels of infrastructure, but also viewing them as sites at which daily bodily practices and routines were played out, as sites over which debates were staged, and as the sites at which social roles were performed, shaped and resisted.

That being said, this dissertation is by no means an attempt to provide a comprehensive study of public toilets in Cape Town. In fact, one consequence of taking such a broad approach is that I have not been able to consider all of these elements in equal measure, or in as much detail as they probably warrant. The technical details and debates surrounding the water carriage sewage system is one such area that deserves much more rigorous attention. On the whole, this project has been guided by a decision to centre my research in the everyday waste management practices of historical Cape Town, and to approach it with a particular focus on infrastructure and bodily techniques. This decision in turn has been shaped by a number of significant developments in the field of history.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONJUNCTIONS

The most significant influence of this work has come from those historians, who building on the groundwork laid by the Annales School have sought to make the “‘everyday life,’ the experiences, actions and habits of ordinary people, a legitimate object of historical enquiry.”⁵⁵ This new group of historians proposed a shift in the scale of historical investigation – from grand narratives focused only on political change, to matters of everyday life. Furthermore, they called for a reconsideration of who or what constituted history. They envisioned histories that included previously overlooked

⁵⁵ John Brewer, “Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life”, *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2010), 90.

people – women, people of colour, people who did not identify as heterosexual, to mention a few – as well as the more transitory elements of life, such as emotions, mental health, and spirituality. Not only was this driven by a more socialist politics, but it was also driven by a desire to write more “total” histories – histories that came closer to capturing the complexity of reality.⁵⁶

Of particular interest to me has been the work that came out of the West German tradition of *Alltagsgeschichte* in the 1970s.⁵⁷ Although these practitioners were also interested in providing a counter narrative to conventional histories, they were not merely interested in the routines and experiences of the everyday just for the sake of it. As Alf Lüdtke argues in his introduction to *The History of Everyday Life*, the real value of this approach is how it reveals the way ordinary people and everyday acts actually constitute bigger political events and processes; it allows us to locate “historical change and continuity” in the actions of “concrete groups and individuals.”⁵⁸ As an example, Lüdtke describes how research on Nazi Germany has revealed that many ordinary people – civil servants and functionaries – actually embraced the Fascist regime in many ways. Rather than being merely “cogs in the machine,” these otherwise unremarkable citizens were in fact “active accomplices” in the fascist project of othering, and eventually murdering, thousands of people. Thus the presumed gulf between the powerful and the masses is diminished, a conception which has for so long “appeared to exonerate the majority of their guilt.”⁵⁹ In addition to locating power in individuals, this approach foregrounds daily practices as significant sites of history. Rather than being blinded by minutiae to the “bigger questions” of history, as Lüdtke and his fellow practitioners have been accused, they have

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 99, 101,

⁵⁷ Uli Linke, “Reviewed Work(s): *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* by Alf Lüdtke”, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 23, No.1 (1996), 152.

⁵⁸ Lüdtke, *History of Everyday Life*, 6.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 4.

actually revealed important connections between the ordinary and the political.⁶⁰

I have also taken inspiration from the new approaches to research that historians of the everyday introduced. Along with Eric Hobsbawm's call to break down what he saw as the artificial boundaries between usually isolated fields of inquiry, historians of the everyday also reimagined relationship between the historian and the archive.⁶¹For one thing, they began to look at state records with new eyes. Rather than using official sources to construct a chronological order of events, as described by the bureaucracy, these types of sources were scoured for any information they revealed, often accidentally, about the values and lifestyle of ordinary people. At the same time, ideas about what constituted a legitimate source were being re-evaluated, and new kinds of sources were being made available to historians.⁶²

Shifts in scale, subjects, and types of sources all required historians to rethink the way in which they wrote histories too – the narrative techniques that they drew on to communicate their findings. Some of these historians, like Carlo Ginzburg and Giovanni Levi, recommended taking notes from the literature of the time, which they believed, had been much more successful in capturing and representing reality than the conventional histories of the time.⁶³ Yet without the option to offer neat conclusions like fiction authors could, they were also aware that historians needed to utilise different methods to fiction writers in their attempts to capture reality. Levi argued that historians should reflect on the limitations of their approach in their work – actively

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 15.

⁶¹ Hobsbawm believed that it was in the overlaps between these 'fields' that the most interesting histories lay, and encouraged historians to use a 'resolute eclecticism' in their research approach to access them. Mark M. Smith, "Making Sense of Social History", *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2003), 165-166.

⁶² Brewer, "Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life", 100.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 102.

incorporating the difficulties that they came across, and the ways in which they had attempted to navigate these difficulties, into their narratives.⁶⁴

Another significant shift in approach that was championed by historians of the everyday was to centre the “experience” of ordinary people in their narratives – an approach pioneered by E. P. Thompson, with the goal of bringing to light the struggles of oppressed groups in particular.⁶⁵ While this approach has certainly allowed for more inclusive histories in many ways, it also comes with the risk of merely reproducing particular ideological systems, and naturalising perceived differences in identity – such as by race, or sexuality.⁶⁶ According to Joan W. Scott, rather than taking “experience” as self-evident, the role of the historian should be to interrogate the very production of the identity that gave rise to a particular experience. This is not to say that politics do not exist, or shape experiences – they unequivocally do - but rather to urge historians to focus on the very production of power formations.⁶⁷ This is a debate that I have tried to be cognisant of my own writing.

The notion that “experience” was a crucial element of history opened up another development in the field that has shaped my thinking – that of a sensory approach to writing history. Sensory historians essentially wanted to expand the concept of experience, by drawing attention to the role of the basic senses – sight, sound, taste, touch and smell – as the sites of bodily materiality through which people perceive(d) and interact(ed) with their surroundings.⁶⁸ These historians were dismayed that in most conventional histories, a passing reference to the significance weight of a politician was often the only

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 100, 102.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 100; Scott, “Experience,” 25, 29.

⁶⁶ Scott, “Experience,” 25.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 37-38.

⁶⁸ Mark M. Smith, “Producing Sense, Consuming Sense, Making Sense: Perils and Prospects for Sensory History”, *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (2007), 842.

reminder of the bodies “whose palpable presence helped shape human thought and action.”⁶⁹

Some sensory historians have argued that their biggest contribution to the field has been making the past more accessible to readers; to help readers imagine what it would have looked like, smelt like, sounded like, tasted and tangibly felt to be alive or involved in a particular event at a particular time.⁷⁰

While this is no doubt a positive thing, a much more significant contribution that these historians have made has been to draw our attention to the need to historicise the senses themselves. As Mark Smith has argued, the sensory organs of contemporary readers may not differ from those living a century ago, but the meaning that each group would attach to particular sensory sensations would.⁷¹

Alain Corbin is considered the first historian to have illustrated this concept through his magisterial work on the significance of smell in nineteenth-century France. In his 1986 classic *The Foul and the Fragrant*, Corbin traces the strategies of deodorisation that he argues were fundamental to and in the process of modernisation in France, as well as the social stakes of this process. One of Corbin’s many contributions with this work was to show that the meaning attached to smell – whether it was considered pleasant or unpleasant, innocent or harmful – was not static, but shifted over time, and according to a variety of other factors. Furthermore, he revealed how the process of deodorisation was closely linked to the creation and entrenchment of particular social hierarchies. “It would be futile,” Corbin argued,

to analyse social tensions and conflicts without accounting for the different kinds of sensibilities that decisively influence them. Abhorrence of smell produced its own form of social power. Foul

⁶⁹ George H. Roeder, “Coming to Our Senses”, *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 81, No. 3 (1994), 1113.

⁷⁰ Reference to Charles Hoffer in Smith, “Producing Sense, Consuming Sense, Making Sense,” 845.

⁷¹ Smith, “Producing Sense, Consuming Sense, Making Sense,” 846.

smelling rubbish appears to threaten the social order, whereas the reassuring victory of the hygienic and the fragrant promises to buttress its stability.⁷²

By tracing the ways in which our understanding and associations with particular sensory stimulus have changed over time, we can better understand the creation of social systems and power dynamics at play in particular places. Additionally, if we do not historicise the senses, as both Smith and Roeder have warned, we run the serious risk of reproducing the prejudices and power structures of the past.⁷³ Smith expresses this concern particularly well:

Historians who quote a nineteenth-century observer's characterisation of immigrant homes reeking – “the filth and smell are intolerable” – leave the impression that the description was objectively and universally ‘true’. What we really need to know is whose nose was doing the smelling, how the definition of “smell” changed over time and according to constituency (did people living in the “filth” agree?), and how the characterisation was used to justify actions my middle class reformers. Absent such explicit commentary, we present the past on the terms set by the reformer's nose and all the prejudices and values that inhered in that nose.⁷⁴

This is particularly important for historians concerned with waste management practices, a topic immersed in discourse around “filth.” Rather than take these attitudes for granted, I seek to recognise the processes by which some things attained an association with filth – recognising that attitudes and understandings of waste have shifted over time, and among societies. For example, Nicholas Goddard has shown that human waste was

⁷² Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (New York: Berg Publishers, 1986), 5.

⁷³ Roeder, “Coming to Our Senses,” 1116.

⁷⁴ Smith, “Producing Sense, Consuming Sense, Making Sense,” 843.

once considered a valuable commodity in Britain, because of its agricultural application.⁷⁵

By illustrating how sensory stimuli, such as smell or sound, are implicated in bigger stories of social and political conflict, Corbin and other sensory historians have also opened up opportunities for more connected histories – one of the central goals for historians of the everyday, and for this dissertation, too.

Although they may not have explicitly expressed an interest in it, sensory historians were essentially drawing our attention to the body, insofar as it furthered our understanding of experience. They urged us to ask, what constitutes experience? How do perceptions of sensory experience change over time, and how have these changes been intertwined with bigger social processes of order and power? Parallel to sensory historians, another (loosely defined) group of scholars were taking a more explicit interest in the body itself, and the range of ways in which people used their bodies.

Marcel Mauss – a French sociologist – was the first to put what he described as the “techniques of the body” on the map as worth of study. He believed that variations in bodily comportment– the result of education and bodily knowledge, rather than just mechanical reflex responses -could be used to characterise different societies or groups.⁷⁶ In a lecture in 1933, Mauss compiled an extensive list of examples to illustrate the range of actions he was encompassing under this term: techniques of birthing and obstetrics; elements of child rearing; approaches to sleep and rest (distinct from sleep); various forms of movement, from swimming to marching styles; as well as the various ways of caring for the body itself, such as washing, rubbing etc. In

⁷⁵ Nicholas Goddard, “‘A Mine of Wealth?’: The Victorians and the Agricultural Value of Sewage”, *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (1996), 275.

⁷⁶ Marcel Mauss, “Techniques of the Body” [1935], *Economy and Society*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1973), 73; Tom Sparrow and Adam Hutchinson (ed.), *A History of Habit: From Aristotle to Bourdieu* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), 271.

addition to these full body movements, he also identified more subtle uses of the body – such as polite and impolite positions for the hands.⁷⁷

Since Mauss's seminal lecture, a number of other scholars, from sociology, anthropology, psychology and linguistics, among others, have increasingly taken an interest in the bodily movements, and many have put forward "large scale theories as to why variations in bodily behaviour have taken the forms they do."⁷⁸ And although historians of art and theatre have long since taken gestures and other physical forms of communication seriously in their work, modern historians have in general, "shied away from what they regard as highly elusive and intractable subjects."⁷⁹

But there are good reasons for historians to take the body seriously. Similarly to the way that a focus on the elementary tools of perception can help us understand experiences from the past better, focusing on bodily comportment can help us understand social interactions of the past better.⁸⁰ As we know from our own interactions – often all it takes is a slight of the hand, or a facial expression, to change the meaning of a sentence uttered. But not only do the meaning of physical actions differ between social groups, but they shift over time, too, and need to be historicised themselves.

More significantly for this dissertation, as Keith Thomas has argued, the use of distinct modes of bodily comportment has long been used as a tool for social differentiation. In some contexts, particular forms of posture and gait were cultivated to indicate class, while the direction of one's gaze, or style of eating – just to mention two examples – were indicative of gender differences. For historians, attention to bodily comportment can not only help us to

⁷⁷ Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," 79-85.

⁷⁸ Keith Thomas, "Introduction," in Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (ed.) *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 4.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 4-5.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 5-6.

identify social differences across a range of spectrums, but it can also help us to understand how those differences were performed and entrenched.⁸¹

This was a central concern for Michel Foucault, whose work revealed that we cannot fully understand historical configurations of power and discipline without considering the way in which bodies are implicated in these processes: “Power relations have an immediate hold upon [the body],” he argued. “They invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs.”⁸² The Foucauldian insight was simultaneously deepened and complicated by Judith Butler’s significant intervention in the field as she brought the problematic of disciplining in conversation with the question of performativity.⁸³

Since Foucault’s seminal work, a variety of scholars have taken up the call to bring bodies back into political discourse. Postcolonial scholars in particular have taken a particular interest in the material and symbolic ways that dominant groups have controlled the bodies of the less powerful.⁸⁴ But there has been very little interest shown in the way in which the human body’s capacity to generate waste, and the particular ways in which different groups of people have managed their waste, have been implicated in these power dynamics. David Inglis and Warwick Anderson have made important forays into filling this gap. Inglis emphasizes the need to interrogate the use of faecal rhetoric in the configurations of power relationships. His analysis connects the symbolic and the material, for he argues that the “meaning attached to faecal products vary as the circumstances alter in which the superordinate group deal with their own faecal waste.”⁸⁵ Anderson has shown in the context of the Philippines, that American colonists used waste management as a means of ordering society, and marking the “racial and social boundaries” on

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 7-8.

⁸² Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 173.

⁸³ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁸⁴ Inglis, “Dirt and Denigration,” 207.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 219.

the islands. American toilet practice was deemed to symbolise their social and political control, while indigenous Filipinos were castigated as devious and “promiscuous defecators.”⁸⁶

It is true that studying bodily comportment from a historical perspective is more challenging than from the more contemporary-based disciplines, because we cannot observe bodies from the past as we can in the present.⁸⁷ However, inferences to bodies and the way people have used them are in fact scattered throughout a number of conventional sources. In the Introduction to *A History of Gesture*, Thomas suggests a variety of such sources, apart from the extensive range of contemporary literature:

Published accounts of sign language, the formal codes compiled for orators, actors, dancers and monks ... incidental descriptions ... found in legal depositions and contemporary accounts of events ... volumes[s] of prescriptive writing on manners, telling children and adults how to control their bodily movements.⁸⁸

In addition to these textual sources, there is also a rich archive to be found in the buildings and infrastructure around which and in which urban inhabitants reside. Henri Lefebvre laid important groundwork for a spatial approach in history, pioneering the idea that “space is neither simply natural geography nor an empty container filled by history. It is rather something that human beings produce over time.”⁸⁹ Therefore, he argued, it “implies, contains and dissimulates social relations.”⁹⁰

Matt Houlbrook’s exploration of public toilets in London as sites where gay men could meet and have sex is a great example of this conception of space.

⁸⁶ Anderson, “Excremental Colonialism,” 643.

⁸⁷ Thomas, “Introduction,” 4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁹ Richard White. “What is Spatial History?” *Stanford University Spatial History Lab* (2010), 2 <https://web.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/pub.php?id=29> [Last accessed 10 February 2018].

⁹⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (1974; reprint, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 83-84; Michelle Allen, *Cleansing the City: Sanitary Geographies in Victorian London* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007), 18.

For Houlbrook, public toilets operated as a kind of liminal space; they had the “potential to be made private, to become a site for the expression of homosexual desire,” but this was a temporary, unstable state of privacy, forged through the everyday practices and interactions between the people who used them.⁹¹ Privacy had to be constituted through actions and discreet communications. For example, Houlbrook points to “posture, physical location, symbolic exchange and eye contact” as subtle gestures that were employed by men to “ascertain that the other man [was] interested” and presumably, that it was safe to act on their desire. However, at the same time that gay men were collaborating to make the urinal a private space, British police were constantly trying to ensure that the facilities remained fully “public” through their own actions.⁹² Thus the meaning of the space was constituted through the everyday practices of various actors.

Through this example, Houlbrook also reveals how public space operated to normalise particular social relations. In this case, “public” meant a place of strictly heterosexual relations. A number of historians have explored this concept in terms of the gender ascribed to the public around the turn of the century in their respective cities of interest, and how the provision of public toilets for women was particularly threatening in these places, because it signalled an increasing occupation of and participation in a formally male dominated area.⁹³

One weakness of these studies is that they have tended to only consider one set of power relations at a time; i.e. just the role of patriarchy, or of heteronormativity. The problem is, as Patel has highlighted in “Violent Cisterns,” that these power relations never operate in isolation.⁹⁴ So while the specific roles prescribed for “men” and “women” under a patriarchal system

⁹¹ Houlbrook, “The Private World of Public Urinals,” 53-54.

⁹² *Ibid*, 56, 61.

⁹³ Penner, “A World of Unmentionable Suffering,” 46, 49; Cooper et al, “Rooms of Their Own,” 426.

⁹⁴ Patel, “Violent Cisterns,” 54.

no doubt had (and still have) a powerful effect on experience, other factors such as race, class, sexuality, and ability – to mention a few – would have ensured that the range of experiences within the categories of “women” and “men” were extremely diverse.

Interrogating “the public” as both a set of relations and/within a physical location, helps us to break away from the very abstract way in which “the public” has traditionally been utilised.⁹⁵ Emphasising how powerfully hierarchies of gender and sexuality were imbedded in these spaces is particularly relevant in a South African context, in which race and class have been the dominant lenses applied to urban space.⁹⁶ However, these elements also need to be considered in terms of the way they overlap and interact to shape identities and experiences, rather than as isolated categories, which I have tried to be mindful of.

REFLECTIONS ON METHODOLOGY

As I have mentioned earlier, references to women, people of colour, and everyday routines and habits of ordinary people were scarce in the colonial archive. But municipal works was relatively well documented, and evidence of public toilets could be found here. Debates around toilet provision, dates and locations of toilet erections (and closures), descriptions of their designs, and details about their maintenance and control were quite regularly featured in the annual reports of the Mayor, as well as the Medical Officer of Health and City Engineer. Correspondence regarding similar matters could also be found in the letters exchanged between city engineers, town clerks, prospective tenders, ratepayers, and residents of the city, as well as in minutes from the toilet-related committees. Sometimes these also included

⁹⁵ Mager, *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan*, 1, 6.

⁹⁶ Vivian Bickford-Smith. *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis: Cities and Identities in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 3.

architects' drawings and engineers' plans, which were particularly helpful. Additionally, I was also able to find evidence of public toilets on historic maps of the city.

The challenges of locating this source material were twofold. Although records were kept of toilets erections, designs, etc. – they were not done systematically, and these records petered out considerably after the first decade or two of toilet provision. Some of this can no doubt be attributed to the context of the time. It is not surprising that there is much more material for the earlier years of my study, when implementing a comprehensive sewage system for the city was considered an urgent matter, and under great public scrutiny. There was also much more information on number, location and design of toilets between the 1890s and 1910s, when they were still a novelty. It is also likely, however, that the deliberate interest in making infrastructure seem neutral influenced the unsystematic recording, and especially the wane in records for the 1920s and 1930s. As a result, there are gaps in the archive, and information on toilets is not neatly distributed between the 1880s and 1940.

Secondly, although many of these records have been kept and archived, they have not all been ordered and catalogued cohesively. The *Mayor's Minute* and *Annual Reports of the Medical Officer of Health* were well-organised and almost complete in their collections, but there was no clear system of organisation at the Roeland Street archive for the other kinds of material – letters, plans, illustrations, adverts, etc. This meant that it was not clear how much of the material I had covered, and how much remains to be mined.

Nevertheless, these kinds of sources, in combination with articles and letters published in English-language newspapers, as well as existing urban histories of Cape Town, were extremely useful for gaining a sense of the political, administrative, social and infrastructural context of Cape Town in the period under consideration. "Read against the grain," they were also revealing of the

social values of the period, imperatives behind toilet provision, as well as the power dynamics in the city.⁹⁷

Between my unsystematic and incomplete archival material, and an inspection of current public toilets in the city – many of which were established during the period under consideration – I was able to compile (as complete a list as possible) of the toilets that were planned and built (and renovated and closed) by the city council between 1893 and 1939. I then used Google Earth's software to find the GPS coordinate for each toilet. With these coordinates, and a program called Arcmap, I was able to map these toilets onto a shapefile of the city Cape Town. Imperfect as it was – considering the gaps in the toilet data and the contemporary version of Cape Town's topography that the program utilised – this process did provide an extremely helpful way to visualise the spatial distribution of toilets in the city. Not only was I able to animate the increasing number of toilets for each year in the period, to visually represent the change over time, I was also able to visualise the spatial relationship between toilets themselves, and between other landmarks, such as public squares, gardens and parks, industrial areas etc. Furthermore, I could also get a sense of the gendered dimension of the spatial distribution of the facilities.

The decision to focus on locations of toilets was inspired by authors such as Margaret Andrews, Annabel Cooper, Robin Law, Jane Malthus, Pamela Wood (Cooper et al) and Deborah Brunton, all of whom have revealed spatial disparities regarding access to public toilets by paying attention to the location of public facilities as they emerged in their respective contexts. Margaret Andrews has highlighted the connection between toilet location and unequal gender provision in her pioneering work on the first public toilets in Vancouver, Canada, stating that “until the early 1910s, municipal public

⁹⁷ Barbara Penner, “Researching Public Toilets: Gendered Spaces, Disciplinary Limits”, *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2005), 95.

toilets were provided in the crowded and busy part of the city for men only,” and that women’s needs before this time were only ever considered in relation to beach facilities. This gives us an indication of the gendered ways in which citizens’ roles, locations and spatial practices were perceived at the time.⁹⁸ Cooper et al took up this theme in 2000 in their study of toilets in Dunedin, in which the shifting location of facilities for men and women was the central focus.⁹⁹ Deborah Brunton’s work on Scottish cities around a similar time is explicit in pointing out the relevance of location for public toilets, stating that “Although open to all citizens, it was the site of a privy or urinal which dictated who would use the facility.” And while a number of different types of patrons were envisioned by officials – “travellers, workers, residents, shoppers and pleasure seekers” – class also played an important role in siting decisions. The wealthiest suburbs were not serviced, as it was assumed that big houses would have enough toilet accommodation for all those who lived and worked there, while the poorest areas were overlooked since “facilities were thought to make only limited impact on areas inhabited by people perceived to be irredeemably dirty, unhealthy, and immoral.”¹⁰⁰

It is surprising, however, that historians writing about public toilets who have been so cognisant of locations and spatial relationships between toilets with regards to *provision*, have overlooked this approach when it comes to the question of toilet *use*. Brunton skims over this question vaguely, stating that “there is very limited evidence on the use of conveniences, but overall, this material suggests that they found favour with the urban population.”¹⁰¹ The mapping method that I have used proved particularly useful for accessing information about the everyday spatial habits and routines of ordinary people in the Cape Town context, that were not reflected in the official archives.

⁹⁸ Andrews, “Sanitary Conveniences and the Retreat of the Frontier,” 9-10.

⁹⁹ Cooper et al. “Rooms of Their Own,” 417-419.

¹⁰⁰ Deborah Brunton, “Evil Necessaries and Abominable Erections: Public Conveniences and Private Interests in the Scottish City, 1830-1870”, *Social History of Medicine*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2005), 195.

¹⁰¹ Brunton, “Evil Necessaries and Abominable Erections,” 196.

While the official archives provided few clues about who toilet users were, how they felt about the institution of toilets, and how these new facilities might have affected their daily routines, a spatial analysis sheds a little more light here. For example, it allowed me to work out the distances, in kilometres, between toilets, and between toilets and other landmarks or locations. With a sense of how long it might have taken a pedestrian to walk between toilets or locations, I was able to surmise how the spatial distribution of toilets might have affected mobility in the city, or influence decisions regarding whether to use public toilets or not.

The decision to make use of GIS mapping techniques to represent and analyse my archival data was drawn largely from the American urban histories I was exposed to while on exchange at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Historians such as Sam Bass Warner, William Cronon and Colin Gordon – although writing at different periods, and about different cities – were all interested in understanding the process of urban expansion in America, and utilised mapping techniques of varying degrees of sophistication in their works to analyse and represent relationships across space and time.¹⁰²

In addition to providing helpful information regarding the number and location of public toilets, the official sources also often included plans, illustrations, and descriptions of the design and aesthetics of these facilities. Between these sources, and the existing public toilets in the city that remain from that period, I was able to approach architecture as a historical source. Some other historians have drawn on the design of toilet facilities too, finding that they often revealed information not evident in textual sources. For example, from the symbolic filigree details around lamps and cubicle dividers in the early Vancouver toilets, Andrews surmised the city officials' desire to

¹⁰² Sam Bass Warner Jr., *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston (1870-1900)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978); William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: Norton Publishers, 1991); Colin Gordon, *Mapping Decline: St Louis and the Fate of the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). Gina Clemmer, *The GIS 20 Essential Skills* (California: Esri Press, 2013) is an invaluable technical guide.

promote “up-to-date toilet habits,” while the lack of basins suggested that germ theory had not yet infiltrated the city’s engineering mandate.¹⁰³ Crook was able to draw useful conclusions about the role of the attendant in early London facilities, by considering the materials from which their quarters were built.¹⁰⁴

A particularly revealing element of design was the number of plumbing fixtures, or “closets” within each facility. Scholars have noted that in addition to the volume and location of public facilities, the number of closets revealed an additional level of disparity in the provision for men and women.¹⁰⁵ Alexander Kira, who pioneered the way in toilet studies with his 1966 study on the bathroom, is one of very few authors who have paid scrupulous attention to what the design of the closet entailed for the physical posture of the user. Kira was particularly concerned that the seat-style closet of modern Western style toilets were not the ideal position in which to defecate, and were in fact contributing to conditions such as haemorrhoids.¹⁰⁶ Alison Moore has drawn attention to closet design and posture in the context of contemporary travel and geopolitics – where “western” designs are usually taken as the norm, and “eastern” designs are considered less-civilised, or backwards.¹⁰⁷

However, no other authors, to my knowledge, have considered the role of closet design and associated posture in contributing to social differentiation within the context of a single city, made up of a heterogeneous population.

¹⁰³ Andrews, “Sanitary Conveniences and the Retreat of the Frontier,” 15.

¹⁰⁴ Crook, “Power, Privacy and Pleasure,” 561.

¹⁰⁵ Cooper et al, “Rooms of Their Own,” 424; Penner, “A World of Unmentionable Suffering,” 43; Crook, “Power, Privacy and Pleasure,” 557.

¹⁰⁶ Alexander Kira, *The Bathroom: Criteria for Design* (Ithaca, New York: Penguin Books, 1966), 61-73; Barbara Penner, “Entangled with a User: Inside Bathrooms with Alexander Kira and Peter Greenaway” in Molotch and Noren (eds.), *Toilet*, 235.

¹⁰⁷ I have put ‘western’ and ‘eastern’ in inverted commas, because, as I will elaborate in Chapter Two, it is an erroneous belief that seated styles were and are exclusively European, and that squat styles were and are exclusively Eastern in origin. Alison Moore, “Colonial Visions of ‘Third World’ Toilets: A Nineteenth-Century Discourse That Haunts Contemporary Tourism”, in Gershenson and Penner (eds.), *Ladies and Gents* [Kindle Loc 1648].

This is hopefully another area in which this dissertation can make an original contribution to the field.

One of the particular challenges that I faced was finding evidence of women in the archives. The fact that women were almost entirely omitted from official records regarding public toilets is in itself revealing about attitudes towards women and their bodily functions. But in order to ensure that women featured more than just as a lament in this dissertation, I had to seek out different kinds of sources. Taking inspiration from Penner and Cooper et al, I sought out catalogues and adverts from the big department stores from the period. The illustrations of women's fashion and underclothing from the big department stores helped me surmise how women might have managed their bodily needs in public on a daily basis.¹⁰⁸ I was even able to find a description and illustration of a Victorian sanitary towel. Furthermore, the wide range of products aimed at women featured in these catalogues gave me some insight into the range of ways women may have spent their time, which I supplemented with secondary literature on women's employment in the city.

In addition to the sources mentioned so far, I have also drawn on a sample of fictive literature written by Cape Town residents, such as short stories and poems, at some points in this dissertation. Although these sources were not written strictly during the period under consideration, and have not been drawn on for their "factual" content, I have found them particularly helpful for thinking about and articulating quite complex ideas – such as the connections between language, space, and ideas relating to bodies and waste. I am also mindful of the fact that these sources are not time-less, and while I have often used ideas and processes highlighted in the literature as starting points, I use the body of the thesis to explore how they have been historically formulated.

¹⁰⁸ Cooper et al, "Rooms of Their Own," 421; Penner, "A World of Unmentionable Suffering," 38-39.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One sets the scene of Cape Town in the 1880s, and explores the material and ideological conditions in which public toilets emerged as the only appropriate place in which to tend to ones bodily needs in the public realm. The period also saw the material boundaries between the public and private realms concretised, as the practice of tending to ones bodily waste-related needs was curtailed to the cubicle space, and municipal governments assumed responsibility for the provision of public toilets. It then explores the particular form that toilet provision took, in terms of the number and location of facilities, and how these decisions were shaped by and used to enforce shifting attitudes towards, bodies, space and social order.

Chapter Two explores the various elements and levels of design that were incorporated in public toilets between 1893 and 1940 at the Cape. Starting with the exterior of the building, it probes the visual impact of this building in the public realm, and questions how the social concerns around cleanliness, bodily needs and social distinctions affected the aesthetics of the physical structure. This section highlights gendered perceptions of acceptable bodily practices in particular. I then consider the waste management system that the various closets were connected to, situating the water carriage system within the context of shifting attitudes towards waste matter itself. Finally, the chapter considers the closets themselves, and interrogates the ideology behind the provision of different kinds of closets for racially categorised bodies.

According to Jackson et al, the transfer of a particular infrastructure system from one context to another “often brings into sharp relief conflicts and incompatibilities with neighbouring or alternative systems, and may be the site of particularly intense battles over...community norms and expectations,

and the definition and scope of standards.”¹⁰⁹ The imposition of the British water carriage system into the Cape context would no doubt have provoked some level of apprehension, if not outright conflict, among residents of the city, as it replaced previously existing systems for dealing with bodily waste. Chapter Three centres the everyday experiences of the ordinary people who would have used and maintained public toilets, and explores the way that they navigated the changes in the ideological and material approaches to waste management.

¹⁰⁹ Jackson et al, “Understanding Infrastructure,” 2.

Chapter One

“Abating All Nuisances”:

Gender, Race, Class

On the first page of his novel, *A Walk in the Night*, Alex La Guma introduces the reader to his young coloured protagonist, Michael Adonis, with the following description:

The young man dropped from the trackless tram just before it stopped at Castle Bridge. He dropped off, ignoring the stream of late-afternoon traffic rolling in from the suburbs, bobbed and ducked the cars and buses, the big, rumbling delivery trucks, deaf to the shouts and curses of the drivers, and reached the pavement.

Standing there, near the green railings around the public convenience, he lighted a cigarette, jostled by the lines of workers going home, the first trickle of stream, that would soon be flowing towards Hanover Street.¹

Positioning Adonis next to the “public convenience” is an interesting choice by La Guma, particularly because the entire plot of the novel unfolds around

¹ Alex La Guma, *A Walk in the Night and Other Stories*. (1962; reprint, London: Heinemann, 1986), 1.

a conflict over a toilet. When we are introduced to Adonis he has just been dismissed from his job at a factory in Cape Town, because of a spat with his (white) foreman regarding his right to urinate when he felt the urge. Seething at this injustice, Adonis takes out his anger on the next white man he encounters, an old Irish man by the name of Mr Doughty who lives in Adonis's building. Accidentally killing the old man, Adonis reels with shock when he realises what he has done, but nevertheless sets of a chain of events that would have fatal consequences for at least one of the characters in the book.² The trope of the toilet reappears throughout the novel – connecting otherwise unrelated characters, and bringing them into conflict; as a metaphorical tool to foreshadow fatal events; and to conjure up foul scenes in the reader's imagination.

Of particular interest to us, however, is the way in which La Guma has used toilet related language to demarcate different kinds of spaces in the novel. By shifting his register for the different situations in which the plot plays out – a public facility on the street; the semi-public tenement building where a number of different people live; and a private conversation between friends – La Guma communicates the different levels of directness “appropriate” in each setting. The more public the setting was, the less acceptable were overt allusions to the body.³ The language used gives us a sense of the social values and customs of the time.

The term “public convenience” could of course refer to any number of things that the public might require on the street – a public telephone, for example, or a place to sit and rest. It neatly removes any association between the building and the body, or the waste that it is used to contain. Used in the

² Old Mr Doughty was already in poor health from years of drinking, so when Adonis hits him over the head with his wine bottle, he dies instantly. Realising what he has done, Adonis flees the scene. Not long after, his friend, Williboy, comes looking for him. His arrival in the building shortly after Adonis has fled the scene is terrible timing, as Williboy is seen and believed to be the one who killed Mr Doughty. The police pursue him throughout the evening, eventually capturing and wounding him. He dies in the back of the police van.

³ Penner. “A World of Unmentionable Suffering,” 46.

context of the public realm, it makes the space seem devoid of any connections to the body. La Guma seems to use this term with slight tongue in cheek, however, because in the next line he likens the “lines of workers going home,” who walk past the “public convenience,” to “the first trickle of a stream, that would soon be flowing towards Hanover Street.” The use of the words “trickle,” “stream” and “flowing” in such close proximity to a public toilet, suggest that he is making a deliberate connection. Perhaps he is poking fun at the sanitised term for a place where people go to urinate and defecate. He might also be making a more powerful comment about the wasteland that was to come, with the horror of the forced removals: likening the wasted community to that excreted by the human body. In this way, La Guma both obeys and subverts the social convention of avoiding reference to bodily waste in the public realm.

When referring to the communal toilets in the tenement block where Adonis lives, La Guma uses the term “latrine.” Throughout this particular setting, La Guma frequently uses the trope of the toilet to bring the characters of the novel into contact with each other through their shared practices, but he avoids any direct references to body parts or the waste produced by those body parts. For example, La Guma uses the following paragraph to introduce Adonis to Mr Doughty:

From each landing a dim corridor lined with doors tunnelled towards a latrine that stood like a sentry box at its end, the floor in front of it soggy with spilled water... The latrine at the end of the corridor opened and a man clawed his way out of it and began making his way towards one of the doors, holding onto the wall all the way and breathing hard with the sound of a saw cutting into wood.⁴

Having just emerged from the latrine when he meets Adonis in the passage, La Guma implies what Mr Doughty has been doing there, but does not use

⁴ La Guma, *A Walk in the Night*, 24.

any explicit language. Furthermore, shortly after this scene he draws attention to the fact that people in the block also used the latrine to collect water. For example, a quarrel between Franky Lorenzo and his wife – who live in the same passage as Adonis and Mr Doughty – is soothed by the suggestion of tea. Mrs Lorenzo “picked up a saucepan and went out of the room to fill it at the tap in the latrine.”⁵ By highlighting this additional function of the communal latrine, La Guma draws attention away from the fact that Mr Doughty was probably urinating or defecating. In the semi-private but communal space of the tenement, people would have probably tried to avoid acknowledging the bodily practices that they would have inevitably seen their neighbours tending to.

Again, while La Guma abides by this convention in his language, he also gently destabilises it, by drawing on the metaphorical significance of modern toilet technology. Flush toilets were designed to take waste out of sight and out of mind instantly, and to help us dissociate the connection between our bodies and waste. But the sewage system functions by connecting all the buildings in the city to the same network of pipes and networks, therefore connecting people via their waste systems whether they like to acknowledge it or not.⁶

La Guma makes use of much more direct language in the private conversation between two friends. Describing the events that led to his dismissal, Adonis tells Williboy:

That white bastard was lucky I didn't pull him up good. He had been asking for it for a long time. Every time a man goes to the piss house he starts moaning. Jesus Christ, the way he went on you'd think a

⁵ It is at this very moment that Williboy slams the door to Mr Doughty's room (after discovering his blue corpse). Seeing Mrs Lorenzo, he bolts in fear. But another neighbour sees him run, and give his name to the police, who pursue him throughout the rest of the novel. *Ibid*, 38.

⁶ Penner, “We shall deal here with humble things,” 5

man had to wet his pants rather than take a minute off. Well, he picked on me for going for a leak and I told him to go to hell.⁷

The phrase “piss house” leaves no doubt in the reader’s mind about the purpose of the facility, or his intention in going there. His frustration that the foreman would sooner see him “wet his pants” reminds the reader that if not directed into an appropriate receptacle, urine cannot be contained within the body inevitably, and will simply be released wherever that person happens to be. A “leak” is a more euphemistic term, but describes liquid that is “out of place” – which urine would be if it were released in the work place.⁸

In addition to revealing the much more direct references to bodily habits that could be made in the private realm, La Guma also uses Adonis’s colloquial dialogue to highlight the issues of control that were bound up in toilet practices:

“You old bastard,” Michael Adonis said angrily [in his last words to Mr Doughty]. “Can’t a boy have a bloody piss without getting kicked in the backside by a lot of effing law?”⁹

Referring to the anger he still harboured about his dismissal from the factory, Adonis pinpoints the crucial element of time. His foreman was not resistant to the idea of Adonis’ needing to urinate; he was just resistant to him taking precious minutes away from his work in order to do so. Had Adonis been sweating profusely – another corporeal bodily function, in which the substance excreted by the body comes with a distinct odour - it is unlikely that the foreman would have objected, as this would not have interfered with his labour. But since urination had been curtailed to some level of privacy, and requires a pause from work, it created a source of conflict between the foreman’s interests and Adonis’s comfort and dignity.

⁷ La Guma. *A Walk in the Night*, 4

⁸ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966; reprint, London: Routledge, 1991), 36; Allen, *Cleansing the City*, 14.

⁹ La Guma, *A Walk in the Night*, 28.

These opening vignettes from La Guma's novel are not intended to provide a direct contrast to the colonial records – considering that they were written some 70 years after the first public toilets were established in Cape Town, and in a very different political context. Rather, they give us a tangible point from which we may be able to work backwards. La Guma's novel describes a context in which there were varying degrees of discomfort in acknowledging and making explicit reference to certain physical needs of the body. Furthermore, it highlights that attitudes toward waste were inexorably bound to location.¹⁰ Not only were there implicit rules about where and when people could tend to their bodily needs, but even the language used shifted according to the space occupied. References to bodily functions such as urination or defecation were acceptable in a private conversation among friends, but the more public the setting, the more effort people made to avoid acknowledging that part of people's daily lives.

This distancing of the public realm from the physical body is the result of a historical process, one that had its roots even earlier than the 1880s, but that can be clearly seen in the processes by which public toilets were plotted, designed and controlled from this period on.

The 1880s and 1890s saw an extensive, state-driven effort to reform the sanitary state of the city of Cape Town. This was partly a response to the increasingly large amounts of waste that were generated by the rapidly growing city, and growing concerns about the link between dirt, disease and social degeneration. But it was also informed by an increasing anxiety surrounding the body among the ruling and upper classes, and a desire to distance themselves from bodily functions. The public toilet was one of the spaces by which, and in which, new bodily practices were enforced.

Public toilets also provided an architectural tool for maintaining the social and racial hierarchy of Cape society. As certain body parts and bodily habits

¹⁰ Allen, *Cleansing the City*, 17.

were increasingly curtailed to private spaces, public toilets became increasingly significant for facilitating mobility in the city. By limiting the provision of toilets for women, city officials attempted to contain the threat that women posed to traditionally male occupied spaces and professions, and ensured that women faced additional obstacles navigating the “public”. Furthermore, by ensuring that white people always had better access to toilet infrastructure and technology than the majority of Cape Town residents, waste management and attention to one’s body now became a powerful way to distinguish between those of different class and race.¹¹

“THE CITY OF STINKS”

As one would expect, the colonial records documenting the first public toilets in Cape Town do not contain words like “piss house,” nor references to people wetting their pants. In fact, the men who wrote these records have tried so hard to avoid mentioning the fact that urine and faeces come from the human body, that it is often easy to miss their meaning entirely. Consider the following excerpt as an example:

Public Urinals

The necessity for these conveniences has been amply proved by the large number of respectable men, who when summoned before the Magistrate, protested that but for the lack of these conveniences they would not have been summoned. A design for three of these submitted by me to the Committee is receiving attention.¹²

This excerpt from the Chief Sanitary Inspector’s Report was published in the *Mayor’s Minute* in 1892, and was intended to justify to the City Council why they should be providing toilets for public use. Instead of telling the Council that currently a large number of respectable men were being summoned

¹¹ Inglis. “Dirt and Denigration,” 215-217.

¹² *Mayor’s Minute* (1892), 30 [EHRIC].

before the magistrate for public urination, he said “but for the lack of these conveniences they would not have been summoned.” He used deliberately vague and ambiguous language to avoid making reference to the fact that bodies excrete waste.

Somebody unfamiliar with Cape Town towards the end of the nineteenth century might think the inspector’s discomfort in referring to public urination was indicative of a very clean and orderly town – where the public did not often come into contact with the smell of excrement, or the sight of someone urinating on the street. This was not the case, however. Writing about Cape Town in 1880, modern historians remark that “[a]lmost every activity in the town contributed to the offensive smell”.¹³ In fact, some residents of Cape Town jokingly referred to it as the “City of Stinks.”¹⁴

Before a comprehensive sewage system had been established in Cape Town circa 1900, most people used pails in their homes to collect their bodily waste, which were collected, emptied and cleaned by a night soil contractor.¹⁵ The frequency of this collection service ranged from daily to weekly, depending on where you lived in the city, and it seems that it was common for the contents of these pails to be emptied onto streets or empty plots near people’s homes, too.¹⁶ A small percentage of people (who had a water connection to their homes) may have had water closets in their homes, but without a main sewer for the drains to connect to, these were often flushed directly into cesspits in people’s yards.¹⁷ In his report in the Mayor’s Minute of 1890, the Medical Officer of Health expressed that his “best efforts have been given

¹³ Worden et al., *Cape Town*, 223.

¹⁴ Letter to the editor of the *Cape Times* from “One Who Knows.” (6 December 1890). Press Cuttings Vol. 1. Oct. 1890 to Jan. 1892 [EHRIC].

¹⁵ This only applies to Cape Town central; as I explain later, connecting both city and suburbs to the water carriage system was a slow process that continued into the 1920s and 1930s. *Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health*(1904), xxvii [GPUCT].; G.51-91b. Clement Dunscombe, *Report on the Sewerage of the City of Cape Town and the Disposal of its Sewage* (1891), 4 [GPUCT].

¹⁶ *Mayor’s Minute* (1881), 3 [EHRIC]; *Mayor’s Minute* (1888), 2-3 [EHRIC]; *Mayor’s Minute* (1892), 30-31 [EHRIC]; *Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health*(1919), xl [GPUCT]; Worden et al., *Cape Town*, 223-225.

¹⁷ Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Colony of the year 1896. (1896), 17 [GPUCT].

during the past twelve months to cause all cesspits to be emptied and filled with proper material."¹⁸

The combination of full pails left out for collection, the common spillage of "night soil" on the streets, and the cesspits in people's yards no doubt created a significant odour. Although some people attempted to deodorize the contents of the pails by "the application of dry earth or other substances," this did not seem to be very effective.¹⁹ The smell that was generated by this system is attested to by the town clerk, who regretted the fact that "the hours of removal should not have been made later," when the new night soil contract was signed in 1890, "as under present circumstances the offensive odours from the wagons are experienced by many who, from 8 to 10p.m., are enjoying the evening promenade."²⁰

General household waste was also collected by a refuse contractor, and was another source of both odour and concern. In a letter to the *Cape Times* in January 1891, a ratepayer attempted to draw the attention of the Council to

the state of the contractor's kraal, off Newmarket-street; to the nuisance existing in having wagon loads of house refuse standing for the space of twenty-four hours in that kraal, which should have been removed before eight a.m. on the previous morning. This is a frequent occurrence; the offensive smell that emanates there from is enough to bring typhoid fever round about that neighbourhood.²¹

In addition to the management of private waste, a number of other things contributed to the general odour on the streets. Horses were used to pull carriages, and many people kept pigs, chickens and dogs, which were often

¹⁸ *Mayor's Minute* (1890), 4 [EHRIC].

¹⁹ G.51-91b. Dunscombe, *Report on Sewerage*, 9 [GPUCT].

²⁰ *Mayor's Minute* (1890), 2 [EHRIC].

²¹ Letter to the editor of the *Cape Times* from "Ratepayer" (4 January, 1891) Press Cuttings Vol. 1. Oct. 1890 to Jan. 1892 [EHRIC].

left to wander the streets.²² Open gutters, in which mud, refuse and both human and animal waste frequently built up, skirted the streets. In winter these gutters flooded, sending its mucky contents all over the streets.²³ Not yet paved, the streets turned to mud in winter. In summer, the south-easterly winds whipped up the sand, while the sun baked the contents of the gutters. Commenting on this state of affairs, an unhappy homeowner wrote:

From this abomination – this black festering mud, reeking in a blazing summer’s sun – a stink arises that is impossible to describe, and there can be no doubt that unless energetic steps are taken the whole district will be down with fever-indeed, there is reason to fear it has already broken out.²⁴

City officials had water drawn from the sea to wash down the streets – in an attempt to keep the sand compact in summer, and to disinfect the streets from the accumulation of waste.²⁵ This often compounded the problem, however, as another ratepayer pointed out in a letter to the *Cape Times*:

... unless some alteration be made in the method of watering the streets we shall hear that to smell Cape Town is the literal precursor of the last enemy’s dreaded attack. It would appear that the water by which it is sought to lay the dust is taken from a very odorous part of the shore, the result being that when it is disturbed the perfume is thick enough to cut with a dull knife. May it be pointed out that this is not exactly the right spot from which to draw water!²⁶

²² *Mayor’s Minute*, (1892), 31 [EHRIC].; *Annual Report of the Acting Medical Officer of Health*(1900). cxlii [GPUCT]; Letter to the editor of the *Cape Times* from “One who Knows” (6 December 1890) [EHRIC]; Worden et al. *Cape Town*, 223-225.

²³ G.51-91b. Dunscombe, *Report on Sewerage*, 10 [GPUCT].

²⁴ Letter to the editor of the *Cape Times* from “One who Knows”. (6 December 1890) Press Cuttings Vol. 1. Oct. 1890 to Jan. 1892 [EHRIC].

²⁵ *Mayor’s Minute* (1881), 1 [EHRIC]; Worden et al, *Cape Town*, 223-225.

²⁶ Article published in the *Cape Times*. (5 January 1891), Press Cuttings Vol. 1. Oct. 1890 to Jan. 1892, [EHRIC].

The slaughter of animals, and the cleaning and curing of fish happened “below the castle walls” and at Roggebaai, respectively, and also contributed to the strong odours of the town.²⁷

“CLEANLINESS” AND REFORM POLITICS

While the material conditions of waste management in the city leave little doubt that the sight and smell of human, animal and food waste were familiar to Cape Town residents, the responses and attitudes towards these sensory encounters are somewhat less clear.

The letters and articles of complaint published in the English-language newspapers, such as the *Cape Times* and the *Cape Argus*, revealed a disgust at the state of Cape Town, and an expectation that the government needed to be implementing sanitary reforms. Many of these contemporary accounts of the city indicate that miasmatic theory – by which infectious disease was thought to be spread by the inhalation of vapours generated by “decomposing waste” – still had a strong influence, despite the fact that medical and scientific practitioners had proved this theory incomprehensive by the 1880s.²⁸ In addition to finding the odours intolerable from an olfactory perspective, there was also great conviction that the smell could in fact spread typhoid and fever of various kinds.²⁹

In addition to posing a threat to physical health, dirt and odour were also conceived of as morally corrupting.³⁰ An article in the *Cape Argus* in 1890 that supported the new sanitary inspectors work made the patronising comment

²⁷ *Mayor's Minute* (1892), 28 [EHRIC]; Worden et al., *Cape Town*, 223-225.

²⁸ Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant*, vi; David S. Barnes. *The Great Stink of Paris and the Nineteenth-Century Struggle against Filth and Germs* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 14, 19; Allen, *Cleansing the City*, 8.

²⁹ Letter to the editor of the *Cape Times* from “Ratepayer.” (4 January 1891) Press Cuttings Vol. 1. Oct. 1890 to Jan. 1892 [EHRIC]; Letter to the editor of the *Cape Times* from “One who Knows”. (6 December 1890) Press Cuttings Vol. 1. Oct. 1890 to Jan. 1892 [EHRIC].

³⁰ Allen, *Cleansing the City*, 2.

that “there are few households who are very wilful offenders against the sanitary laws. They sin for the most part either from ignorance or inattention, and the gentle but persistent attention now paid to them by the Town House is just what is required.”³¹ If those who resisted sanitary laws were sinful, the solutions that sanitary reformers offered emphasised not only health, but also virtue. Commenting on the improvements he believed that the new drainage scheme would bring Cape Town in 1891, the Mayor claimed that, “It will make Cape Town a place of noted purity, as its situation is one of exquisite beauty, and as the health resort of South Africa the city will be unsurpassable.”³²

But Cape Town’s public was a heterogeneous group, and this was not a unanimous attitude. “Public opinion” on sanitation was so polarised in 1882, that the politicians running for office were dubbed the “Clean Party” and the “Dirty Party.”³³

The “Dirty Party” was largely made up of the older business generation in the town, and represented those that felt that extensive reforms were an unnecessary expense. These property-owning members of the Council also had conflicting interests, as the ratepayers of the city would have had to shoulder the costs of any reforms.³⁴ But there was also a nationalist element to this resistance. The “clean party” represented a distinctly British rhetoric that linked sanitation not only to morality, but to civilisation as well. As Anne McClintock has shown in her social history of soap, “Victorian cleaning rituals were peddled globally as the God-given sign of Britain’s evolutionary superiority.”³⁵ Inherent in this “civilising mission,” was an emphasis on racial difference. Indeed, the press often castigated opponents of reform in explicitly

³¹ Article published in the *Cape Argus* (29 December 1890), Press Cuttings Vol. 1. Oct. 1890 to Jan. 1892 [EHRIC].

³² *Mayor’s Minute* (1891), 4 [EHRIC].

³³ Worden et al., *Cape Town*, 225; Bickford-Smith, *Emergence of South African Metropolis*, 64.

³⁴ Worden et al., *Cape Town*, 225-227.

³⁵ Anne McClintock. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest*. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 207.

racist terms.³⁶ Quoted in a letter to the *Cape Times*, an English visitor to the country summed up this attitude:

They have a noble Parliament-house to legislate in, and there is no lack of shrewd, long headed men capable of legislating correctly – why, then, not deal determinedly with this question of drainage and with the aboriginal notions of the Malays and the bovine indifference of the Dutch, and so rescue a charming town situated amidst lovely scenery and standing radiant in a delightful climate, from the most disgraceful charge which, in these days of science and soap and of drain-pipes, can be brought against a community?³⁷

While Afrikaners were frequently snubbed by the English-language press as being backward, many of them retained positions of power in the city as business men and Council members, and were part of the “reforming clique” when the “Clean Party” won the election. But the coloured and black members of society did not have the same opportunities for upward mobility, and remained scapegoats for the state of the city. As the government began to effect sanitary changes in the city, “the differential between whites and other residents of the city increased as the former began to benefit” from these changes.³⁸

INFRASTRUCTURAL AND BUREAUCRATIC CHANGES

Even after the “Clean Party” came into power, change was slow and conflict continued, but the subsequent Councils were more compelled by a sense of civic responsibility, and more willing to invest in changes.³⁹ Using the British

³⁶ Worden et al., *Cape Town*, 223.

³⁷ Letter to the editor of the *Cape Times* from “One who Knows” (6 December 1890), Press Cuttings Vol. 1. Oct. 1890 to Jan. 1892 [EHRIC].

³⁸ Worden et al., *Cape Town*, 225-227.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

model as the benchmark, the Council tackled the “sanitary problem” at both an infrastructural and bureaucratic level.

One of the first things that the Council sought was metropolitan experts’ advice on a comprehensive sewage system. Between a Mr Pritchard and Mr Dunscombe and the city engineer, plans were drawn up for Cape Town, based on the British water carriage system, wherein all houses and buildings would be connected to large underground sewers, which would use large volumes of water to flush the waste out of the city, to an outfall in the bay.⁴⁰ This posed a significant challenge to an already water-short Cape Town, and it took much of the last two decades of the nineteenth century to expand the city’s water source, and find a way to safely store and transport it to people in the city. Then the existing sewers and drains had to be greatly altered and expanded, and connected to individual homes and buildings, where “water closets” – water flushing toilets - would replace the pail system.⁴¹ This was a slow process, first instigated in the city centre, and slowly extended to the suburbs. By 1904, most of the central city had been connected to the Water Carriage System, but it was some time before it was extended to the suburbs.⁴² In his report for 1919, the Medical Officer of Health wrote: “The Capetown Central and Green Point and Sea Point Districts, and the greater portion of the Kalk Bay District are sewered on the Water Carriage system by means of well constructed sewers...In the remaining districts, Woodstock, Maitland, Mowbray, Rondebosch, and Claremont, the pail system is in force with only a weekly collection free of charge...”⁴³ This was largely because until 1913, most of the suburbs made up separate municipalities, and it was only the increasing cost of access to fresh water that forced them to join together with

⁴⁰ *Mayor’s Minute* (1889), 1 [EHRIC]; *Mayor’s Minute* (1891), 5 [EHRIC]; *Mayor’s Minute* (1892), 2 [EHRIC]; *Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health* (1892), 36 [GPUCT]; G.51-91b. Dunscombe, *Report on Sewerage* [GPUCT].

⁴¹ G.51-91b. Dunscombe, *Report on Sewerage*, 11 [GPUCT].

⁴² *Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health* (1904), xxvii [GPUCT].

⁴³ *Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health* (1919), xl [GPUCT].

the city just after Union in 1910. Only Wynberg retained its independence, until 1927.⁴⁴

While this process was being negotiated, the government set up a sanitary administration, which began regulating public behaviour, even before there was infrastructure in place to assist. From 1887, a Sanitary Report was included in the Mayor's Minute, in which the Chief Sanitary Inspector reflected on the work accomplished by that department.⁴⁵ The department originally operated as an extension of the City Engineer's department, but was later incorporated into the Medical Officer of Health's domain by 1891.⁴⁶ Its duties shifted, too, between the early 1890s and first half of the twentieth century, as drainage infrastructure expanded. But their mandate from the beginning was "preventing, reporting and abating all nuisances."⁴⁷ This was primarily done by a small staff, who inspected both public streets, shops, factories and institutions, as well private homes, paying particular attention to the management of waste systems in the city – managing "night soil" and refuse collection, the management of livestock and food preparation, and the state of streets, lanes and yards.⁴⁸

This urban renewal project that the city officials embarked on towards the end of the nineteenth century was certainly partly an effort to "clean" and deodorise the city. In addition to the smells and sights that were frequently complained of, we know that mortality rates were high, and that medical practitioners were starting to make the link between inadequate waste management and the spread of certain diseases, such as typhoid – even if the popular understanding that linked smell to disease was deficient.⁴⁹ But if, as Mary Douglas argues in her seminal text *Purity and Danger*, "dirt is matter out

⁴⁴ Vivian Bickford-Smith, Elizabeth Van Heynigen, Nigel Worden, *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century: An Illustrated Social History* (Claremont, South Africa: David Philip, 1999), 46.

⁴⁵ *Mayor's Minute* (1887), 3 [EHRIC].

⁴⁶ *Mayor's Minute* (1891), 7 [EHRIC].

⁴⁷ *Mayor's Minute* (1890), 4 [EHRIC].

⁴⁸ *Mayor's Minute* (1891), 25 [EHRIC].

⁴⁹ *Mayor's Minute* (1887), 3 [EHRIC].

of place,” then any efforts to cleanse the city were inherently efforts to reconfigure the spatial boundaries of the city.⁵⁰ The sanitary inspector’s records of “work done” by the department show that much of what they were trying to achieve in their regulations was the confining of certain behaviour to certain places.⁵¹ The case of public toilets is the most obvious example of this. According to Crook, the provision of public toilets was “central to this segmentation of the urban environment; it formed in fact one of its guiding architectural threads.”⁵²

THE “PROBLEM” OF PUBLIC URINATION

As the Sanitary Inspector vaguely alluded to with his comment that “but for the lack of these conveniences, [respectable men] would not have been summoned” before the Magistrate, public urination was a common feature of Cape society in the late nineteenth century.⁵³ Before 1893, when the Council took on the provision of public toilets as their municipal responsibility, there were one or two public toilets in the vicinity of the Branch Market, and a few iron urinals around city.⁵⁴ Some people must have made use of the toilets in canteens, since the Sanitary Inspector was so horrified by the state of them.⁵⁵ But for the most part, there was virtually no public provision, and if the urge to relieve oneself came while in the public, it was socially acceptable to relieve oneself against a wall, or in a side alley. However, with the spread of British sanitary rhetoric, and the increasing calls for government action that accompanied the “clean and dirty” politics of the 1880s, city officials targeted this practice.

⁵⁰ Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 36; Allen, *Cleansing the City*, 14.

⁵¹ Michel Foucault, “The Great Confinement” (from *Madness and Civilization*), in Paul Rabinow (ed), *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 128.

⁵² Crook, “Power, Privacy and Pleasure,” 553.

⁵³ *Mayor’s Minute* (1892), 30 [EHRIC].

⁵⁴ *Mayor’s Minute* (1894), 40 [GPUCT].

⁵⁵ *Mayor’s Minute* (1892), 28 [EHRIC].

The move to shift this habit was partly because of concerns around the nexus of cleanliness, health and morality. An article published in the *Cape Argus* in 1891 outlined the efforts that the Public Works Committee were putting in to remove a wall, bordering the Company Gardens and Museum in New-street (now Victoria Street), that was clearly a favoured spot as an unofficial toilet. “Health and morality alike suffer from the nuisance arising from this Government wall,” they lamented. The “deposits of filth” were an “intolerable nuisance to the schools and hotels, and to pedestrians, especially ladies,” “almost unbearable at time by those pedestrians obliged to use that important thoroughfare.”⁵⁶

Public toilets provided an architectural solution to this “problem” – a way to physically contain the waste, and protect the increasingly intolerant noses of pedestrians.⁵⁷ In fact, the public toilet built on Victoria Street was one of the earliest facilities provided. Reflecting on its recent erection, and the soon to be erected toilet on Sir Lowry Road, the town clerk commented that, “When [the toilet] has been erected, the Council will have the satisfaction of feeling that a commencement has been made towards the removal of the reproach to the city.”⁵⁸

But as Brunton points out in her work on public toilets in Scotland in the same period,

The desire for cleanliness is not, however, the whole story. It is hard to see how the results of pedestrians relieving themselves in public spaces could have been distinguished from the far greater quantities of urine and dung produced by the many horses working in the city

⁵⁶ Article in the *Cape Argus* (12 February, 1891) on “New-street Nuisances”, Press Cuttings Vol.1. Oct. 1890 to Jan. 1892 [EHRIC].

⁵⁷ Cooper et al, “Rooms of Their Own,” 420; Brunton, “Evil Necessaries and Abominable Erections,” 189-190; Penner, “A World of Unmentionable Suffering,” 37; Crook, “Power, Privacy and Pleasure, 552-553.

⁵⁸ *Mayor’s Minute*, (1895), 23 [GPUCT]

streets, or from the odours generated by slaughterhouses and other noxious trades.⁵⁹

As we have already seen from the imperfect night soil and refuse collections, in addition to the animal manure and excesses that collected on the unpaved streets, waste already accumulated in large quantities in the city of Cape Town.

PUBLIC TOILETS AND THE BODY

An equally compelling contemporary concern was the fact that public urination or defecation involved revealing parts of the body that were “increasingly prescribed as private.”⁶⁰ We have already seen the lengths to which the sanitary inspector would go to avoid mentioning bodies that excreted. The type of offences for which people could be arrested further illustrates this particular concern. Arrests for “indecent exposure” were recorded in the Police reports as early as 1882.⁶¹ The names of the offences changed over the next three decades, in which people continued to be reprimanded for this practice, but were consistently body-orientated. Between 1893 and 1904, people were frequently arrested for variations on “indecent exposure,” “indecently exposing the person,” “indecent behaviour,” and the vaguer, “committing nuisance.”⁶² Public toilets provided a way for people to interact with their bodies away from the public gaze.⁶³

Brunton goes on to suggest that it was “adult male anatomy” in particular that “presented the greatest threat to moral order.”⁶⁴ It is significant that

⁵⁹ Brunton, “Evil Necessaries and Abominable Erections,” 190-191.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ G.100-1883. Reports of Commissioners of Police on the several Police Districts of the Colony 1883, 9 [GPUCT].

⁶² *Ibid.*; G51-1884. Reports of Commissioners of Police on the several Police Districts of the Colony 1884, 6 [GPUCT]; *Mayor's Minute* (1904), iv [GPUCT]; *Mayor's Minute* (1909), ii [GPUCT]; *Mayor's Minute* (1914), ii [GPUCT].

⁶³ Crook, “Power, Privacy and Pleasure,” 562.

⁶⁴ Brunton, “Evil Necessaries and Abominable Erections,” 190-191.

neither the complaints from members of the public about people “committing nuisance” nor the arrest records specify *what kind of bodies* were practising this habit. We have seen that public toilets were envisioned as architectural efforts to curtail the common practice of urination and defecation in public. But this way of conceiving of public toilets as the containers of urine and faeces reveals that the “body” that colonial officials were concerned about was unquestioningly a male body. Women’s bodies not only excrete urine and faeces, but blood, at certain times, too.⁶⁵ The complete silence on the matter of women makes it appear not only as if women did not publicly engage with their bodily needs, but also as if they did not exist in the public realm at all. As Cheryl Walker highlights in *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, this “documentary silence may be erroneously equated with historical passivity, or even worse, with historical insignificance, so that women disappear from our view of the past.”⁶⁶

WOMEN’S PRESENCE IN THE PUBLIC REALM

The gender ratio of Cape Town at the turn of the century is of significance here. In 1891, out of a population of 67,000, there were 2000 more men than women in the city. This figure had increased to a difference of 13,376 in a population of 171,000 by 1904.⁶⁷ But 46% of the city’s population is by no means an insignificant number.

It is also true that British settlers in the Cape brought with them British middle-class notions of gender relations, in which the home – “the realm of morality and emotion” - was thought to be the proper place for women, and the public – “the domain of productive work and politics” – the place of

⁶⁵ Cooper et al, “Rooms of Their Own,” 417.

⁶⁶ Cheryl Walker (ed), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990), 3.

⁶⁷ Worden et al., *Cape Town*, 213.

men.⁶⁸ In line with these values, women were excluded entirely from politics in Cape Town, most brazenly until 1930, when franchise was granted to white women only.⁶⁹ Many settler women were largely confined to their homes at the end of the nineteenth century, with the considerable task of running a household in a period before electricity.⁷⁰

But white English middle-class women only made up a small percentage of Cape women at the turn of the century.⁷¹ Furthermore, as Olive Schreiner pointed out in her book *Woman and Labor* in 1911,

at present day, ... probably much more than half the world's most laborious and ill-paid labor is still performed by women, from tea-pickers and coca tender in India and the islands, to the washerwomen, cooks and drudging laboring men's wives, who, in addition to the sternest and most unending toil, throw in their child-bearing as a little addition...⁷²

The same was true in Cape Town. Although slavery had officially been abolished at the Cape in 1833, the Masters and Servants Act of 1855 bound servants to their "employers", and women made up the majority of domestic help as "laundresses, seamstress and domestic servants."⁷³ Most of these positions would have been filled by working-class women of colour, but the higher paid positions of "housekeeper or cook, were usually reserved for whites, while housemaids would be coloured."⁷⁴

Furthermore, while the mineral revolution attracted a large number of male immigrants to the region, these profound economic changes also created new opportunities for women – especially white, educated women – outside of the

⁶⁸ Natasha Erlank. "Writing Women in(to) early Nineteenth Century Cape Town." *KRONOS: Journal of Cape History*, No. 23. (1996), 76; Cherryl Walker (ed), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990), 319.

⁶⁹ Bickford-Smith et al., *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century*, 80

⁷⁰ Worden et al, *Cape Town*, 130

⁷¹ Bickford-Smith et al., *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century*, 25

⁷² Olive Schreiner. *Woman and Labor*. (New York: Dover Publications, 1998 [1911]), 78; Walker (ed), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa*, 319.

⁷³ Worden et al, *Cape Town*, 204

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 205

domestic realm.⁷⁵ Many of the new opportunities in “commerce and secondary industry” only really took off after World War One – where “a range of new jobs opened up for working-class women as machinists, packers, labellers, sales-women and secretarial staff” – but there were also a small number of professions open to women at the end of the nineteenth century.⁷⁶ The majority of teachers in the Cape, in both middle class and poorer schools, were British, and of these, 75% were women in 1891.⁷⁷ Women also found opportunities in textiles, cigarette packing factories, as typists and “shorthand” writers, and in nursing.⁷⁸

Women’s employment in industry, as in domestic service, was also characterised by racial distinctions. According to Walker, “young Afrikaner girls” were some of the first women to take up factory jobs, to support “struggling farm families”. But as they moved into better paying jobs as secretaries and clerks, in the 1930s and 1940s, increasing numbers of black and coloured women were encouraged to fill their roles.⁷⁹

The discriminatory archives makes it much harder to get an idea of black women’s presence and mobility in the city at the turn of the century, because even those city officials who were given the task of erecting the structures at Uitvlugt – the location where black people were forcibly sent from their homes in District Six and other areas of inner city Cape Town when plague broke out in 1901 – seemed blind to their existence. In his report on the location, the Chief Inspector of Public Works details the design of large compound like structures, which would be “of course, for single men.”⁸⁰ He expressed great surprise later in the year, when he discovered that many of these “buildings” had been taken over by families, as if the idea of black

⁷⁵ Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa*, 322.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 331.

⁷⁷ Worden et al, *Cape Town*, 153; Walker (ed), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa*, 322.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 322; Bickford-Smith et al., *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century*, 27.

⁷⁹ Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa*, 332.

⁸⁰ G.49-1902. Report of the Chief Inspector of Public Works for the Year 1901. The Native Location, Uitvlugt, 42-43 [GPUCT]; Bickford-Smith et al., *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century*, 19.

women had never even occurred to him.⁸¹ But according to one calculation, women made up “about a tenth” of the approximately 6000 people of colour who made Uitvlugt –later Ndabeni – their home.⁸² It is unclear how many of these women would have worked in factories or domestic roles, but there is evidence later in the period of requests for public toilets for women at the Ndabeni station, indicating that they did travel to and around the city, even though the officials had tried hard to exclude them.⁸³

Even those women who did not spend their days doing manual and office labour would have been spending increasing amounts of time moving about the city streets. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the large department stores in the vicinity of Adderly Street, such as Garlick’s, Stuttafords, and Cleghorn and Harris, were stocking an increasingly large range of products aimed specifically at women. A Garlick’s catalogue from 1899 devoted ninety-three pages to women’s clothing, while an advert for Stuttafords in 1903 highlighted over forty departments, from “Dress Material” and “Drapery,” to “Cabinets and Bedding.”⁸⁴ These department stores did soon realise that their customers would stay for longer if toilets were provided, but it was some twenty years before this became the norm. Architectural plans of the Garlick’s building indicate that it was only from 1925 that that they began to provide toilets for their customers.⁸⁵

⁸¹ G.49-1902. Report of the Chief Inspector of Public Works for the Year 1901. The Native Location, Uitvlugt, 43 [GPUCT].

⁸² Bickford-Smith et al., *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century*, 44.

⁸³ This is will be elaborated on later in the chapter. Letter from the Superintendent of Natives to the Assistant General Manager of South African Railway and Harbour. SMC. Vol. 1/1/41. Folder: South African Railway and Harbour. (2 October 1929) [KAB]; Letter from the District Inspector to the System Manager [SMC]. Vol. 1/1/41. Folder: South African Railway and Harbour. (26 October 1929) [KAB].

⁸⁴ Private Papers of Sherry Garlick Stanton. File C66.4. (1903) [SCUCT].

⁸⁵ Parker Plans. No.’s 111 (1902) and 124 (1902); Garlick’s Ltd Extension to premises St Georges Street Cape Town (1925). BC729 Parker Collections. UCT; Cooper et al., “Rooms of Their Own,” 422.

MANAGING WOMEN'S BODILY HABITS

Once we begin to consider the fact that since the end of the nineteenth century increasingly more women came to traverse the public space, whether commuting to their work place or spending a day shopping in town, the question remains: how did these women manage their bodily needs in public? Did they, too, make use of the areas like the New-Street Wall near the Company Gardens?

It is likely that some Cape women would have deliberately curtailed their spatial behaviour to accommodate their bodily needs, as a contemporary Londoner Mary Vivien Thomas described:

a morning's shopping was all we could manage for one day, for, as strange as it seems now, the big shops had no restaurants, no rest-rooms, no conveniences for toilet, however dire one's need.⁸⁶

But not all women could have the luxury of only spending a few hours away from their homes at a time, particularly the substantial working class population. And there is little doubt that even middle class women would have occasionally been "caught short in public."⁸⁷ Brunton, Cooper et al and Penner have all suggested that the discretion provided by long skirts would have made it easier for women to relieve themselves inconspicuously on the street on these occasions.⁸⁸

The underclothing advertised in the Garlick's "Gazette of Fashion" from 1899 revealed knee length drawers, fastened at the waist, as a fashionable style for women. The buttons at the back revealed that a flap could be opened, presumably so that women could relieve themselves without taking the drawers off entirely, but these buttons would have been difficult to access

⁸⁶ Quoted in Alison Adburgham, *Shopping in Style: from the Restoration to Edwardian Elegance*. (London: Thames & Hudson, 1979), 141; Penner, "A World of Unmentionable Suffering," 38.

⁸⁷ Penner, "A World of Unmentionable Suffering," 38.

⁸⁸ Brunton, "Evil Necessaries and Abominable Erections," 191; Cooper et al, "Rooms of Their Own," 420-422; Penner, "A World of Unmentionable Suffering," 38.

discreetly under heavy skirts.⁸⁹ Penner's investigation of women's underclothes from Victorian London revealed that most women's underclothing was in fact open at the crotch – but that this detail was carefully obscured in fashion magazines.⁹⁰ This may also have been the case in Cape Town, especially considering that much of Garlick's range were imported from England.

Menstruation would have been much more difficult to manage. A careful perusal of a clothing catalogue from Garlick's Department Store in 1899 reveals a Victorian version of the pad was available; a product called the Beltinas Towel:

a loosely –woven fabric, with a surface of soft absorbent cotton, made in the form of a pocket into which the towel is folded, and having a tab at each end, by means of which it is attached to the buckle of the Beltina Belt. These are easily washed and last for years.⁹¹

The Beltina's belt appears to fit around a woman's waste, with buckles on the front and back where the Beltinas towels could be attached. There was also the option of Southall's Sanitary Towels and Sheets, which did not seem to be attached to any kind of belt. Since these were not disposable, women would have needed access to water to wash these towels, and a private place in which to leave them to dry. Considering that even modern pads need to be changed every couple of hours, the difficulty of changing the Beltina towel would probably have contained women to their homes while they menstruated.⁹² Furthermore, this product would probably not have been accessible to working class and poor women, who would probably have used a piece of cloth.

⁸⁹ Private Papers of Sherry Garlick Stanton. File: C66.4 Gazette of Fashion. Winter 1899 [SCUCT].

⁹⁰ Penner, "A World of Unmentionable Suffering," 39.

⁹¹ Private Papers of Sherry Garlick Stanton. File: C66.4 Gazette of Fashion. Winter 1899 [SCUCT].

⁹² Cooper et al, "Rooms of Their Own," 421.

Considering that women had more bodily needs to manage than men did, one would think that this would justify at least equal provision as men, if not a greater volume. This however was not the case.

NUMBER OF TOILETS

Between 1893 and 1913, approximately twenty-six public toilets were provided by the City Council.⁹³ Of these, the most generous estimate suggests that eight included facilities for women. Even if we exclude the men's toilets at the Branch Market and Caledon Square, which were closed in 1904, the number of toilets provided for men was still double the number of those for women.⁹⁴ Furthermore, none of the facilities providing for women in this period were *exclusively* for women; so in fact, men had access to all twenty six of these toilets, putting the amount of toilets that men had access to at three times those that women had access to.

Even within the facilities that provided for both men and women, there were frequently more toilets provided for men. For example, in 1901 designs were submitted to the Council for a mixed facility in the centre of the city. It was initially intended as a "large underground convenience in the passage between the General Post Office and Standard Bank," on Adderly Street. These plans indicated twelve water closets and eighteen urinals for men, with only four water closets for women.⁹⁵ If we just considered the water closets as receptacles for urine, in addition to the urinals – the ratio of receptacles for men to women was nearly 8:1.⁹⁶

⁹³ *Mayor's Minute* (1893-1913) [GPUCT]. See spread sheet in Appendix B.

⁹⁴ Branch Market must have closed in 1904, because the Cape Town city hall was built on that location in 1905. Bickford-Smith et al, *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century*, 24.

⁹⁵ Both the men and women's sides also included a caretaker's office, and "lavatory basins." *Mayor's Minute* (1901), xi-xii [GPUCT].

⁹⁶ These plans were not acted on in 1901, but the proposal appears again in the records in 1912. The underground design seemed to have been scrapped, in favour of an above ground facility, attached to the Post Office building. Interestingly, these plans show a dramatic decrease in the ration of men's to

Rather than reflecting the heterogeneous needs of the public, therefore, the provision of public toilets was deeply embedded in the patriarchal order that conceived of the men and women in asymmetric and unequal ways. In a time in which great changes were taking place in South Africa's economy in general, and the political unrest was high during and after the Anglo-Boer War, the desire to maintain boundaries of race, class, and gender in particular were reflected in the provision of public toilets. Cooper et al have argued that in the case of settler-town Dunedin, men's bodies needed to be made "less public," while women's bodies needed to be prevented from getting more public.⁹⁷ However, in the case of Cape Town, the distinctions of race and class within the broad categories of men and women complicated this general statement.

NOT ALL MEN WERE RESPECTABLE

One of the biggest anxieties relating to male bodies was the fear that being arrested for public urination was bridging the gap between white men and men of colour. Consider the following quote from the *Mayor's Minute* in 1893:

The number of nuisances created in unlighted places calls for special comment, and the large number of respectable men who have been prosecuted and who have the humiliation of being prosecuted for this offence is, I think, a strong reason why the Council should provide

women's toilets. Instead of twelve water closets and eighteen urinals for men, they proposed two water closets, and a six stall urinal. Instead of two water closets for women, they now proposed three.⁹⁶ While there has been an negligible increase in the women's provision, the decrease in the men's provision show that the ratio has gone from approximately 8:1 to approximately 3:1. Due to the change in proposed location, we cannot completely rule out the possibility that this was merely due to a reduction in space available. But more likely than a council acknowledging the changing role and public presence of women in Cape society, it seems that this decrease in toilets planned for men reflected a less urgent need to provide for the men in the city. By 1912 the volume of military men and refugees displaced by the war would probably have decreased, leaving the city demographics more balanced. Letter from the City Engineer to the Town Clerk (31 July 1912). 3/CT. Vol. 4/2/1/1/123 [KAB]; Report of the Special Committee (10 April 1913). 3/CT. Vo. 4/2/1/1/123 [KAB]; *Mayor's Minute* (1913), 84 [GPUCT].

⁹⁷ Cooper et al, "Rooms of Their Own," 418

these accommodations. Designs have been submitted, but I regret nothing further has been done though repeated attention has been drawn to the subject by the Resident Magistrate.⁹⁸

The writer was partly concerned about cleanliness, and began by highlighting the “number of nuisances created in unlighted places.” But his bigger concern was the humiliation that “respectable men” faced when being prosecuted for public urination – and this, he thought, was the most compelling reason for municipal provision of public toilets. The underlying tone was that it was particularly humiliating for white men to be arrested for the same crime as men of colour, because it would have drawn attention to the fact that white men and black men have the same basic anatomy and the same physical needs. One of the central tenants of white supremacy was that white people were better able to control their bodies than black people. In “Excremental Colonialism,” Anderson shows that the colonial officials in the Philippines constantly contrasted the “closed, ascetic American body with an open, grotesque Filipino body.” White American bodies were distinguished by their retentiveness, while Filipino bodies were castigated for being “promiscuous defecators.”⁹⁹ The body’s ability to generate waste, and waste related habits were used to “mark racial and social boundaries.”¹⁰⁰

This desire to curtail certain practices to private spaces, but only for some, so that the racial and social hierarchy might be maintained, can be seen in an earlier example from the Cape. In the police report from 1883, the Commissioner of Police, Bernard V. Shaw, requested the purchase of police vans so that they did not have to march prisoners through the streets on foot. He was concerned that mobs often formed and jeered at these prisoners, and “the disgrace to Europeans of being marched through the public streets in

⁹⁸ *Mayor’s Minute*(1893), 40 [GPUCT].

⁹⁹ Anderson, “Excremental Colonialism,” 640-643.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 643.

company with a lot of disreputable Malays and Kafirs is keenly felt.”¹⁰¹ Clearly it was acceptable for people of colour to be seen being arrested in the streets, but it was not so for white people – even though they were breaking the law as well. In this sense, public streets in Cape Town acted as theatres of display. Social and racial boundaries needed to be constantly staged, in order to retain their potency.

This hierarchy was further entrenched by restraining access to the emergent buildings of public toilets:

Five new chalets are at present in use in the City, and their erection has supplied a long-felt want. The urinals have been used 150,000 times. There is a demand for more urinal accommodation. Mr. Corben suggests that it would be a wise step to establish a couple of rough free closets for the use of tramps and coolies, with the idea of still further diminishing the nuisance committed in partially screened corners.¹⁰²

This quotation from the 1896 Report of the Medical Officer of Health reveals, besides his own prejudice, that the use of public toilets came with a charge; thus deliberately excluding the poor and people of colour, and only fulfilling the “long-felt want” of “respectable men.” The fact that this charge was specifically targeted at excluding black people, and that this remained a concern some thirty years later, is supported by another quote from the Medical Officer of Health in 1922, this time in relation to the facility at the Maitland Outspan. In a discussion with the Health and Building Regulations Committee (HBRC) over the attendant’s duties at the facility, he wrote,

It is obvious that to carry out this duty efficiently, [the attendant] must either give up the collection of dues from the farmers, or have a penny in the slot attached to the water closets. Of course it might be

¹⁰¹ G.100-1883. Reports of Commissioners of Police on the several Police Districts of the Colony 1883, 2-3 [GPUCT].

¹⁰² *Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health* (1896), lix [GPUCT].

observed that the same purpose could be served by leaving the closets open while the man is away, but that would not exclude kaffirs.¹⁰³

Ironically, those in positions of power blamed the poor people and people of colour, at least partly, for “nuisances committed in partially screened corners,” but also ensured that the only place they could go was in the street. While the Medical Officer of Health in 1896 did suggest the provision of free closets, he showed no concern for the dignity of people of colour, or their desire to avoid humiliation.

Providing public toilets meant that white men were less likely to be arrested along with men of colour, and thus were assisted to retain their image of superior self-control. The addition of a charge to enter the facilities ensured that white men and men of colour would appear to have different toilet habits.

WOMEN AND LOCATION: THE PRE-WAR PERIOD

Meanwhile, provision of toilets for women was aimed at limiting their mobility in the public realm. The early provision of public toilets for women indicates that despite the fact that a substantial portion of women in the city worked for their living, the City Council only had traditional British middle-class women in mind. Between 1893 and 1914, the few toilets that provided for women were almost all located in areas where women could visit while still performing traditional roles, such as caretakers of children, leisure seekers, and consumers or traders.

One of the first public toilets that catered for women as well as men was situated in the Company Gardens, abutting Victoria Street (then New Street)

¹⁰³ Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (14 December 1922), 3/CT Vol. 4/1/5/464. Folder: E452/5 [KAB].

in 1895.¹⁰⁴ Commenting on this new erection, the Superintendent of the Gardens stated that, “[He is] pleased to say the chalet erected at the bottom of the Garden on New Street side, and just now completed, will be a very great convenience to the public, more especially to strangers to the Gardens.”¹⁰⁵ This quote suggests that those women moving about the city for leisure – coming to visit or to be entertained – were the intended patrons of this facility, and of greater concern than those who lived and worked in the area. The toilets provided at De Waal Park in 1903, in what would now be considered Tamboerskloof, and at Kalk Bay Beach in 1914, were also both places where women could go for recreation, or take their children to play, without unsettling any notions of “feminine decency.”¹⁰⁶

Markets were also one of the earliest places to include toilets for women; both the Early Morning Market at the corner of Sir Lowry and Stuckeris Streets, Woodstock, and the New Fish Market on the Foreshore had mixed facilities in place by the end of the 1890s.¹⁰⁷ Clearly, shopping or trading were also roles that women were sanctioned to play.

By 1914, there were only two public toilets in the city that catered for women and were not clearly linked to a traditionally female occupation. These were the toilets erected at Riebeeck Square in the city centre, and at the corner of Searle and Sir Lowry Streets, Woodstock.¹⁰⁸ These facilities most likely indicate a growing awareness of women moving about the streets in other capacities besides as mothers, consumers and leisure seekers.

Men’s toilets, on the other hand, showed an almost inverse pattern, where the majority of toilets were built on the streets or in public squares, without any clear indication of what activity would bring them to that area. This reflects the fact that men were imagined as holding multiple roles in public.

¹⁰⁴ *Mayor’s Minute*, (1895), 23 [GPUCT].

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 66.

¹⁰⁶ *Mayor’s Minute*, (1903), xxx, xxxi [GPUCT]; *Mayor’s Minute*, (1914), iv [GPUCT].

¹⁰⁷ *Mayor’s Minute*, (1896), 44 [GPUCT]; *Mayor’s Minute*, (1899), xxxix [GPUCT].

¹⁰⁸ *Mayor’s Minute* (1907), xxv [GPUCT]; *Mayor’s Minute*, (1908), 11 [GPUCT].

It might be possible to interpret this locating of public toilets as merely ignorance of women's changing roles and their bodily needs, rather than a deliberate attempt to restrict women's movement. As Kitchen and Law have argued in their study of public toilets for disabled people in Ireland, that "[b]ecause disabled people take it on themselves to monitor and restrict their behaviour in light of the restricted facilities, the outcome is that their constrained mobility becomes naturalised and invisible to others."¹⁰⁹ It is possible that women had become so adept at managing their basic needs in lieu of the lack of facilities for them and the stricter social codes regulating their behaviour, that their difficulties were imperceptible to the men of the Council.

However, evidence from the post-war period – a period in which women were joining the work force in increasing numbers – suggests that in addition to this pervasive indifference, there was in fact deliberate and increasing resistance to the provision of toilets for women.

WOMEN AND LOCATION: THE POST-WAR PERIOD

Between 1916 and 1918, various facilities for men were opened in different parts of the city: at the Maitland Outspan (1916), on Darling Street (1917), at Greenmarket Square (1917), at the Salt River Market (1918), and at Kalk Bay Beach (1918) – with no more than two years between the date of request or proposal and the date of erection. The records show that requests were made for facilities for women at almost all of these locations in the same period. These requests were met with a variety of excuses, however – ranging from a lack of funds and concerns about locations, to outright denial of the need for accommodation for women. Provision was eventually provided on Darling Street eight years after requested, at the Salt River Market eleven years after it

¹⁰⁹ Kitchen and Law, "The Socio-Spatial Construction of (In)accessible Public Toilets," 296,

was first requested, at Kalk Bay ten years after requested, and at Greenmarket Square after eight years – but with great reluctance from the Council, and in many cases, only after other city officials, such as the Assistant General Manager of South African Railway and Harbours (AGM of SARH) rallied on their behalf.¹¹⁰ This support did not necessarily stem from a feminist agenda, but rather because the railway stations had to make up the flack for the lack of provision elsewhere, and were frequently unable to cope with the congestion.

While requests for the Ladies Rest Room did eventually prove successful, unlike the case of the Maitland outspan, this example provides some of the

¹¹⁰ There were some facilities at Kalk Bay for women at this time, but not nearly enough for the volumes that were using them. The only location for which there is no record of a specific request for female accommodation is Greenmarket Square. Maitland outspan: the building was still in progress in September 1915, so I assume that it would have been open to the public in 1916. *Mayor's Minute*, (1915), v [GPUCT]; Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Public Health and Building Regulations Committee (7 October 1920) 3/CT Vol. 4/1/5/464. File E452/5 [KAB]. Darling street: Letter from the City Engineer to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (6 June 1917) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463 [KAB]; Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Health and Building Regulations Committee. (16 May 1925) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463 [KAB]. Greenmarket Square: Letter from the City Engineer to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (1917) 3/CT Volume. 4/1/5/463 [KAB]. Salt River Market: *Mayor's Minute* (1918), vi [GPUCT].; Letter from the City Engineer to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (24 April 1918) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. Folder: E 453/5. [KAB]; Letter from Finance Committee to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (30 May 1918). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. Folder: E 453/5 [KAB]; Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (16 April 1924) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. Folder: E454/5 [KAB]; Letter from City Engineer to Town Clerk (18 February 1925) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. Folder: E454/5 [KAB]; Minutes from Meeting of Health and Building Regulations Committee (18 February 1925). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. Folder: E454/5 [KAB]. Kalk Bay beach: *Mayor's Minute* (1918), vi [GPUCT]; Letter from the Town Clerk to the Assistant General Manager of South African Railway and Harbour (28 December 1916) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File. E459/5. KAB; Letter from the Assistant General Manager of South African Railway and Harbour to the Town Clerk (3 January 1917) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File. E459/5 [KAB]; Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Health and Building Regulations Committee. (2 February 1917) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File. E459/5 [KAB]; Letter from the Assistant General Manager of South African Railway and Harbour to the Town Clerk (17 April 1917) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File. E459/5 [KAB]; Letter from the Town Clerk to the Assistant General Manager of South African Railway and Harbour (21 September 1918) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File. E459/5 [KAB]; Letter from the Assistant General Manager of South African Railway and Harbour to the Town Clerk (17 October 1918) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File. E459/5 [KAB]; Letter from the Town Clerk to the Assistant General Manager of South African Railway and Harbour (28 November 1918) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File. E459/5 [KAB]; Letter from the Assistant General Manager of South African Railway and Harbour to the Town Clerk (10 January 1919) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File. E459/5 [KAB]; Extract from minutes of meeting between representatives of the city council, and the railway administration (3 March 1919) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File. E459/5 [KAB]; Tenders invited for the erection of proposed alterations to existing chalet at Kalk Bay outspan. 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464 File: E460/5 [KAB].

clearest evidence of the resistance woman faced in securing toilet facilities in the city.

As previously mentioned, plans for a public toilet for men and women were originally put forward for the area between the Standard Bank and Post Office in 1901. These were reconsidered in 1912, before they were eventually vetoed in 1913, because an agreement could not be made about the site. Discussions around a mixed facility in the centre of the city resurfaced in the records in 1917. From 1918 it seems to have been re-conceptualised as a “rest room” exclusively for women, and three possible sites were suggested, all in the premises of existing buildings on Adderly Street.¹¹¹ However, HBRC, which was in charge of public toilets in the city, believed that there was enough toilet accommodation for women in the city, between the Town Hall and “various large houses”, and advised the Council not to build anything before the central market planned for the Parade had been completed.¹¹²

The perception that there was enough accommodation for women in this part of the city was challenged by a Mrs (Sgt) Kirkman the following year. A resident of Mowbray, she clearly travelled to the city by train frequently to visit the shops and restaurants, among other things. From her discussions with the Station Master, Mr Pritchard, she gleaned that “80% of the women and children using the Station Lavatories [were] not travellers,” and she wrote to the Council in June 1919 to express the “urgent need for building Ladies Lavatories in the vicinity of Adderly Street.”¹¹³ “Various ladies associations” also voiced their concerns about the insufficient toilet facilities for women, according to the AGM of SARH.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Letter from City Engineer to Health and Building Regulations Committee (24 September 1918), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File: E 447/5 [KAB].

¹¹² City Council Minute (2 December 1918), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File: E 447/5 [KAB].

¹¹³ Letter from Mrs (Sgt) Kirkman to the Mayor (28 June 1919), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File: E 447/5 [KAB].

¹¹⁴ Letter from the Assistant General Manager of the South African Railway and Harbour to Town Clerk (12 September 1922), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File: E 447/5 [KAB].

The town clerk placated Mrs Kirkman, stating that the matter would be considered “in connection with the preparation of the loan estimates for the next year.” However, two and a half years later, in December of 1921, the town clerk wrote to the hallkeeper at the City Hall, requesting to close the Rest Room accessible from Long Market Street, and remove the 100-pound expenditure proposed for the annual estimate.¹¹⁵ This effectively decreased the already limited convenience accommodation in the city.

No progress was still made in the following year towards the provision of a women’s rest room, and this time the AGM of the SARH took up the matter. In 1922 he, too, added his weight to the requests to the Council, arguing that the station facilities could not accommodate the number of non-passengers currently using it, and for whom the station should not be expected to cater. He urged the Council to seriously consider this “long-felt want,” as the station’s predicament was a result of the Municipality’s failure to provide sufficient accommodation for women in the city.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, he continued to write to the Council at least once a month (receiving very non-committal responses from the town clerk) until April 1923.

Only after the AGM of SARH’s persistent pressure, did the HBRC seem to take these calls seriously, and committed to putting aside some of the following years loan estimates for this purpose. Yet the matter remained unresolved for another two years. “Central and ... inconspicuous sites” were hard to come by, the HBRC reported, and “wherever situate will meet with opposition.”¹¹⁷

Finally, eight years after the facility was re-imagined as a Ladies Rest Room, and twenty-three years after a mixed facility in the vicinity of Adderly Street

¹¹⁵ Letter from Town Clerk to Hallkeeper (19 December 1921), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File: E 447/5 [KAB].

¹¹⁶ Letter from the Assistant General Manager of the South African Railway and Harbour to Town Clerk. (12 September 1922), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File: E 447/5 [KAB].

¹¹⁷ Report of Health and Building Regulations Committee to the City Council (27 March 1923), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File: E 447/5 [KAB].

had first been suggested, the HBRC settled on a site among the trees, near the existing men's facility on Darling Street, and the rest room was erected at the end of 1924.¹¹⁸ The HBRC had consulted the Women's Municipal Association (WMA) and the National Council of Women of South Africa (NCWSA) on the matter of the site of the rest room, but considering that both of these organisations had specifically asked that the building *not* be near the men's facility – a request that the committee blatantly ignored – it seems that this gesture was more an act of tokenism than a genuine response to women's needs and desires.¹¹⁹

This eight-year process illustrates at least two points: first, a complete lack of awareness on the part of the HBRC and the City Council of the presence and needs of women in the city centre; second, an obvious reluctance to take them seriously, when these needs were articulated. Perhaps even more significantly, the example of the Ladies Rest Room indicates the considerable anxiety over the idea of a central and conspicuous facility exclusively for women in the centre of the city.

The location of toilets also reinforced ideas about what kind of women belonged in the city. Of those toilets for which we have architect's plans, all those that provided for women indicated that there was provision for white or "European" women, as well as "Mahomedan" or "Malay" women, but not for black women.¹²⁰ Rather than an effort to keep black women out of the toilets, this seems to indicate a complete unawareness of the fact that black women even lived in the city.

¹¹⁸ Letter from the Town Clerk to the City Treasurer (23 December 1924), 3/CT Vol. 4/1/5/463 [KAB]; *Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health* (1925), lxiv [GPUCT].

¹¹⁹ Letter from the National Council of Women of South Africa to the Town Clerk (5 April 1923), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File: E 447/5 [KAB]; Letter from the Women's Municipal Association to the Town Clerk (24 April 1923), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File: E 447/5 [KAB]; Report of the Health and Building Regulations Committee adopted by the Council (24 April 1923), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File: E 447/5 [KAB]; Letter from the Town Clerk to the City Treasurer (23 December 1924), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File: E 447/5 [KAB].

¹²⁰ *Mayor's Minute*, (1895), 23 [GPUCT]; *Mayor's Minute* (1899), xxxix [GPUCT].; *Mayor's Minute* (1907), xxv [GPUCT].; *Mayor's Minute* (1908), ii [GPUCT].

The racial distinctions in the women's facilities were not as clearly articulated as they were in the men's facilities. The inclusion of toilets for "Malay" women might have reflected the acknowledgement that there were some middle class women of colour in Cape Town at this time, who would also have frequented the parks and gardens in the city. But considering that there was almost always a distinction made between "Malay" closets and "water closets", it is more likely that this indicated an acknowledgment that women of colour frequently looked after white children, and would have needed to be able to take them to the toilet if they were out at a park or garden.¹²¹

INTERSECTIONS OF GENDER AND RACE

It would be surprising if the anxiety surrounding public toilets for women were disconnected from the white male fears about the liaisons between white women and black men. As the container of women's bodily fluids – including menstruation – women's toilets made unstated assumptions about women's sexuality visible.¹²² In pointing out how white British males arrogated to themselves the role of fiercely guarding white British women's sexuality,¹²³ Bickford-Smith argues that there was a great deal of concern about prostitution in middle-class British circles at the beginning of the twentieth century. These fears lay particularly in the fact that prostitution provided an opportunity for black men to sleep with white women:

[I]t appears that a considerable traffic was being carried on in Cape Town between aboriginal natives and white European women. There were certain houses in Cape Town which any Kafir could frequent, and as long as he could pay the sum demanded, he could have illicit intercourse with these white European women. This was a matter of

¹²¹ This will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

¹²² Penner, "A World of Unmentionable Suffering," 45.

¹²³ Bickford-Smith et al., *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century*, 25.

the gravest importance, for once the barriers were broken down between the Europeans and native races in this country, there would be no limit to the terrible dangers to which women could be submitted, particularly in isolated places.¹²⁴

This quote reflects two significant ideas about race and sexuality: firstly, it casts black men as uncontrollably sexual, destined to rape white women unless they are restrained. As Pumla Dineo Gqola highlights in her book *Rape: A South African Nightmare*, “constructions of ‘black peril,’ or what was termed ‘swaartgevaar’ in colonial and apartheid South Africa, depended heavily on this idea of the sexually and otherwise violent Black man.”¹²⁵ Vron Ware has also highlighted the way in which the construction of white women as fragile victims in colonial contexts, in need of protection, shaped many oppressive measures taken against men of colour.¹²⁶

Secondly, it highlights that even consensual intercourse between black men and white women would threaten the white supremacy that British middle class society was based on in South Africa, by breaking down barriers between the races.¹²⁷

Both of these ideas may have come into play regarding women’s public toilets; firstly because the overt connection to women’s bodies would have piqued already heightened sexual concerns around white women, and secondly, because public toilets might have been viewed as places where women were vulnerable to attack from the hypothetical black rapist.

Intersections between black women and white men in the imagination of city officials played out quite differently. 1917 saw the erection of two public toilets in the city centre for men only, as temporary measures during the war – to accommodate the military presence – at Darling Street and Greenmarket

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 39.

¹²⁵ Pumla Dineo Gqola. *Rape: A South African Nightmare* (Johannesburg: MF Books, 2015), 4.

¹²⁶ Vron Ware. *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History* (London: Verso Books, 2015), 38; Patel, “Violent Cisterns”, 58-59.

¹²⁷ Bickford-Smith et al., *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century*, 39.

Square.¹²⁸ Both of these facilities were very soon the cause of considerable complaint from members of the public and city officials alike. Of Darling Street, people complained about the smell and dilapidation.¹²⁹ The Medical Officer of Health deemed it “the source of continual trouble and expense,” and explained that as a result of a defective tile job, the “urine and flushing water soaks into the material and gives off an offensive smell.”¹³⁰ Similar complaints were made about the Greenmarket Square toilet, although the Medical Officer of Health revealed an additional concern about the “class of people who use it.”¹³¹ While he recommended that the facility be removed altogether, others in the Council felt that it had “created a demand for such a place there,” and that a “number of people...will look in the future for the continuance of the chalet.”¹³² Nevertheless, several years after the war had ended, plans were drawn up for both of these facilities for improved buildings, made of better quality materials, and including attendants to maintain them. The inclusion of a “wash and brush up room,” with “cupboard space for stores,” at the Darling Street location suggests that this new building was not merely intended as a place for men to relieve themselves, but also a place to attend to their appearance.¹³³ It is unclear whether this facility was actually built, but it is clear that the new underground facility at Greenmarket Square was built in 1928, and it remains there today.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ Letter from the City Engineer to the Health and Building Regulations Committee. (6 June 1917) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463 [KAB]; Letter from the City Engineer to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (1917) 3/CT Volume. 4/1/5/463 [KAB].

¹²⁹ Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Town Clerk (20 November 1919).3/CT Vol. 4/1/5/463 [KAB].

¹³⁰ Report of Medical Officer of Health, taken from minutes of meeting of Health and Building Regulations Committee (23 February 1925). 3/CT Volume: 4/1/5/463 [KAB].

¹³¹ Report of the Medical Officer of Health, taken from an extract of minutes of meeting of the Health and Building Regulations Committee (14 February 1925) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File: E 449/5 [KAB].

¹³² Opinion of Councillor Rev: A.J.S. Lewis, in *ibid.*

¹³³ Letter from Medical Officer of Health to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (16 May 1925) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. KAB].

¹³⁴ Plans for the Underground Facility: Report of the Health and Building Regulations Committee submitted to Council (27 August 1925) 3/CT Vol. 4/1/5/463 [KAB]; *Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health* (1928), 80 [GPUCT].

A request for a public toilet for women at the Ndabeni station in 1929 was met with a very different attitude from officials. The request was expressed in the records via the Superintendent of Natives, who wrote to the AGM of SARH, stating that:

Several complaints have been forwarded to me by the residents here to the effect that there is no sanitary convenience for women at Ndabeni Station. Will you kindly give the matter your attention as I think you will agree with me that such is very necessary.¹³⁵

This letter was forwarded to the District Inspector, with a request for his report and recommendation.¹³⁶ The District Inspector interviewed the same Superintendent that had written the original request, and came to the conclusion that since there was “a woman’s lavatory within 150 yards from the station, which Mr Cooke [the superintendent] assures me, whatever they do, cannot be maintained in a clean and satisfactory condition,” that an additional convenience at the station “would be a continuous source of public complaint,” and was inadvisable.¹³⁷ He also added, that “in view of the fact that the location will eventually be removed, I do not consider the expenditure should be incurred.”¹³⁸ The Systems Manager accepted this report, and there is no evidence of any objection from the superintendent.

It seems strange that the Superintendent would go to the trouble of making the request for a ladies convenience at the station, on behalf of the residents, which he believed “[was] very necessary,” only to turn round and tell the District Inspector that “after further consideration, he considers it inadvisable that one should be provided.”¹³⁹ It seems more likely that the District

¹³⁵ Letter from the Superintendent of Natives to the Assistant General Manager of South African Railway and Harbour. SMC. Vol. 1/1/41. Folder: South African Railway and Harbour (2 October 1929) [KAB].

¹³⁶ Letter from System Manager to the District Inspector. SMC. Vol. 1/1/41. Folder: South African Railway and Harbour (10 October 1929) [KAB].

¹³⁷ Letter from the District Inspector to the System Manager. SMC. Vol. 1/1/41. Folder: South African Railway and Harbour. (26 October 1929) [KAB].

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

Inspector was seminal in engineering a particular outcome from the conversation. Regardless of the Superintendent's original intentions, however, he did not make any further attempts to push the matter, and the requested convenience was never built.

Unlike the patrons of the Darling Street and Greenmarket Square toilets, of whom similar criticisms were made, the Ndabeni residents were ruled out as inherently unclean. Rather than view the matter as one of material and maintenance, as they did in the case of the men's toilets, the women themselves were blamed. In the same way that we saw ideas about bodily control playing out in the early provision of toilets for men in the city, black women were also cast off as "faecally uncontrollable."¹⁴⁰ The fact that even concerns about the "class" of people using the toilets at Darling Street and Greenmarket Square did not prevent the officials from providing better facilities there, suggests that it was the race and gender of the Ndabeni residents primarily that made them of so little significance to the city officials.

CONCLUSION

From a surface-level analysis of the provision of public toilets in Cape Town, it might appear that the unequal provision of public toilets reflected the demographic reality of the city at the time. City officials described public urination and defecation as a male practice, and there were more men than women in the public realm at the turn of the century when municipal provision began. However, an analysis of both the discourse surrounding the provision of public toilets, and the spatial distribution of public toilets that were built, suggest a much more complex picture – in which women feature significantly, despite efforts to invisibilise them. While there were more men in the city at the beginning of the twentieth century than women, there were

¹⁴⁰ Inglis, "Dirt and Denigration," 208; Anderson, "Excremental Colonialism," 640-643.

still significant numbers of women, who were increasingly moving about the city. This suggests that rather than meeting a public need, public toilets were shaped by the social values and power dynamics of the time, and operationalised to maintain them.

For men, public toilet provision was conceived of as a way to retain distinctions among men, so that white middle class men could sustain their facade of superiority. Providing toilets for men meant that white men would not be seen being arrested along with black men, and including a charge for access meant that people of colour would mostly be excluded. Deliberately limiting the provision of toilets for women, and locating them in strategic areas, meant that women's mobility in the public realm remained restricted, and they faced even more obstacles as they increasingly pushed at the boundaries of a male dominated society.

While race and class shaped the patterns of provision within the categories of men and women, they also played out between them. The female toilet, with its connotations of female sexuality, pulled on anxiety about "illicit sexual relations" between black men and white women. Great efforts were made to ignore the very existence of black women in the city, but on the few occasions when they were able to communicate their needs to the Council, the very same conditions that led to improved facilities for men in the city, were used as an excuse to continue excluding black women.

Chapter Two

“For Aesthetic Reasons”:

Designs, Bodies, Stereotypes

The previous chapter offered public toilets as an architectural site and instrument in a wider context of ordering urban space that increasingly sought to enclose certain bodily habits to privatised spaces. It outlined the ways in which the provision of public toilets were simultaneously shaped by the social hierarchies in Cape Town and used to maintain them. The inadequate number and strategic siting of toilets for women were deeply informed by the dominant British Victorian values that imagined women's role to be in the domestic realm of the home. But these characteristics of toilet provision limited women's mobility in the public space, and ensured that they remained excluded from it. Furthermore, racial segregation gradually increased throughout the period. The earlier toilets included provision for white women and 'Malay' women, but excluded black women, but by the end of the First World War there was evidence of increasing reluctance to provide for coloured women especially, and a move towards completely separate

buildings for white women and people of colour. Toilet provision for men indicated an assumption that the public realm was a male domain, and the far higher volume and more varied locations reflected and promoted this. But it was also shaped by a desire to retain the social and racial hierarchy of men in the Cape, and ensure that differences were continually performed on the public streets.

This relationship between social values and the built environment cannot only be seen in terms of the number and location of facilities built; the design of the facilities, at both exterior and interior levels, remains critical to questions of use. At an external level, the desire to erase any connections between civilised societies and bodies that excreted waste informed the various strategies used to make public toilet facilities appear as inconspicuous as possible, such as constructing facilities underground, or erecting fences of various materials around the entrances to above ground facilities. The entrances at mixed facilities were also orientated specifically so that there was less chance of women being seen using facilities, reflecting the particular disquiet surrounding women's bodies and bodily needs. At the same time, these design features operated with a kind of "non-human agency," impressing the values that shaped them on the bodies that used them, and reinforcing them in the eyes of the public.¹

This desire to distance the public realm from particular corporeal needs of the body was also reflected in the mode of waste control at an infrastructural level. The water carriage system ensured that waste was removed from sight instantly, taking with it any other sensory evidence of its existence. The spatial expansion of this system also operated to demarcate those that were considered part of the city public, and those that were not.

At an internal level, ideas linking civilisation and racially categorised bodies shaped the design and designation of toilet fittings, from cubicles to closet

¹ Crook uses the term "non-human agency" in Crook, "Power, Privacy and Pleasure," 550; 566.

styles. Factors such as the posture required of the body when using the toilet, the level of privacy afforded to users, and the quality of materials and construction were simultaneously influenced by the desire to maintain and perform racial and gendered hierarchies.

SHIELDING FROM THE PUBLIC GAZE

The preoccupation with underground and “inconspicuous” designs that surfaced in the course of constructing the Ladies’ Rest Room, as discussed in Chapter One, highlights the social emphasis placed on the relative invisibility of public toilet facilities. In “Sanitary Conveniences and the Retreat of the Frontier,” Andrews attributes the slow pace of sanitary provision in Vancouver to “Victorian prudery,” and shows that the emergence of underground conveniences was largely linked to visual concerns. She quotes an English report on the matter, stating that

[p]rior to the last fifteen or twenty years, conveniences were constructed above ground, and as it was necessary for their purpose that they should be in the most frequented places, attention was generally called to their extreme ugliness. During the last fifteen or sixteen years, however, a very large number of underground conveniences were constructed...and in many cases, provision has been made for the female sex.²

Cooper et al as well as Penner have stressed the connection between the emergence of underground conveniences and the provision for women as a result of the trend of ‘visual discretion’ in “Rooms of Their Own” and “A World of Unmentionable Suffering,” respectively.³ According to Penner,

When lavatories were provided, the desire to reduce an overt connection with women’s bodies and prevent mixing affected

² Andrews, “Sanitary Conveniences and the Retreat of the Frontier,” 5.

³ Cooper et al, “Rooms of Their Own,” 424-425; Penner, “A World of Unmentionable Suffering”, 46.

discussions not only about the conveniences location but the design as well. Often located underground without windows, protected from the ‘public’ gaze and, by means of internal partitions, from the eyes and ears of other women, the conveniences were meant to seal off and contain the ‘unmentionable’ secrets of the female body.⁴

In “Evil Necessaries and Abominable Erections,” Brunton also draws attention to the “importance which residents [in Scotland] placed on the visual prominence of lavatories.” She provides several examples of cases where police authorities were able to resolve disputes over conveniences solely through elements of design, such as “add[ing] screens to urinals or re-orientat[ing] facilities so that entrances faced away from private houses.” In one case, residents of Leith, Scotland, were placated when the authorities repainted a convenience ‘stone colour,’ to make it blend in with its surroundings more easily.⁵

Concerns around the conspicuousness of public conveniences, as well as the different standards for and behaviour expected of men and women regarding the use of public conveniences were evident in the white Cape society too. The following section will illustrate how underground designs, screens, and separate entrances for men and women were variously used to navigate this period of conflicting social values.

UNDERGROUND DESIGNS

The earliest mention of an underground design in the colonial records was the toilet facility initially proposed in 1901, for the area between the Standard Bank Building and the Post Office (previously mentioned in Chapter One). According to the Council minutes, several designs were submitted, but a large underground plan was selected, with accommodation for both men and

⁴ Penner, “A World of Unmentionable Suffering”, 4.

⁵ Brunton, “Evil Necessaries and Abominable Erections,” 200-201.

women (although with far greater provision for men).⁶ It appears to have been the source of much debate, however, as the facility was not built at the time of proposal, and only re-appears in the records eleven years later, in 1912. The Cape Peninsular Publicity Association appears to have been reluctant to let the question of a public toilet for ‘both sexes in some central part of the city’ go, and thus wrote to the city engineer to clarify what difficulties might be expected in the construction of an underground facility.⁷ The City Engineer responded to say that the concerns frequently raised –that the underground construction would interfere with building foundations, or that the rock under the street would be too difficult to excavate-- were not in fact “insuperable difficulties.” Even concerns about the floor level being below the sewers could be managed by “mechanical means,” as the sewage could be lifted by “compressed air or hydraulic power.” This would add to the cost however, which, along with disagreements over a suitable site, was the main reason that various reports and plans that had been submitted over the “past ten years” had not been realised.⁸ The next best bet after the underground option appeared to be within an existing building –such as Trafalgar Place, or inside the Standard Bank – which although decreasing the cost, may have also been another attempt to disguise the use of the facility. But consensus continued to be elusive, and by 1913 the plans had, again, come to nothing.⁹ They only reappeared again several years later, in what had become discussions about a Ladies Rest Room in particular. When Mrs Kirkman wrote to the town clerk to emphasise the need for additional toilet accommodation for women in the centre of the city, she specifically requested

⁶ *Mayor’s Minute* (19010, xi-xii [GPUCT]).

⁷ Letter from the Secretary of the Cape Peninsular Publicity Association to the City Engineer (23 April 1912), 3/CT. Vol. 4/2/1/1/123 [KAB].

⁸ Letter from the City Engineer to the Secretary of the Cape Peninsular Publicity Association (27 April 1912) 3/CT. Vol. 4/2/1/1/123 [KAB].

⁹ *Mayor’s Minute* (1913), 84 [GPUCT].

that it be “built underground.”¹⁰ As shown in chapter one, however, this request was also not met.

The next mention of underground construction appears amidst much debate over whether to demolish the facility at Greenmarket Square. As mentioned in Chapter One, this facility was initially erected as a temporary measure to meet the needs of the military during the War in 1917.¹¹ Along with the Darling Street facility, it had been the object of many complaints from the public, particularly in regards to the smells that emanated from it. However, since there was evidently a demand for it, efforts had been made to rebuild it with better materials.

In addition to concerns about the smell of the Greenmarket facility, many of the concerns expressed had been centred on the visual spectre that it posed. Mr C.W. Duminy wrote in April 1925 to a Council member, to state that, “[v]isitors from the country are frequently enquiring as to whether the aesthetic sense of the City Council can much longer tolerate the retention of a structure originally cheap and nasty but now no less than a public eyesore.”¹² In a letter to the Mayor in 1926, the Editor of the Lady’s Pictorial and Home Journal, Mrs H. Kemp, also described the facility as “an eyesore [that] should be removed from the principle square in the city.” While she acknowledged that the building had been cleaned since her last letter of complaint, two years previously, she still took offence to that fact it “stands a disgrace to our fine city,” and requested that “something ... be done which will ... add to [our town’s] beauty.” Remove the “ramshackle edifice,” she suggested, and build a rest room underground. More than anything, Mrs Kemp was concerned about the *sight* of the facility. Towards the end of her letter, she confessed that

¹⁰ Letter from Mrs (Sgd) Catherine J. Kirkman to the Town Clerk (28 June 1919) 3/CT Vol. 4/1/5/463. File: E 447/5 [KAB].

¹¹ Report from the Medical Officer of Health (14February 1925)3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File E449/5 [KAB].

¹² Letter from Mr. C.W. Duminy to Mr. Finch (2 April 1925), in *ibid.*

“my flat overlooks the square so that I cannot avoid seeing many unpleasant incidents in connection with it.”¹³

While the Medical Officer of Health was concerned about the sanitary state of the toilets, he too fixated on the visual element of the toilets, and in discussions with the relevant Cape Council and committee members stated that, “for aesthetic reasons [he] preferred not to have a chalet in the middle of one of the finest squares in the city,” and that the “existing chalet was an eyesore.”¹⁴

Weighing up the necessity of public toilets in that area, with the offence that the visual spectre of the facility seemed to cause, an underground design was settled on for the new building. As in the Standard Bank/Post Office example, there was much debate regarding the technical difficulties of this type of construction, but it was eventually resolved in 1925 that an “underground public sanitary convenience for males and females” was to be erected in Greenmarket Square, “at a cost not to exceed 2600 pounds.”¹⁵ This convenience is still in use in the city centre today, with its roof about a metre above the ground. The men and women’s entrances are on opposite sides of the building, and each follow a flight of steps down to about 2 or 3 metres below ground level. With all the stores and people who make use of the market space, it was not easy to spot, even with the knowledge that it was there, and this was presumably the appeal when it was built in 1925.¹⁶

The trend of “a very large number of underground conveniences” being constructed that Brunton describes in London does not seem to have occurred in Cape Town, as the facility at Greenmarket Square is the only record of an

¹³ Letter from Mrs. H. Kemp to the Town clerk (25 March 1925), in *ibid.*; Letter from the Editor of the Lady’s Pictorial and Home Journal to the Mayor (18 December 1926), in *ibid.*

¹⁴ Extracts from minutes of meeting of the Health and Building Regulations Committee (23 February 1925) in *ibid.*

¹⁵ This is substantially less than the amount quoted for the underground convenience planned in 1901, perhaps due to technical advances since then. Extract from minutes of meeting of the Health and Building Regulations Committee (14 February 1925) in *ibid.*

¹⁶ Observations made in person on Friday 27 November 2015.

underground convenience constructed between 1893 and 1940. This was most probably because of the technical difficulties of construction, and the additional cost (the underground design was nearly double the cost of an aboveground one), although it was clearly a popular idea amongst members of the middle class and city officials. There does seem to be a connection between providing for women and the popularity of the underground design, considering that all the records of underground plans – including those that were never built – incorporated provision for women. The trend however does not seem as strong as it was in most European and north American cities, considering that only one of these was actually built in Cape Town, and by 1925 there were several other mixed facilities that were built above ground. Nevertheless, the preoccupation with underground design was clearly part of the larger concern with making public conveniences as inconspicuous as possible.

SCREENS AND FENCES

Another design element used to decrease the visibility of public conveniences was the use of a screen in front of the entrance. This could be separately constructed, as was planned for the facility erected in Kalk Bay in 1918, or fashioned from the special selection of foliage.¹⁷ For example, in 1907, the Acting City Engineer requested that the Superintendent of the Public Gardens, “Kindly arrange to plant one or two small bushes to form a screen at each of the entrances to the [St Andrew’s Square Chalet]. I shall be pleased to point out position to you or your assistant at any convenient time.”¹⁸ The Health and Building Regulations Committee made a similar request of the

¹⁷ Extract from minutes of sub-committee of Health and Building Regulations Committee (23 July 1918). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File: E459/5 [KAB].

¹⁸ Letter from the Acting City Engineer to the Superintendent of the Public Gardens re St Andrew’s Square Chalet (14 August 1907). 3/CT. Vol. 4/2/1/1/53 [KAB].

Improvements and Parks Committee for advice regarding the best shrubs to plant in front of the facility in Ralph Street, Claremont in 1924, “with a view to screening the chalet which is built practically up to the footway.”¹⁹ In some cases, the concealment of public facilities was taken to such extreme measures, that the Medical Officer of Health had to intervene. In a letter to the City Engineer in 1907, he wrote:

The Public Sanitary Convenience recently erected on the Mouille Point Road, near the Cycle Track...is so concealed that the public would hardly understand that it was a Public Convenience. Will you please have a board fixed in a conspicuous place marked “Gentlemen” so as to indicate the nature of the building.²⁰

An exchange between a member of the public and the city officials regarding the Sea Point facility in 1923 reveals some of the concerns behind this practice. The following excerpt is taken from a letter that was written by a Mr Willshire Harmer to the Town Clerk on the 21st of November 1923, after it came to his attention that a “Public Lavatory was in the course of erection on the triangular piece of ground just behind the Sea Point Bathing Pavilion:”

That a convenience of this nature is required in this neighbourhood is admitted and the Council is to be commended for providing one but the site to my mind is unfortunate. This particular piece of ground is in daily use by small children of this area as a play ground; being removed from the dangers of the beach and immediate sea front; it is frequented particularly by the very small children under the care of their nurses or parents. I realise that it is impracticable to stop the building operations but might I suggest respectfully that the lavatory be adequately screened off by a wall from the remaining space when the children would still be able to use the unoccupied area without being brought face to face with the public using the lavatory.

¹⁹ Letter from the Health and Building Regulation Committee to Improvements and Parks committee (10December 1924). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. Folder E457/5 [KAB].

²⁰ Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the City Engineer (12March 1907). 3/CT. Vol. 4/2/1/1/53 [KAB].

I am writing solely in the interests of the children and perhaps you are aware that I am the Magistrate to whom is allocated the administration of the Children's Protection Act in Cape Town.²¹

After some discussion between the Town Clerk, City Engineer and Health and Building Regulations Committee, it was decided that a "jarrah picked fence and a suitable hedge [was] to be planted so as to screen off as far as possible the chalet ..."²² The fact that some sort of fence was initially intended from the start, as the City Engineer pointed out to the Town Clerk, is additional evidence that this was common practice at the time.²³ In his response to Mr Harmer, he goes on to point out that

a special request was made for a chalet for the use of children and nurse maids who frequent the abovementioned park and it is felt that a live hedge in preference to a brick wall [would] be a more suitable screen in this Park.²⁴

What is interesting about this exchange is that Mr Harmer did not object to the public toilet itself – in fact, he congratulated the Council for tending to this social need. His distaste lay rather in the possibility that children might observe people making use of it.²⁵ Bearing in mind that the entrance of the chalet would obscure the inside, and once inside, the closets were further hidden by cubicles (admittedly the urinals would have been exposed) – the chances of children seeing the actual act of urination or defecation or any private parts of anatomy – from the play ground – would have been virtually impossible. He must therefore, have objected to the notion that the children might see adults enter the building, and perceive the reason that one would enter it. This seems even more absurd, considering that the facility was requested specifically for the use of these children and their nurses, who

²¹ Letter from Mr Willshire Harmer to the Town Clerk (21 November 1923). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File E440/5 [KAB].

²² Letter from the Town Clerk to Mr Willshire Harmer (19 December 1923) in *ibid.*

²³ Letter from the City Engineer to the Town Clerk (29 November 1923) in *ibid.*

²⁴ Letter from the Town Clerk to Mr Willshire Harmer (19 December 1923) in *ibid.*

²⁵ Letter from Mr Willshire Harmer to the Town Clerk (21 November 1923) in *ibid.*

would have had exactly the same bodily needs. As Penner puts it, “[t]here is something profoundly ironic about a public amenity being condemned for being ‘too public.’”²⁶

ENTRANCE ORIENTATION

Concerns about people being seen while using the public toilet facilities were even more pronounced regarding women. We have already seen that those facilities in Cape Town that provided for both men and women were segregated by a wall, and had separate entrances. However, the orientation of these entrances reveals concerns not only about men and women coming into contact with each other as they entered the convenience, but that any member of the public might see a woman enter a public toilet.

The public convenience that was built in the Municipal (or company) Gardens is still in existence, with a special plaque trumpeting its date of erection as 1895.²⁷ While the building has presumably been repaired and painted many times over the years, the basic structure of the building has been left intact. The convenience was one of the first to provide accommodation for both men and women, but interestingly, the men’s entrance can be reached from Victoria Street, which the chalet abuts, while the women’s entrance can only be reached from around the back, via the Gardens.²⁸ A similar structure can be seen at the convenience at Jurgen’s Park, on the corner of Burnside Road and the M62 in the city centre, another convenience that still stands 97 years after its erection in 1919.²⁹ The Men’s entrance is directly off the street, while the women’s entrance is around the corner, reachable from the park.³⁰ Clearly,

²⁶ Penner, “A World of Unmentionable Suffering,” 45.

²⁷ *Mayor’s Minute* (1895), 23 [GPUCT].

²⁸ Observations made in person on Friday 27 November 2015.

²⁹ *Mayor’s Minute* (1919), iii [GPUCT].

³⁰ Upon visiting this site, the attendant who maintains the toilet explained that although the labels above each section showed that the men’s was closest to the street, and the women’s around the back,

one was more likely to be spotted by a member of the public from the street, than from a park or garden entrance, where there might also be cover from trees and shrubs, and it was less acceptable for a woman to be seen using the convenience than it was for a man.

It is unclear whether this was a practice imposed by the architects on women, or whether this was in response to women's concerns. Penner speaks to this issue in "A World of Unmentionable Suffering." Women's public toilets in Victorian London were "notorious financial duds," she writes, but not because poor women were unable to pay for them, but because women frequently shunned them, "whether out of fear, distaste or ... 'a peculiar excess of modesty.'" It seems that women had "internalised the patriarchal system of representation, particularly the discourse of decency and femininity," to such a degree, that they were inhibiting their own use of these public facilities, Penner argues, much to the frustration of the few architects that were trying to provide for their needs.³¹ The elimination of the street entrance for ladies at a mixed facility was therefore met with great approval by London engineers, Davis and Dye; the convenience would be accessible only through a series of other rooms moving from the most public to the least – the general waiting room, the ladies waiting room, and finally the ladies convenience. In this way, use of the ladies room would sidestep the "publicity, which is such a barrier to the use of these places by the opposite sex," they argued.³² Presumably, the fact that some public toilets also provided an area for women to sit and rest meant anyone who did see a

they had actually switched them in everyday use, for safety reasons. "You can't hear the women scream from around the back," she told me. Clearly concerns of safety have replaced those of propriety in modern society. Observations made in person on Friday 27 November 2015.

³¹ Penner, "A World of Unmentionable Suffering," 45. According to Penner, women's public toilets in Victorian London were frequently closed down because of the lack of patronage from women.

³² *Ibid*, 46.

woman enter the facility would not automatically assume that they were intending to use a water closet.³³

It is likely that middle-class women in Cape Town would have had similar concerns at this time, especially considering the dominance of middle class British values in this group.³⁴ For example, in 1935 a Mrs Murray Louw wrote to the town clerk to complain about an attendant that worked there, who had drawn attention to her use of the public toilet in front of a number of men. According to her report, Mrs Louw had taken her daughter to the public toilet at Greenmarket Square – fully renovated by that time – and “in the lavatory noticed she had a few spots on her legs.” After using some tissue paper to wipe the spots away, she left them on the side of the basin. But as she was leaving the facility, “the attendant there chased after [her] shouting as loud as she could that this was not allowed and she had no place where to put the papers.” While Mrs Louw was confused by this behaviour, and queried whether she ought to have paid for the use of the basin, the crux of her (and her husband’s) indignation lay in the fact that the attendant had called her out “in the presence of chauffeurs and [many strange men]” – which she found “most insulting.”³⁵

The examples of underground design proposals, the use of screens to obscure entrances, and differently orientated entrances for men and women at public toilets in the city, all highlight a conflict of social values. Although there was an acknowledgement of the need for public toilets among the general public, there was also a great reluctance to acknowledge that respectable people actually needed to use them. This notion of respectability – which required the illusion of having no bodily needs – informed the efforts to make public toilet buildings as inconspicuous as possible. Furthermore, behaviour in the

³³ Extract from meeting minutes of a sub-committee of the Health and Building Regulations Committee (29 November 1924). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463 [KAB].

³⁴ Bickford-Smith, *Emergence of South African Metropolis*, 36.

³⁵ Letter from Mrs F.A Murray Louw to the Town Clerk (4 April 1935). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463 [KAB].

public space was strongly mediated by notions of gender and age; it was far more acceptable for a man to be seen using a public toilet than it was for a woman, and it was even less acceptable for children to observe anyone using a public toilet. At the same time, these architectural elements reinforced the values that shaped them, so that users internalised the idea that needing to use the toilet – whether to urinate, defecate, manage menstruation, or tend to any other related bodily need – was a shameful thing, and that women, especially, should avoid drawing attention to their bodily needs as much as possible.

WATER CLOSETS VS. EARTH CLOSETS

While the exterior design elements of underground plans, screens and fences, and differently orientated entrances give us a sense of generally gendered attitudes towards bodies and bodily waste, within the categories of ‘men’ and ‘women’, bodies were also categorised and ordered according to race and class. The interior design of public toilets in Cape Town reveals that assumptions linking toilet practice, race and civilisation largely shaped the design and designation of different fittings and furniture within the public facilities, and were also utilised to maintain and perform perceived racial differences.

We have already seen that one of the main priorities of the colonial officials at the end of the nineteenth century was to install a water carriage system, so that water closets could replace the manual pail system of disposing of human waste. The fixation on the water carriage system makes it seem that this was the only “modern” solution to managing waste in the city, but there were in fact other sanitary systems competing for dominance in the nineteenth century. The earth closet system posed the biggest competition to the water closet system, but rather than offering an inherently better system

to the earth closet, the water closet offered a solution that appealed to a shifting set of values.

The earth closet was designed to capitalise on the perceived value of human waste as manure.³⁶ Instead of enabling the immediate removal of the waste, it used soil or sawdust to deaden the smell while the waste decomposed, after which it could be used on the land.³⁷ The water closet was based on the idea that human waste was the “ultimate valueless matter.”³⁸ In a context of increasing shame associated with bodily needs, the ability to make both waste and smell disappear with just the flush of a lever, and remove any further need to interact with that waste, was particularly appealing to the Victorian middle class.³⁹

Thus by the end of the nineteenth century, when the colonial officials in Cape Town were assessing a more comprehensive waste management system for the city, the dominant sanitary discourse in Britain had already positioned modes of dealing with waste on a linear progression – from pails, to earth closets, to water closets. For example, when commenting on the sanitary state of Johannesburg, a Mr Robert Boyle exclaimed that, “There is a splendid opening here for an improved dry-earth closet, as the [pail-closet] system at present employed is very unsatisfactory.”⁴⁰ Water closets, connected to underground drains, represented the ultimate distancing from the physical body and its needs, and thus represented the pinnacle of progress.

As we have already seen, the provision of public toilets began while the city was still in the process of establishing a city-wide water carriage system. While those facilities built in the centre of the city, such as Dock Road, Castle

³⁶ Goddard, “‘A Mine of Wealth’?” 274, 275.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 279.

³⁸ Moore, “Colonial Visions of ‘Third World’ Toilets”.

³⁹ There were other economic and transport factors that effected the increasing popularity of the water closet, which Goddard’s article explains in detail. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, the water closets ability to take waste out of sight and mind instantly was its particular appeal. Penner, “We Shall Deal Here with Humble Things,” 5; Goddard, “‘A Mine of Wealth’?” 281.

⁴⁰ Robert Boyle, “A Sanitary crusade through South Africa.” *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection* (Cape Town: Robert Boyle and Son, Limited, 1891).

Bridge and the Municipal Gardens, were able to install water closets that were connected to underground drains immediately, other facilities – such as those built in Salt River and Maitland – were originally built with pail or earth closets, and later replaced by water closets when those areas were connected to the drainage system.⁴¹ While the needs of some areas of the city may well have been placed before others, the delay in extending the drainage system to the suburbs was more a result of the fact that most of the suburbs were separate municipalities until 1913.

However, one area in which the extension of the drainage system was not even considered was at the Uitvlugt (later Ndabeni) location. The “Simpson latrine,” which was utilised at Uitvlugt, “consist[ed] of a raised platform with cement floor, in which spaces [were] sunk to receive stercus pails.”⁴² The pail system, which was described by the Mayor as “abominable and disgusting” in 1881, and clearly considered an intolerable system for the rest of the city, was apparently thought to be completely adequate for the black people who had been moved from their homes, ironically on the charge of living in insanitary conditions.⁴³ Nor was this just a result of the fact that “everything had to be done post-haste” in the location, as the Inspector of Public Works explained in his report, because in 1929, when the matter of a woman’s lavatory at the Ndabeni station was raised, there had still be no efforts to connect the area to the water-borne service – an idea that the District Inspector considered “impossible.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Dock Road, Castle Bridge and Municipal Gardens: *Mayor’s Minute* (1894), 40 [GPUCT].; Salt River: Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (16 April 1924) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File. E 453/5 [KAB].; Letter from the City Engineer to the Town Clerk (21 May 1924) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File. E 453/5 [KAB].; Letter from the City Engineer to the Town Clerk (18 February 1925). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File. E 453/5 [KAB]. Maitland: Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (7 October 1920). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File E453/5 [KAB].

⁴² G.49-1902. Report of the Chief Inspector of Public Works for the year 1901, 43 [GPUCT].

⁴³ *Mayor’s Minute* (1881), 2 [EHRIC].

⁴⁴ G.49-1902. Report of the Chief Inspector of Public Works for the year 1901, 47 [GPUCT].; Letter from the District Inspector to the System Manager (26 October 1929). SMC. Vol. 1/1/41. File 461/10 [KAB].

The toilets at Uitvlugt were not technically public toilets, in the sense that they were intended to provide for the residential needs of the ‘community,’ rather than to facilitate mobility in the urban public realm. But since they were built as communal facilities, rather than in each private home, and they were municipally provided, it seems appropriate to compare them to public toilets within the so-called city boundaries.

Connection to the water carriage system was therefore used to demarcate those that were considered residents of the city, and those that were not. Black people who had been forcibly relocated to Uitvlugt were clearly not considered part of the Cape Town “public”, and so even though the toilets provided for them resembled public facilities, they were not connected to the drainage system in the period under consideration. But the rate at which public toilets within the so-called boundaries of the city were connected to the drainage system was not so clearly linked to the race of the expected patrons.

TOILET STYLES: POSTURE, PRIVACY AND MATERIALITY

In addition to the variations in modes of dealing with waste, toilets also differed (and still do) in terms of the posture required of the body to use them. These, perhaps even more so than the mode of disposing of the waste, were wrapped up in ideas about civilisation. Alison Moore has shown that toilet styles – and the posture that they require of the body in particular – also existed in the colonial imagination on a linear plane of progress, with a squat style toilet considered the most primitive, and the seat style most civilised.⁴⁵ The squat toilet, like the name suggests, required the user to squat with their feet a few widths apart, as one would if defecating on the ground, while the

⁴⁵ The habit of sitting on stools, instead of in a squat position on the ground, had already been a “recurrent measure of racial worth in travel writing” for some time by the end of the nineteenth century, as Anne McClintock pointed out in *Imperial Leather*. Moore, “Colonial Visions of ‘Third World’ Toilets”; McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 244.

seat style required the user to sit, as if on a stool, with the bottom resting on the seat. Because the seat style was believed to be a European invention, and the squat style to be of Asian or African descent, they provided corporeal 'evidence' to support colonial notions that white people were a more advanced race than those of colour.⁴⁶

While this ideology certainly informed many of the decisions made regarding the design of toilets in public facilities, the Cape context was also more complicated than this. Firstly, toilets provided by the municipality were not only distinguished by posture, but also by the materials that they were made with, and the degree of privacy they afforded. Secondly, these differences in design elements were not merely shaped by ideas of white superiority, but also by a desire to create and maintain differences among people of colour. Furthermore, while the hypothetical toilet user was frequently discussed in gender-neutral terms in the records, it is also clear that toilets were generally designed with a male anatomy in mind.

Seat- and squat-style toilets in municipally provided public toilets were typically distinguished from each other in the records with racialized terms. For example, the record of the alterations that were made at the Early Morning Market toilet facility in 1899, specified the following accommodation:

- Two modern conveniences for ladies
- Two Mahomedan conveniences for ladies
- One lavatory
- Women's refreshment room, 8 feet by 7 feet 9 inches
- Men's refreshment room, 12 feet by 7 feet 9 inches
- Two modern W.C.'s for men.
- Two Mahomedan W.C.'s for men

⁴⁶ Moore, "Colonial Visions of 'Third World' Toilets".

One range of urinals for six persons.⁴⁷

The term “Mahomedan” is used to describe the squat toilet, and “convenience” and “W.C” are used interchangeably to refer to seat-style toilets. The practice of only using race to label the squat toilets can be seen in various other examples throughout the period, for both mixed and men only facilities. The 1907 plans for the proposed Grand Parade facility specified the need for both “ordinary” water closets and “oriental” water closets, while the records for the facilities at Riebeek Square, and Searle and Sir Lowry Street, both built in 1908, indicated the provision of “water closets” and “native closets.”⁴⁸ When discussions regarding the replacement of the temporary men’s facility on Darling Street were happening in 1925, the Medical Officer of Health suggested that,

It would probably be well to construct separate portions for Europeans and non-Europeans. It is suggested that the latter portion might consist of 5 w.c.’s (of which 2 would be the Malay type) and 8 urinal stalls.⁴⁹

These terms suggest that the colonial officials differentiated between the white norm and the ethnic ‘other.’ Terms such as “Mahomedan,” “Malay,” “Oriental,” and “Native” used to describe squat toilets clearly indicate a racial or ethnic group in mind, while there was rarely any racial description attached to seat style toilets, since white people and their toilet practices were positioned as the norm. The term “ordinary” closet further entrenched this idea. The “modern” label that was also frequently used to describe seat-style toilets, positioning them as an improved design on the racialised scale of toilet practices.

⁴⁷ *Mayor’s Minute* (1899). xxxix [GPUCT].

⁴⁸ Letter from the City Council to the Leeds Fireclay (Colonial) Company (12 February 1907). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/1/53 [KAB].; *Mayor’s Minute*. (1907), P-xxv [GPUCT].

⁴⁹ Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (16 May 1925). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463 [KAB].

The idea that the seat-style toilet was essentially European, and the squat essentially Asian or African – one which is still held by many today – was empirically wrong. Squat toilets were “the norm in France throughout the early twentieth century and exist there still in many old buildings,” according to Moore, a fact that even one colonial official acknowledged when discussions around a new toilet design for railways were underway in 1905: “I saw this style of latrine,” wrote the Northern Manager, “in a Railway station in Paris, some 14 or 15 years ago, vis. squatting with blocks for the feet.”⁵⁰ Moreover, for many countries outside of Europe, such as Japan, and some South American countries, the seat style toilet has been the norm for just as long, if not longer, than Britain.⁵¹ Therefore it is quite likely that there were “European”-looking people in Cape Town who preferred a squat-style toilet, and people of colour who preferred a seat-style toilet, but the strict racial designation of seat and squat style toilets would have ensured that they were denied this option.

Although these terms clearly position “European” seat style toilets as more advanced than the squat style toilets, there was little else to distinguish between white and coloured people within most of these facilities. While the urinals in the men’s sections were typically in the communal area with the basins, the closets in both the men and women’s sections – both squat and seated – were always enclosed in cubicles. From the floor plans of proposal records, and from personally inspecting those toilets from the period that are still standing, the cubicle partitions appear to have been solid floor to ceiling walls, with wooden doors to enter.⁵² Therefore both white and coloured users were afforded the same levels of privacy.

⁵⁰ Moore, “Colonial Visions of ‘Third World’ Toilets”; Northern Managers report, featured in a Letter from the Chief Traffic Manager to the General Manager of Railways, Cape Town (14 May 1905). CGR. Vol. 2/1/337. File 203/57 [KAB].

⁵¹ Moore, “Colonial Visions of ‘Third World’ Toilets”.

⁵² Colour plans of alterations made at the public toilet at the Kalk Bay Outspan (1928). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File 455/5 [KAB]; Plans of the proposed public toilet in Mowbray (5 December 1928).

Furthermore, facilities providing for both white and coloured users were frequently made from quality materials, with imported fittings. Commenting on the progress of the erections at Dock Road, in the Municipal Gardens and Early Morning Market – of which the latter two both provided for white and coloured users – the *Mayor's Minute* revealed that, “These buildings are elegant in design and furnished with the most approved sanitary fittings...”⁵³ When the first two had been completed, they were said to be “fitted with every convenience and finished off in a substantial manner with an attractive exterior. The interior fittings are of the best description procurable. They were imported from Messrs. Twyford & Co., Staffordshire...”⁵⁴ The Council was clearly quite proud of the materials used on their chalets in general, because after inspecting the toilet facilities at the Opera House, it was concluded that, “they did not fulfil the present requirements of such buildings as the chalets erected by the council,” and efforts were made to bring them inline with these standards.⁵⁵ Furthermore, many of the municipally provided facilities were not only sturdy buildings, with imported fittings, but were also intended to be aesthetically pleasing (a seemingly contradictory effort, considering the struggles to disguise the purpose of public toilets in many instances). For example, both the facilities built at the Municipal Gardens (1895) and at De Waal Park (1903), appear to have been influenced by pagoda style architecture, as they both feature small turrets and curved roofs. High ceilings and exposed rafters were also a feature of the Municipal Gardens ‘chalet.’⁵⁶ There is one example in the records, however, that shows a blatantly different set of design standards for white and coloured patrons. The following

3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File 455/5 [KAB]. Public Toilets observed in person: Municipal Gardens, De Waal Park, Greenmarket Square, Riebeeck Square, Friday 27 November 2015.

⁵³ *Mayor's Minute* (1895), 23 [GPUCT].

⁵⁴ *Mayor's Minute* (1895), 44 [GPUCT].

⁵⁵ *Mayor's Minute* (1896), 26 [GPUCT].

⁵⁶ Both of these buildings still stand today, and these observations were made in person, 27 November 2015; it is not clear however, if the public toilet at De Waal Park provided for both white and coloured users.

comment appeared in the *Mayor's Minute* for 1910, regarding the facility built at the corner of McGregor and De Villiers Street in District Six.

This convenience was originally constructed for the use of Mahomedans, and it was found necessary to convert it to the use of Europeans: this was done by reconstructing the conveniences, constructing a roof over the same, and providing a caretaker's room.⁵⁷

While the reconstruction of the toilets may not come as a surprise considering earlier evidence, the omission of such a basic element of shelter – a roof – for coloured patrons, shows that when white patrons were not also expected to use the facility, that basic design criteria was of a much lower standard.

Although the Medical Officer of Health specified that the “Malay” type should be provided for “Non-Europeans” in the Darling Street case, it was clear that “Non-European” did not include anyone who was not white. The city officials had already indicated that they made a distinction between coloured and black people in the city, by removing all the black people from their homes in the city, and restricting them to the location at Uitvlugt (later Ndabeni), while coloured people had been allowed to remain. The use of the penny charge to enter public toilets was also clearly aimed at excluding black people, in many cases.⁵⁸ One public place that did seem to provide toilets (of a sort) for black people, in addition to the Location, was railway stations. Although these required seat style posture of the body, individual seats were rare, and the most common design was the beam or rail system. This was essentially a long piece of wood or railing with holes cut and positioned over buckets, so that several people could sit on it at the same time. There were no partitions between the holes. The pails that were provided at the Uitvlugt location, as already mentioned, were also devoid of any kind of privacy

⁵⁷ *Mayor's Minute*, (1910), vii [GPUCT].

⁵⁸ Evidence of this is provided in chapter one. Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (14 December 1922). 3/CT Vol. 4/1/5/464. Folder: E452/5 [KAB].

between users – with up to twenty-eight seat/pail combinations lined up next to each other in one building.⁵⁹ Calling these places ‘buildings’ is even a stretch, considering that out of the thirty-four latrine buildings that were erected at Uitvlugt, twenty-nine of these did not even have roofs.⁶⁰ In a letter specifying the amendments to be made to a new toilet designed specifically for the use of black passengers at railway stations, the Medical Officer of Health from Cookhouse specified that, “Minor points are the roofing in of the entire close and urinal, and the adoption of such a form of screen at entrance to closet as the situation requires.”⁶¹

The fact that he had to articulate the need for a roof – a factor that was never mentioned in any of the records of the municipal public toilets built for white users– just serves to highlight what a basic and taken for granted element of building construction this was considered – and thus what an insult the lack of a roof was at facilities intended for the black community. While a screen in front of toilet facility entrances was a common feature of other municipal toilets, the Medical Officer of Health seems to be suggesting the need for a screen in front of individual closets, which implies that wall to wall cubicles and doors were not provided here, either.

Furthermore, there was no mention of fine imported fittings and materials in the records regarding the construction of facilities for black people. The Simpson latrines provided at Uitvlugt were made from cement, and supplied with “ordinary pails,” while none of these material details were provided regarding the railway stations.⁶²

⁵⁹ G.49-1902. Report of the Chief Inspector of Public Works for the Year 1901. 50 [GPUCT].

⁶⁰ G.49-1902. Report of the Chief Inspector of Public Works for the Year 1901. 48 [GPUCT].

⁶¹ Letter from the Railway Medical Officer at Cookhouse, enclosed in the letter from the Secretary of the Railway Sick Fund Board, Port Elizabeth, to the General Manager of Railways, Cape Town. (10 June 1905). CGR. Vol. 2/1/337. File 203/57 [KAB].

⁶² G.49-1902. Report of the Chief Inspector of Public Works for the Year 1901. The Native Location, Uitvlugt, 48 [GPUCT].

RMO LATRINES: DESIGNING FOR BLACK BODIES

One can argue that in spite of the great discrepancies in privacy afforded and materials used, the different posture styles were, at least initially, provided to meet the perceived preferences of different groups. However, in addition to the fact that the strict racial designation of seat and squat style toilets would have ensured that white or 'European' people in Cape Town with a preference for a squat toilet were denied this, and people of colour who preferred a seat style toilet were denied that – an even stronger case can be built against this argument by drawing on a set of exchanges between colonial officials about a new toilet that was specifically designed to improve on the facilities for black people at the railways. These discussions reveal firstly, that decisions about different people's bodily needs and preferences were generally made by officials without consulting them, and secondly, that it seemed particularly important to some officials to maintain different styles for different races, even in the face of evidence that members of those races did object to the toilets provided for them.

In 1904, two medical officers from Craddock and Cookhouse observed that black people in their areas disliked the beam-and-bucket style toilets that were provided for them at the railways, and so took it upon themselves to come up with a new design, which they named the RMO latrine.⁶³ Believing that the objection lay particularly in "sitting on a seat or beam when defecating," the new design allowed one to "squat a la nature," while "proper alignment of person and receptacle" was maintained by foot pedestals "placed in relation to the hole in the floor." In addition to providing (what they assumed) was a preferred position for the use of both men and women,

⁶³ Letter from the Railway Medical Officers at Cookhouse and Craddock, enclosed in letter from the Secretary of the Railway Sick Fund Board, Port Elizabeth to the General Manager of Railways, Cape Town (23 November 1904). CGR. Vol. 2/1/337. File 203/57 [KAB]; Letter from the Goods Superintendents Office to the Traffic Manager, Cape Town (10 April 1905) in *ibid.*

the officers also believed the new design would appeal to the railway officials from the perspective of efficient waste management. The new design directed the urine and solids into separate systems, which, the officers argued, meant that the solids did not have to be removed as frequently.⁶⁴ Plans of the RMO latrine were sent off to various Cape Town officials connected to the railways – stations masters, goods superintendents, inspectors, traffic and general managers – with a request for feedback.

The responses from the various officials fell into three main categories. About a third seemed to welcome the new design. The Station Masters at Maitland described it as an “excellent idea,” while a manager from the Midlands thought it “appear[ed] highly satisfactory,” and suggested that it be “generally adopted at other stations where there is a large Native passenger traffic.”⁶⁵ The District Traffic Inspector believed it was not only suitable for black people, but that it “would be as well to make this a standard pattern for all closets,” especially, he argued, considering the fact that, “80% [of white passengers] do not sit on the seats [at country stations], but stand on same in the posture similar to that of the Kaffir using the new designed one.”⁶⁶

The second group thought that the new design would be suitable for areas where there were a lot of black people, but did not think it suitable for the majority of coloured passengers in their areas. According to station master J MacKay, “[he had] no doubt that the design [was] imminently suitable for the Midland and Eastern Systems, but what [they required] on the Western [was] accommodation of the old type for coloured passengers.” This response is slightly confusing, because the new design was extremely similar to the “old

⁶⁴ Letter from the Railway Medical Officers at Cookhouse and Cradock, enclosed in letter from the Secretary of the Railway Sick Fund Board, Port Elizabeth to the General Manager of Railways, Cape Town (23 November 1904) in *ibid.*

⁶⁵ Letter from the Station Master, Maitland to the Traffic Manager, Cape Town (8 March 1905) in *ibid.*; Opinion from a Midlands Manager, featured in a Letter from the Chief Traffic Manager to the General Manager of Railways, Cape Town (14 May 1905) in *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Letter from the Traffic Inspectors Office to the Traffic Manager, Cape Town (20 December 1905) in *ibid.*

type" usually provided for coloured users, but nevertheless, he seems to feel that it was important to retain "latrines" for "natives" and the "old type" for coloured passengers.⁶⁷ The District Traffic Inspector from Worcester made a similar argument; "my opinion is that at large Kaffir centres the proposed closet will meet the requirements admirably, however, the Natives in my district (Cape Boys) make use of the ordinary closets, and, the few Kaffirs to be found, have been educated up to doing likewise ..."⁶⁸ He suggested that both coloured ("Cape Boys") and black passengers in his area (unlike those at "large Kaffir centres") had been "educated up" to using the "ordinary" or seated style closet, and thus implied that returning to a squat-style closet would be a step backwards.

The third and largest group thought the RMO closet was a terrible idea, either because they refused to believe that black people did object to the beam, or because they thought a squat design too offensive to comprehend. For example, the South Western Manager "[had] not heard of any objection to the part of natives to use the seats or beam, and [he] should have thought the beam and bucket arrangement best in every way..." The Goods Superintendent was similarly adamant that there was "no doubt that the existing accommodation ... suits the average Kaffir fairly well," for in his "15 years experience on the Eastern systems, and at stations on that system where large numbers of "raw" and other Kaffirs daily entrained and detrained, [he] did not find that the Kaffir men objected in any way to using the accommodation provided."⁶⁹

The Easter Manager clearly just found the idea of a squat toilet intolerable, stating that

⁶⁷ Letter from the Station Master to the Traffic Manager, Cape Town (3 April 1905) in *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Letter from the District Traffic Inspector, Worcester to the Traffic Manager, Cape Town (14 April 1905) in *ibid.*

⁶⁹ Letter from the Goods Superintendents Office to the Traffic Manager, Cape Town (10 April 1905) in *ibid.*

[t]he native has to squat directly over the bucket, which must be offensive, even to him. There is also some danger of accident from the native losing his balance and falling backwards, whilst if he should happen to lean forward to escape the effluvia, the urinal trough will probably be fouled with excreta.⁷⁰

DESPOTISM OF DESIGN

A common theme in all the responses was the fact that none of the opinions expressed were based on actual consultation with the people for whom the new latrine was designed, but rather on what they had heard from other officials. For example, Mr H.S. Ball, from the Goods Superintendents Office, was not convinced that men of colour had any objection to sitting on a beam, “provided they were kept clean,” but this opinion was largely based on what he had been told about the practices of men at Uitvlugt.⁷¹ The Chief Traffic Manager seemed to think the new design a good idea overall, but he too had based his opinion on the reports of “the practical men with experience of the native,” rather than from discussions with people of colour themselves.⁷² But even these “practical men” whose opinion he valued seemed to rely merely on what they had “heard,” and indicated no evidence of seeking out a more comprehensive understanding of people of colour’s preferences.⁷³ While the Medical Officers of Health from Craddock and Cookhouse indicated a concern for the physical comfort of people of colour, there was also no evidence that their new design had been initiated by discussions with people of colour.

⁷⁰ Easter Manager’s opinion, featured in a Letter from the Chief Traffic Manager to the General Manager of Railways, Cape Town (14 May 1905) in *ibid.*

⁷¹ Letter from the Goods Superintendents Office to the Traffic Manager, Cape Town (10 April 1905) in *ibid.*

⁷² Letter from the Chief Traffic Manager to the General Manager of Railways, Cape Town (14 May 1905) in *ibid.*

⁷³ Comment from “South Western” featured in a Letter from the Chief Traffic Manager to the General Manager of Railways, Cape Town (14 May 1905) in *ibid.*

“PROGRESS”, RACE AND TOILET STYLES

The idea that toilet styles existed on a scale of progress, with the seated “European” style at the pinnacle, that was evident in the municipal toilet records, can also be clearly seen in two other groups of respondents.⁷⁴ The Worcester Inspector seemed proud that both the “Cape Boys” (coloured men) and “Natives” (black people) in his area had been “educated” up to using “ordinary closets,” and the Eastern Manager believed the “native has been educated to use the rail, and will probably aspire to the ordinary seat.”⁷⁵ Even the medical officers from Craddock and Cookhouse, who generally displayed more progressive racial attitudes towards toilet habits than their colleagues drew on the discourse of education, stating that “the use of closets, even by whites, is not instinctive and education by experience as well as precept is necessary.”⁷⁶

But the idea that the posture required by the toilet was a clear indication of social progress was not quite as straightforward in this context, because although the squat toilet was clearly believed to be inferior to the seat, Malay or coloured people were still imagined to be higher up on the social scale than black passengers, for whom seats (which allowed for a supposedly superior posture when defecating) had previously been provided (albeit without any privacy, and not drawing on the same technology as those provided for white passengers.) For example, after stating that he did not believe black people objected to the beam and bucket system, the Goods Superintendent went on to state that

⁷⁴ Moore, “Colonial Visions of ‘Third World’ Toilets”.

⁷⁵ Eastern Manager’s opinion, featured in a Letter from the Chief Traffic Manager to the General Manager of Railways, Cape Town (14 May 1905). CGR. Vol. 2/1/337. File 203/57 [KAB].

⁷⁶ Letter from the Railway Medical Officers at Cookhouse and Craddock, enclosed in letter from the Secretary of the Railway Sick Fund Board, Port Elizabeth to the General Manager of Railways, Cape Town (23 November 1904) in *ibid.*

A type not unlike this RMO type of closet is already in use at the passenger station here for the Malays, who it is said have conscientious scruples which prevent their adopting our method, but the Kaffir has no such scruples, and given the opportunity, is generally quite prepared to adopt European customs in this and almost all other respects.⁷⁷

Although he clearly positions “our method” – or the seated WC – as the best toilet style, his comment reveals an additional layer regarding his attitude towards black and coloured people. Coloured people, or “Malays” were, if not fully respected for their squat preference, at least excused by the fact that “they had scruples.” This toilet practice was understood as being part of a set of specific cultural practices. Black passengers could not win either way: if they were not accustomed to “European style” closets it was because they were “uneducated,” and if they were willing to adapt to “European style” toilets it was because they “had no such scruples,” or clear customs of their own, which would prevent them from adopting “our method.”

In addition to complicating Moore’s theory about the relationship between toilet posture and racial distinctions, the responses of the latter two groups of respondents indicate more than anything else, a discomfort with the idea of black people and coloured people using the same kinds of toilets. Because toilet styles were a way in which social difference was believed to be enacted, the idea of a single habit developing among coloured and black people may have fed fears about black and coloured people forming a closer bond; as a united majority, they would pose a significant threat to white supremacy.

In the initial explanation that accompanied the RMO design plans, Railway Medical Officer, J.C. Mitchell, clearly specified that, “the closet works equally

⁷⁷ Letter from the Goods Superintendents Office to the Traffic Manager, Cape Town (10 April 1905) in *ibid.*

well for Males and Females.”⁷⁸ And yet the responses from the officials showed (perhaps a typical?) lack of sensitivity to the different needs, preferences and experiences of women. Again, they can be organised into three main camps.

A few responses clearly only conceived of the design in relation to male bodies. The District Traffic Inspector from Worcester referred to the “Natives in [his] district” as “Cape Boys” – not only using a derogatory diminutive term for men, but also erasing women from the category of coloured people and the discussion as a whole.⁷⁹ Similarly, the Eastern Manager only used male pronouns throughout his letter, referring to “The native” with “him,” “his” and “he.”⁸⁰

The second, and largest group used technically gender-neutral terms in their responses, such as “passengers,” “natives”, and most offensive of all, “the kaffir.”⁸¹ While these might be preferable to male-specific terms, the lack of distinction between men and women indicates an assumption that men and women would have experienced the new toilet design in the same way, had the same needs and concerns, and that they could make decisions on their behalf without any consultation.

Only one official clearly distinguished between men and women in his comments. Although adamant that “Kaffir men” did not object to the beam and bucket system, and that the RMO design was not necessary for them, the

⁷⁸ Letter from the Railway Medical Officers at Cookhouse and Cradock, enclosed in letter from the Secretary of the Railway Sick Fund Board, Port Elizabeth to the General Manager of Railways, Cape Town (23 November 1904). CGR. Vol. 2/1/337. File 203/57 [KAB].

⁷⁹ Letter from the District Traffic Inspector, Worcester to the Traffic Manager, Cape Town (14 April 1905) in *ibid*.

⁸⁰ Eastern Managers report, featured in a Letter from the Chief Traffic Manager to the General Manager of Railways, Cape Town (14 May 1905) in *ibid*.

⁸¹ Letter from the Station Master to the Traffic Manager, Cape Town (3 April 1905) in *ibid*; Northern Managers opinion featured in Letter from the Chief Traffic Manager to the General Manager of Railways, Cape Town (14 May 1905) in *ibid*; South Western Managers opinion featured in Letter from the Chief Traffic Manager to the General Manager of Railways, Cape Town (14 May 1905) in *ibid*; Midlands Manager featured in Letter from the Chief Traffic Manager to the General Manager of Railways, Cape Town (14 May 1905) in *ibid*; Letter from the Traffic Inspectors Office to the Traffic Manager, Cape Town (20 December 1905) in *ibid*.

Goods Superintendent did nevertheless concede that “The women, however, much avoided [the beam and buckets at other stations] and very seldom visited them,” and suggested that “accommodation as provided for Europeans should perhaps be supplied” for black women and children in the station.⁸² He does not give much thought to why they might avoid these places – or consider that elements such as the lack of partitions along the beams or between the seats. But he does acknowledge that black people were not one homogenous group, and that both gender and age could affect their experience and preference.

Although the Medical Officer of Health specifically drew attention to gender in his initial proposal, he undermines himself a few months later. After perusing some of the responses from the other officials, he wrote again to specify a few amendments – mostly of a technical nature – to the design. One of these points was that,

In the Female closet it is found that the stercus buckets invariably contain a large quantity of urine. This I attribute to the act of urination being performed in the reverse position to that in which the closet is intended to be used.⁸³

The fact that he attributes the “large quantities of urine” in the stercus bucket to “the act of urination being performed in the reverse position to that in which the closet is intended to be used” clearly indicates that the toilet was not designed with female anatomy in mind. The fact that it did not work as efficiently when women used it was attributed to a fault in the user, rather than a fault in the design.

⁸² Letter from the Goods Superintendents Office to the Traffic Manager, Cape Town (10 April 1905). CGR. Vol. 2/1/337. File 203/57 [KAB].

⁸³ Letter from the Railway Medical Officer at Cookhouse, enclosed in the letter from the Secretary of the Railway Sick Fund Board, Port Elizabeth, to the General Manager of Railways, Cape Town. (10 June 1905) in *ibid.*

CONCLUSION

Design in public toilets can be understood as operating on various levels. At the level of the exterior, a general anxiety surrounding bodies and bodies that excreted waste influenced efforts to disguise the purpose of public toilets as much as possible, and design features such as underground plans, screens to obscure entrances, and different entrance orientations for men and women ensured that these values were impressed upon those that used them.

At the level of infrastructural design, there did not seem to be a significant relationship between race and the rate at which public toilets were connected to the water carriage system *within* the so-called boundaries of the city, but it was clearly used as an additional way to exclude black people from the new sanitary order of the city.

Within public toilets, the belief in the racial difference of bodies, and the desire to maintain and perform these differences, shaped the various designs of toilet features. While there is no doubt that different groups and cultures had developed different preferences for the posture required of the body while voiding their bowels or bladder, the strict racial designation, and the lack of consultation with members of the public, indicate that provision of squat and seat style toilets in municipal toilets reflected a desire to distinguish between racial groups, rather than accommodate preferences. Squat toilets were imagined as requiring a more primitive posture to that required on a seat style toilet, and the fact that these were provided for coloured and white users respectively reinforced colonial notions of white supremacy. However, the relationship between toilet posture and race as it played out in Cape Town was not as linear as has often been imagined. Levels of privacy, and building and material quality were also used, not only to distinguish white people from people of colour, but also to ensure that coloured and black people retained different toilet “styles”.

Furthermore, in the same way that women, and women's bodily needs and preferences, were missing from the discussions about the volume and location of public toilets, they were also overlooked in the discussions and decisions made about the design of public toilets. This would have affected women on a much more physical level. Even Medical Officers of Health, who purported to have thought of women too, were surprised when a toilet designed with male bodies in mind did not work as "effectively" when women used them.

Chapter Three

“The People We Have to Contend With”:

Access, Use, Contestations

In Chapter One, we have seen that one of the factors behind the drive to shift the habit of public urination to a private cubicle, and to have (some) toilets connected to a citywide water carriage sewer system, was the belief that the presence of “filth” in the city was contaminating at a physical and moral level. These concerns were frequently used discriminately, and mapped onto particular bodies, in ways that upheld the social hierarchy of the city. When white men were arrested for urinating in public, colonial officials were concerned that they were being humiliated, but when poor men, or men of colour were arrested, it was because they were causing a “nuisance.”

Chapter Two pointed out, among other things, that different kinds of closets were provided inside public toilets for different races. This was not done to accommodate the range of preferences as one might expect to find in a contemporary cosmopolitan city, but rather to ensure that difference –

conceived in racial terms – was performed at even the most intimate and corporeal level of toilet practice.

These kinds of sanitary changes were, according to Michelle Allen, “necessarily disruptive to the routines and sensibilities of urban inhabitants.”¹ They necessitated not only that people adapted to tending to their bodily needs inside a cubicle space, as opposed to outdoors, potentially in the close vicinity of another toilet user, but that they adapted to the new technology, and the potentially new posture that this required of their bodies, as well as the various other elements of etiquette that came with public toilets. By acknowledging that these changes would have “affected people in very different ways depending on their spatial and social locations,” and that they would have elicited a variety of different responses, we open up a range of new questions regarding the experience of Cape Town residents in this period.² How did people feel about shifting the location, style and meaning of their toilet practice? Did people readily adapt to this new convention, or were they reluctant to change this long-standing habit? And how did they respond to the various mechanisms of control that we have seen associated with these facilities?

By focusing on the everyday experiences and habits of the residents of Cape Town, we provide a counter-narrative to the colonial one espoused in the archives, and disrupt the notion of the standard homogenous toilet user, distinguished only by categories of race, class and gender. This allows us to create a more nuanced and complex picture.³ Furthermore, it enables us to complicate the normative perspective that this particular form of sanitary reform was (and is) desirable for everyone.⁴

¹ Allen. *Cleansing the City*, 2.

² *Ibid.*

³ Brewer, “Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life,” 96-97.

⁴ Allen. *Cleansing the City*, 17.

There is a risk, however, in the endeavour of trying to reconstruct the daily routines of everyday people, of unwittingly endorsing the colonial logic. For example, concerns about “filth,” and the colonial agenda of maintaining white male (middle class) supremacy did not disappear just by shifting the habit of public urination/defecation to a cubicle. They merely manifested in different ways – namely in assumptions about who would use the public toilets, how particular groups of people would behave inside public toilets, and the way in which they treated the facilities. As a historian, it is particularly tempting to try to contradict these kinds of views – to show that people of colour were not more likely than white people to transgress toilet etiquette, for example. However, Anderson cautions against this strategy in his study of American colonialism in the Philippines:

To attempt at this distance to determine the “true” pattern of Filipino and American excretory practices would be unrewarding at best. Even if such a positive reckoning were possible, its results would contribute little to our understanding of the contemporary meaning of an objectifying corporeal poetics. Moreover, an exonerative ethnography risks perpetuating the frames of reference that gave rise to the charges in the first place.⁵

In other words, given the nature of the colonial archive, the process of accurately reconstructing the intimate toilet-related habits of a population as heterogeneous as Cape Town’s in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century seems virtually impossible. But perhaps more importantly – even if it were possible – it would risk reinforcing the idea that there is an inherent moral value attached to bodily habits by which we can essentialise different groups of people.

It is also easy to make the mistake of representing the inhabitants of Cape Town, and their attitudes towards toilet related behaviour, in binary terms –

⁵ Anderson, “Excremental Colonialism,” 644.

as colonial officials versus toilet users; force versus resistance. In reality, it was much more complex than this. The fact that many of the inhabitants of Cape Town were oppressed by the hegemonic culture of the city did not mean that they necessarily rejected the culture and the set of assumptions surrounding toilet use that came with it. And while many toilet users did actively subvert the toilet etiquette that developed around public toilets, both toilet users, and the attendants who regulated them, would have negotiated the use and meaning of public toilets in multiple and nuanced ways – the complexity of which may be lost under a blanket term such as “resistance.”

HABITANTS AND HABITS: COLONIAL ASSUMPTIONS

In 1888 the House of Assembly commissioned a select committee to investigate, among other things, the “Sanitary Condition of Cape Town and the Suburbs.” The Committee, consisting of seven Council members, interviewed a number of prominent, and mostly medically trained, men from various parts of the city. When asked to comment on what the committee described as the “unbearable” condition of the city during the last summer, a Mr T. J. Reilly was quick to blame the population: “A great deal of that is owing to our inhabitants, and the people we have to contend with,” he argued. Although he did not specify any particular group in the statement, Mr Reilly clearly did not include all inhabitants of the city in this statement, as he went on to clarify that it was only the “extreme ends of the town” where there was a particular problem, and which “render[ed] effectual sanitary arrangements ... a matter of very great difficulty.”⁶ Considering that the southern and Atlantic suburbs were not considered part of the Municipality of Cape Town until 1913, Mr Reilly was most likely referring to the areas of

⁶ Interview with Mr. T.J. Reilly (2 July 1888), A.9-'88. Reports of Select Committees: Committee on Cape Town Sanitation, 34 [GPUCT].

District Six, the Malay Quarter (known as Bo-Kaap today), and the area around the Docks – which bordered the city on three sides.⁷

With its dense housing and low rents, District Six was the first home for many immigrants to the city. Although “ethnically and socially mixed” from early on, by the 1870s the more socially mobile had begun to migrate to the more comfortable southern suburbs. Despite the many local relief institutes in the District, and the sense of community that it is known for, poverty was also a characteristic element of the area from early on.⁸ The Malay Quarter got its name from the large population of Muslims who lived in the area, and the distinctive Mosques and Madrassahs. But like District Six, it was also characterised by a mix of residents. Because of its proximity to the Docks, many waterfront workers – boatmen and fishermen – settled here alongside artisans.⁹ Even closer to the Docks, in the area known as District One, behind the Fish market, were the barracks where many of the Dock labourers were housed by their employees. This area had a reputation by the end of the 1880s as one of the “most neglected” areas in the city.¹⁰ City officials were appalled at the state of the overcrowded area in 1901, when the plague epidemic galvanised a thorough inspection of the area.¹¹

As the areas in which the majority of people of colour in the city lived, as well as the poorer classes, the type of people whom Mr Reilly believed the Council had to “contend with” becomes a little clearer. Dr. Fisk, another of the prominent men interviewed by the committee, had no reservations stating his assumptions clearly. When questioned by the committee about his views on

⁷ Bickford-Smith et al., *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century*, 46.

⁸ Worden et al., *Cape Town*, 250-251.

⁹ *Ibid*, 249-250.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 225.

¹¹ Howard Philips. “‘Black October’: The Impact of the Spanish Influenza Epidemic of 1918 on South Africa”, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town (1984), 79.

the sanitary state of the city, he confidently pointed to the “dirty habits of the coloured population” as a major cause.¹²

Exactly what these “dirty habits” were Dr Fisk did not clarify. Referring to the people living on the “extreme ends of town,” Mr Reilly complained that “it takes a great deal to keep them and their premises in anything like a clean and orderly condition,” and highlighted unflushed drains and the act of putting house refuse out on the street— two matters which were less matters of individual habit, and more matters of municipal service.¹³ Dr C.L Herman also gives us another clue as to what were considered “dirty habits.” Although he did not attribute any of the contemporary sanitary concerns to particular people, he did suggest that he thought a charge for the removal of night soil from residential properties a bad idea, as “the poorer class of people would make use of the ‘outside.’”¹⁴

Unflushed drains, refuse in the street, and relieving ones bowels or bladder in the street – these are all issues of matter being “out of place.”¹⁵ As far as the officials were concerned, the public street was no longer the place for them to be. But clearly many residents of the city did not share this new ideology, and perhaps more importantly, the infrastructure to support this new ideology was not yet in place.¹⁶ For example, Dr John Hewat, the medical officer of health for the Woodstock Municipality at the time, reported that the area was in a “deplorable state,” largely because “there are no sanitary arrangements at

¹² Interview with Dr Fisk (21 June 1888), A.9-'88. Reports of Select Committees: Committee on Cape Town Sanitation, 1. GPUCT. Mr Charles Selwyn Powrie, the chairman of the Claremont municipality, was also quick to express his frustrations regarding the “large Malay population” in the suburb, which, he stated, “require[d] a great deal of looking after.” Interview with Mr. Charles Selwyn Powrie (9 July 1888). A.9-'88. Reports of Select Committees: Committee on Cape Town Sanitation, 70 [GPUCT].

¹³ Interview with Mr. T.J. Reilly (2 July 1888), A.9-'88. Reports of Select Committees: Committee on Cape Town Sanitation, 34 [GPUCT].

¹⁴ Interview with Dr. C.L. Herman (21 June 1888), A.9-'88. Reports of Select Committees: Committee on Cape Town Sanitation, 10 [GPUCT].

¹⁵ Douglas. *Purity and Danger*, 36; Allen, *Cleansing the City*, 14.

¹⁶ Paul Maylam has highlighted “contradiction and dysfunctionality” as a key characteristic of both segregation and Apartheid. Maylam, “Explaining the Apartheid City,” 34; Von Schnitzler has also highlighted this tension between ideology and infrastructure. Von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure*, 118.

all. There is a tub system carried on, but it is entirely without supervision." When the committee questioned his assertion that there was "no recognised system of removal under control," he responded that there was "supposed to be, but it is not carried out. The slops and refuse from the houses simply run into the small drains at the side of the houses...but this is never carried away, and just sinks into the soil."¹⁷ When questioned on his views on the best method of sewage removal, Dr Herman was forthright in his opinion that it would be "homicidal to compel a man to connect [his home] with a drain that is defective," highlighting that the technology for waste removal in 1880 was not yet keeping pace with the sanitary rhetoric of the governing class.¹⁸ They therefore relieved the tension between the ideology and the inadequate infrastructure by shifting the blame to the individual bodily techniques of particular people.

In the interview with Mr Reilly, members of the committee challenged his assertion that the problem was only on the "extreme ends of town," drawing his attention to St Georges Street in the centre of town, as well as Shortmarket and Longmarket Streets. But they seemed not only to accept his assertion that it was the *habits* of particular people that were to blame, but were quick to blur the lines between the habit and the very essence of the people in question. "Dirty habits" soon became "these dirty people."¹⁹

Maynard Swanson has written at lengths about this "sanitation syndrome" that developed in the Cape at the turn of the century. According to this narrative, "overcrowding, slums, public health and safety, often seen in the light of class and ethnic differences in industrial societies, were in the colonial context perceived largely in terms of colour differences."²⁰ During the Anglo-

¹⁷ Interview with Dr. John Hewat (28 June 1888), A.9-'88. Reports of Select Committees: Committee on Cape Town Sanitation, 28 [GPUCT].

¹⁸ Interview with Dr. C.L Herman (21 June 1888), in *ibid.*

¹⁹ Interview with Mr. T.J. Reilly (2 July 1888), A.9-'88. Reports of Select Committees: Committee on Cape Town Sanitation, 40 [GPUCT].

²⁰ Swanson, "The Sanitation Syndrome," 387.

Boer War, the city saw an influx of refugees from the interior of the country. While relief organisations were set up, and white male refugees were housed in barracks at the Docks, coloured and black men were given no assistance whatsoever, and they were left to fend for themselves with the rest of Cape Town's poor and marginalised.²¹ The growing number of people of colour in the city, but black rural migrants in particular, increased already existing white fears, as expressed by many of the medical men interviewed by the select committee in 1880. These fears were catalysed in 1901, when Bubonic Plague arrived in Cape Town. Despite the fact that the number of infections among black people were less than those among coloured and white people, the Plague Administration leapt at the chance to create a "permanent location for the black labouring class" outside of the city, under the guise of public health. Thus the first forced removals were initiated, and some 8000 black residents were rounded up from around the city, although mostly from District Six, and forced onto a makeshift location at Uitvlugt Farm, which was later named Ndabeni.²²

Despite barring the majority of black people from the city, the perception that the heterogeneous nature of the residents was to blame for the sanitary "problems" the city faced, did not dissipate. Reflecting on the previous three decades, in 1911, the Mayor made the following comment:

It is only a few years since the citizens of Capetown writhed under the imputation that their City was one of the dirtiest in the world, whereas they can now confidently assert its claim to rank as one of the cleanest. When one considers the large area encompassed by the City boundaries, the widely distributed population and the cosmopolitan character of the inhabitants as compared with most other large cities,

²¹ Bickford-Smith et al, *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century*, 13.

²² Swanson, "The Sanitation Syndrome," 392-393.

especially in Great Britain and the Continent of Europe, the result achieved does eminent credit to the City.²³

Nor did this kind of narrative subside as the city's waste management infrastructure expanded and developed. Rather, it manifested in the way that inhabitants of the city were expected to interact with toilet-related infrastructure.

FROM THE STREET TO THE CUBICLE: SHIFTING A PUBLIC HABIT

Although the colonial archive does not give us a direct window onto the attitudes, experiences and particular routines of residents of Cape Town, by mapping the public toilets that were built between 1895 and 1939, I have been able to get a sense of the spatial distribution of these facilities. In combination with exchanges between officials, and letters from residents of the city, requesting additional facilities, it is possible to get a sense of how the presence or lack of facilities might have affected people's corporeal habits in the city.

There is no doubt that for some residents, the convenience of tending to their bodily needs wherever they could find an inconspicuous area outdoors, outweighed the option of walking to a public toilet, especially considering these frequently came with a charge. For example, in 1907 the Street Inspector wrote to the City Engineer, to complain about the state of Orphan Lane, a passage between Loop Street and Orphan Street in the City Centre. "The said passage," he wrote, "is in a very filthy condition with pieces of fish and skins of sheep heads, and old rags and human excrement, and smells very offensive, and is liable to cause disease in the vicinity."²⁴ The presence of decomposing food and rags suggest that this street was a dumping ground

²³ *Mayor's Minute* (1911), xiii [GPUCT].

²⁴ Letter from Street Inspector to the City Engineer (4 January 1907), 3/CT. Vol. 4/2/1/1/53 [KAB].

for various kinds of waste, but clearly people also used it to relieve their bowels as well. While there was no public toilet on this particular street, the facility at the Municipal Gardens was approximately 500m away, or a five-minute walk.²⁵ Clearly, for some, Orphan Lane trumped a walk to a public facility nearby.

There is evidence that public urination and defecation continued to some extent throughout the period. The records of arrests and summonses in the *Mayor's Minute* between 1893 and 1904 reveal that people continued to be arrested and summonsed for these practices, and there was no significant pattern in these figures to suggest a decrease in the habit. For example, in 1893, 145 people were arrested for "Committing nuisance."²⁶ In 1896 this figure had dropped to 56, but by 1898 it was back up at 130.²⁷ By 1904, which was the last year that this category was used as a charge for arrest, 159 people were arrested – the highest amount in the ten-year period.²⁸ Considering how small the Sanitary Department's staff was at this point, it is also likely that there was far more people engaging in this practice than were arrested or summonsed. It is harder to tell what the rates of this practice were between 1905 and 1914, because the categories of "Committing nuisance" and "Indecent Exposure" seem to have been replaced with the even wider-encompassing "Indecent Behaviour" and "Riotous or Indecent Behaviour." While these charges would also have been used to arrest people for public urination or defecation, they could also have incorporated acts such as drunkenness, having sex in public, or fighting, for example. This would explain the much greater number of arrests for "Riotous or Indecent Behaviour" – 258 in 1909, which had increased to 363 in 1914.²⁹

²⁵ *Mayor's Minute* (1894), 11 [GPUCT].

²⁶ *Mayor's Minute* (1893), 56 [GPUCT].

²⁷ *Mayor's Minute* (1896), cxlv [GPUCT]; *Mayor's Minute* (1898), clix [GPUCT].

²⁸ *Mayor's Minute* (1904), iv [GPUCT].

²⁹ *Mayor's Minute* (1909), ii [GPUCT]; *Mayor's Minute* (1914), ii [GPUCT].

There is also clear evidence, however, especially from the 1920s onwards, that residents of the city were frequently opting to use public toilets, and were distressed when they found themselves in situations without one nearby. The majority of recorded cases of public urination or defecation in Cape Town in the post-war period occurred in areas where there was no public toilet in the near vicinity, or where a public toilet that had previously been open had been locked, or was no longer functioning. Thus inadequate volume of facilities and poor maintenance frequently posed an obstacle for those that sought out these facilities. By 1914, although thirty-four public toilets had been proposed for the city, only twenty-six had been built, and two of these had been closed, so there were only twenty-four toilets in the city. As we saw in the 1880s, however, situations that arose chiefly from infrastructural inadequacies were also frequently perceived as evidence of deviant behaviour from would-be toilet users.

In 1920 the Assistant Medical Officer of Health reported that a

cause of complaint is the natives working, loading sand into trolleys and tracks below the Camps Bay Hotel, making use of the bush and rocks along the beach below Victoria Road. At the time of my inspection there were seven labourers working there but no sanitary convenience provided for them.³⁰

Without any public toilets nearby or facilities provided for them, the labourers would have had no other choice but to relieve themselves where they could on the land, even if they would have preferred to use a public toilet. The fact that they selected inconspicuous areas of “bush and rocks along the beach” suggests that they sought privacy, and might even have wanted to ensure that their waste was not in any path or street where people might encounter it.

³⁰ Letter from the Assistant Medical Officer of Health to the Medical Officer of Health (7 December 1920), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File E439/5 [KAB].

Likewise, the women and children that frequented Claremont Park also had to resort to using “certain secluded parts” of the gardens to relieve themselves, because the closest public toilet was about a kilometre away in Ralph Street, Claremont, which would have been about a fifteen-minute walk for a child.³¹ While the Park Constable reported several complaints from members of the public that these areas were getting “fouled,” he also acknowledged that, “on more than one occasion people have been in considerable distress.”³² This suggests that that by the late 1920s, relieving oneself in public was no longer a socially acceptable habit, and was not a choice that many people, and women in particular, would have made had they not been desperate.

A similar situation was occurring around the same time at the Rochester Recreation Grounds in Salt River, where large groups of children made use of the fields on a regular basis. With no public toilets in the vicinity, the Woodstock and Salt River Ratepayers Association (WSRRA) were determined that the HBRC should provide temporary facilities, as the “conditions in the meantime are very awkward,” and the “matter is one of urgency,” as the Hon. Secretary, Clare R. Goodlatte, described it.³³ When the Town Clerk regretfully denied this request due to a lack of funds, Miss Goodlatte wrote again, pressing the committee to reconsider their request, emphasising that it was “a little indecent to have no least sanitary provision where so many are congregated.”³⁴ When the Town Clerk again repudiated this request, Goodlatte wrote on behalf of the WSRRA for a third time:

³¹ *Mayor's Minute* (1921), xv [GPUCT].

³² Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Health and Buildings Regulation Committee (18 April 1928), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464/ File E456/5 [KAB].

³³ Letter from Clare R. Goodlatte (Hon. Secretary of the Woodstock and Salt River Ratepayers Association) to the Town Clerk (3May 1927), 3/CT. Vol. 4/2/1/1/397 [KAB].

³⁴ Letter from the Town Clerk to Miss C.R. Goodlatte (Hon. Secretary of the Woodstock and Salt River Ratepayers Association) (23May 1927), in *ibid*; Letter from Clare R. Goodlatte (Hon. Secretary of the Woodstock and Salt River Ratepayer's Association) to the Town Clerk (5 June 1927), in *ibid*.

This Association ventures respectfully to remind the Health Committee that temporary conveniences are insisted upon in the case of builders employing only a few men. They are much more necessary for a crowd of children.

The Health Committee rightly lays great stress on matters of public health and decency, and it is hardly credible that it should refuse so small a necessary provision.³⁵

In addition to revealing that the children of the Rochester area were not very high up on the HBRC's list of priorities, this example also emphasises that the public urination and defecation was not just socially unacceptable by this time, but had also become a source of distress, for adult residents of Cape Town, at least. Phrases such as "very awkward," "indecent," and "urgent" to describe the situation, as well as the WSRRA's insistence on a temporary facility, reinforce the argument that public toilets had become the only appropriate place in which to relieve oneself in the city, when away from ones home.

The fact that people continued to urinate or defecate at the location of public toilets in the city, even if they were no longer open, is further evidence of how much attitudes towards public relief had shifted. In a letter to the Town Clerk in 1908, the Medical Officer of Health revealed that although the urinals at the St Andrew's chalet had been fastened up a few months previously, "nuisances are created around the wall outside."³⁶ The fact that he suggested that, "two water closets be constructed there," rather than just opening up the urinals, suggests that this "nuisance" was not just urine, but faeces too. While it is not clear why the urinals were closed up in the first place, it is clear that

³⁵ Letter from the Town Clerk to Miss C.R. Goodlatte (Hon. Secretary of the Woodstock and Salt River Ratepayers' Association) (20 June 1927), in *ibid*; Letter from Clare R. Goodlatte (Hon. Secretary of the Woodstock and Salt River Ratepayer's Association to the Town Clerk (28 June 1927), in *ibid*.

³⁶ Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Town Clerk (13 April 1908), 3/CT. Vol. 4/2/1/1/53 [KAB].

people expected to find facilities there, and upon finding them closed, continued to relieve themselves in the vicinity.

A similar “problem” occurred at the public toilet in Government Avenue in 1922. The toilet was built as a temporary facility, along with those at Darling Street and Greenmarket Square in 1917, to meet the needs of the military during the war.³⁷ By 1919, like the Darling Street and Greenmarket Square facilities, it had fallen into disrepair, and become a source of complaint. According to the Town Clerk, it was “in a disgustingly filthy state.”³⁸ Despite his suggestions that it be placed under the care of an attendant and kept in a cleaner condition, the facility appears to have been locked up, pending further instructions from the Council.³⁹ In 1922, the Principal of Marist Brothers’ High School drew the Medical Officer of Health’s attention to the fact that the, “lock has been broken, and the lavatories are used, but there is no water to flush the pans, consequently they are full, and the flies and stench beggar description.” Believing that “they [were] not wanted anymore,” the Principal advised, “that they be pulled down altogether.”⁴⁰ While his concern about the health hazard of stagnating waste may have been fair, the Principal’s belief that the toilets were no longer wanted seems to miss the crucial point. The fact that people had broken into the facility to use the toilet is surely evidence not only that the toilet was still wanted – by residents of Cape Town, if not by the Council – but also of how deeply ingrained this new bodily practice of urinating or defecating in the privacy of a cubicle had become – that even a toilet that did not flush, and had been closed to the public, was preferable to relieving oneself outside.

³⁷ Letter from the Town Clerk to the Medical Officer of Health (11 June 1919), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File E446/5 [KAB].

³⁸ Letter from the Town Clerk to the Medical Officer of Health (11 June 1919), in *ibid.*

³⁹ Letter from the Town Clerk to the City Engineer (20 June 1919), in *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Letter from Sgd B. Ambrose, Principal of Marist Brothers’ High School to the Medical Officer of Health (28 August 1922), in *ibid.*

There is also evidence however, that sometimes the act of public urination was used to resist the colonial methods of control that characterised public toilets. For example, in a letter to the Health and Building Regulations Committee in 1922, to request additional public toilets for the Sea Point area, the Medical Officer of Health wrote,

It is true that provision is made at the Sea Point Pavilion but that necessitates payment to enter the Pavilion and payment of a penny in the slot.

At Clarens Road Railway station there is only one closet for both sexes and both races and there is no urinal, and therefore, to avoid paying a penny, the partition from the platform is used for that purpose and as a consequence there is a nuisance continually caused by the urine flowing over to the platform.⁴¹

In this case, even though there was a public toilet at the pavilion, and at the railway station, people moving through this area saw no reason to spend a penny – an amount that might have been small change to a middle-class resident, but would not have been for the majority of people living in Cape Town – in order to fulfil a basic bodily need. It is unlikely that women would have done this, considering the heightened anxiety surrounding women's bodies.

PRICE AND PREJUDICE

As the water-carriage system developed and public toilets became a more commonplace element of the city streets, fears about general sanitary habits manifested in more specific ideas about toilet related behaviour. In 1924 the Medical Officer of Health advised the HBRC to close the men's side of the public toilet at the Old Fish Market, because he believed that "the fishermen

⁴¹ Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Health and Building Regulation Committee (2 December 1922), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File E440/5 [KAB].

of Rogge Bay, for whose use the chalets were originally provided, have now removed to the New Fisheries," and that the toilet on Dock Road would meet all the other needs of the area. He did not, however, consult any of these fishermen, or anyone else who was connected to the Fish Market on the matter, but suggested that it "be closed down temporarily with a view to determining whether this is so."⁴²

On the contrary, it appears that there were many people at the old Fish Market who did still use the facility, and the owner of Swerling and Son wrote to the Town Clerk to demand that it be reopened.⁴³ Upon hearing the Town Clerk's explanation for the closure, Mr. Swerling wrote again, enclosing a petition "containing the names of some of those who use[d] this lavatory," requesting that it be "handed over without delayed to the responsible committee as an urgent measure."

In the letter accompanying the petition, Mr Swerling purports to have the best interests of the workers in mind: "The closing of this lavatory is a most serious inconvenience," he stated, "as a considerable number of fishermen, as well as those who are working in the fish market, both white and coloured, have made regular use of it." He went on to highlight how the facilities at Dock Road would not be sufficient to meet the additional volume of users, and contended that, "fair play [had] not been accorded to the workers in the market in this case, more especially as no reference [had] been made to those in the habit of using this chalet."⁴⁴ His next sentence, however, belays his true concern:

We are certain that many coloured fishermen users of the Fishmarket lavatory will not take the trouble to use the Dock Road lavatory. We are sure that the vacant ground at the back of the power station and

⁴² Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (25 June 1924), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File E451/5 [KAB].

⁴³ Letter from Swerling and Sons Fish Merchants to the Town Clerk (12 January 1925) , in *ibid*.

⁴⁴ Letter from Swerling and Son to the Town Clerk (15 Jan 1925) , in *ibid*.

the Table Bay yacht clubs premises will be used for this purpose and a dangerous nuisance will be created.⁴⁵

Although Swerling had previously indicated that there were both white and coloured people who worked at the Fish market, and who had previously made use of the public toilet, he singled out the “coloured fishermen” as the most likely to engage in the then socially unacceptable habit of open urination or defecation.⁴⁶

Concerns about the way that particular people would behave inside public toilets were also common and enduring, and can be seen in the following example from 1923. After several requests for additional public toilets in Camps Bay, the Town Council acquiesced, and plans were set in motion to erect additional facilities in the area, near the Beach Cafe. Upon receiving this news, a Mr Hirsch wrote to the Town Clerk with the following piece of advice:

I would suggest to have a penny-in-the-slot locks attached to several of these lavatories, leaving one lavatory for each sex open to the general public, as these conveniences are frequented by some that leave these places in a very dirty condition and the public will not have proper use even after this extension is completed.⁴⁷

Mr Hirsch does not clarify exactly what he means by “a very dirty condition.” But although purporting to ensure that the toilets be maintained in “fit condition,” Mr Hirsch’s letter reveals two assumptions: firstly, that people of lower classes – or those who could not afford to pay a penny every time they needed to use the toilet – were responsible for leaving the place in a “dirty

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ It is conceivable that Mr Swerling only made this comment because he knew that it would be effective in persuading the Medical Officer of Health, and other committee members, tapping into the racist stereotypes that were highlighted in chapter one, but there is no other evidence to suggest that Swerling did not subscribe to these racial stereotypes himself.

⁴⁷ It is not clear from this letter exactly what Mr. Hirsch’s role was at the Beach Cafe, but considering his offer of assistance with anything connected with the place that he held at least a managing position, if he was not the owner. Letter from Mr. Hirsch to Town Clerk (9 November 1923), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File: E 439/5 [KAB].

condition.” Secondly, that those same people should be excluded from the facility through the instrument of a user’s fee.

It is worth noting that the Assistant Medical Officer of Health had called attention to the “inadequate sanitary arrangements for visitors to Camps Bay” three years earlier. While it is unclear whether he was referring to the same location as Mr Hirsch, his description of the facilities makes it clear that the volume of users was far greater than the amount that the existing facilities could handle:

Here there are two sanitary pails for men and two for women, while there are two receptacles placed inside the entrance to the men’s closets for serve as urinals. When there are visitors these very soon get filled up, overflow and very offensive, the urine running out at the entrance.⁴⁸

Even if Mr Hirsch was talking about a different set of toilets at a different cafe, it is very possible that a high volume of people also used the facilities at Beach Cafe, considering how few other facilities there were in the area. Therefore, no matter how “clean” the habits of the users were, the sheer volume would have taken its toll on state of the toilets on some occasions, at least.

The examples of the Old Fish Market and Camps Bay facilities serve to highlight that the attitudes expressed by the various medical practitioners in 1880, which attributed the sanitary ills of the city to the “dirty habits” of people of colour, had not diminished. By 1924, the law that prohibited black people from living within the boundaries of the city had already been in place for over twenty years. Some labourers were still housed in barracks at the Docks, but these were much more strictly controlled after the Spanish Influenza epidemic hit the city in 1918, and officials were forced to take the

⁴⁸ Letter from the Assistant Medical Officer of Health to the Medical Officer of Health (7 December 1920), in *ibid.*

overcrowding and “unsanitary conditions” there seriously.⁴⁹ Coloured people had been allowed to remain living in the city, but along with the other poor classes, became the object of toilet related prejudices.

USERS AND ATTENDANTS: NEGOTIATING ACCESS

With the general belief that toilet users were deviant, and that certain people in particular needed to be regulated, various mechanisms of control were used to monitor access to and use of public toilets. As discussed in the previous chapters, the facilities were physically divided to keep men and women apart, with entrances orientated specifically to ensure they would not even pass each other on entering the convenience. Penny-in-the-slot machines were used to enforce class and race divisions in most conveniences, while different types of closets were provided for people of different races. These divisions were further entrenched with the use of signs.⁵⁰

In addition to these measures, attendants or caretakers were also employed at many public toilets. Their duties naturally correlated with the values that informed the initial provision of public toilets. The task of overseeing payment for access to public toilets was imbued with the values of class distinction and exclusivity, while the job of keeping the facility in a “perfect state of cleanliness” was axiomatic in a society so concerned with the eradication of “filth.”⁵¹ Attendants were also expected to assist in the task of regulating behaviour within the facilities. The attendants’ room was usually orientated in such a way as to have a clear view of all of the stalls, and the glazed glass in the doors also ensured that they would be able to see the

⁴⁹ Philips, “Black October,” 80.

⁵⁰ For example, in 1908, the MOH wrote to the Acting City Engineer with the following request: “Will you please have a Notice Board fixed at the corner of the Ladies Chalet in Searle Street and Sir Lowry Road, marked “LADIES ONLY”, and that the same be made to project, as sometimes men go round that side by mistake.” Letter from Medical Officer of Health to Acting City Engineer (31 March 1908), 3/CT. Vol. 4/2/1/1/53 [KAB].

⁵¹ *Mayor’s Minute* (1894), 40 [GPUCT].

number of people in the stall.⁵² Underlying this duty of the attendant was the belief that without supervision, toilet users would inevitably misuse the facilities.

For example, in a report about the Branch market, Early Morning Market and Fish Market in 1895, the Medical Officer of Health stated that, “the sanitary conveniences are often abused owing to the lack of constant attendant to look after them.”⁵³ Nor was this attitude specific to the early period of toilet provision, because in 1925, the then Medical Officer of Health made a similar comment regarding the facility at Greenmarket Square: “[There is] no accommodation for an attendant, and in consequence it gets fouled by the class of people who use it.” In addition to revealing his prejudice that a certain “class of people” were responsible for “fouling” the toilet, he posits this outcome as a direct consequence of the lack of attendant. These values (and the corresponding duties) were intertwined of course, because as we have already seen, class, race and gender were heavily imbedded in the rhetoric around cleanliness and acceptable behaviour.

And yet the pattern of attendant employment once again belied the tension between what the state ideology espoused, and what the state could physically enact through city infrastructure – both material and human. Between 1895 and 1925 there were certainly attendants at some facilities, but not at all. The scattered nature of the archives makes it difficult to draw definite conclusions about the pattern of employment. Some of the facilities where we know that attendants were employed were clearly facilities intended largely for white or middle class residents, or visitors to Cape Town – such as those provided at the Municipal Gardens (1895), the Opera House (1896), the underground facility proposed for the area between the Standard Bank and the Post Office (1901/1912), Green Point Common (1910), and the

⁵² Observed in person at De Waal Park, Company Gardens, Riebeeck Square, Jurgen’s Park, and Greenmarket Square facilities, Friday 27 November 2015.

⁵³ *Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health* (1895), 111 [GPUCT].

Ladies Rest Room (1924).⁵⁴ We also know that an attendant's room was only built at the McGregor Street chalet when it was renovated for "the use of Europeans: this was done by reconstructing the sanitary conveniences, constructing a roof over same, and providing a caretaker's room."⁵⁵

Many facilities built in areas where a more mixed crowd of users was expected, however, were not initially equipped with an attendant, such as those at the Early Morning Market in Woodstock (1895), the Fish market near the Docks (1895), Castle Street near the Grand Parade (1900), Riebeek Square in the city centre (1907), St Andrew's Square (1907) near Bo-Kaap, or Searle and Sir Lowry Street (1907) in Woodstock.⁵⁶

But there were also facilities that were probably used largely by white middle class residents – such as at De Waal Park – where there was no attendant, and there were also facilities that were probably used by a more mixed group from the lower classes – such as at the Maitland Outspan – where there was an attendant.⁵⁷ Therefore, a neat conclusion regarding the pattern of attendant employment before 1925 is difficult to ascertain. From 1925 onwards, however, the Medical Officer of Health reports include a list of all the public toilets under Council control, which indicate that attendants were employed at every facility between 1925 and 1940.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ The facility proposed between the Standard Bank and the Post Office was never built, but the intentions communicated in the proposal are still revealing. *Mayor's Minute* (1895), 23 [GPUCT]; *Mayor's Minute* (1896), 26 [GPUCT]; *Mayor's Minute* (1901), xi-xii [GPUCT]; *Mayor's Minute* (1910), vi [GPUCT]; Minutes from Meeting of Sub-Committee of the Health and Building Regulations Committee (29 November 1924), 3/CT Volume: 4/1/5/463 [KAB].

⁵⁵ *Mayor's Minute* (1910), vii [GPUCT].

⁵⁶ *Mayor's Minute* (1899), xxxviii [GPUCT]; *Mayor's Minute* (1899), xxxviii [GPUCT]; *Mayor's Minute* (1900), xxxi [GPUCT]; *Mayor's Minute* (1907), xxv [GPUCT].

⁵⁷ *Mayor's Minute* (1903), xxxi [GPUCT]; Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Public Health and Building Regulations Committee (7 October 1920), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File E452/5 [KAB].

⁵⁸ Given the scattered and sparse nature of the archive, it is difficult to ascertain whether the lack of reference to an attendant at a particular facility is evidence that one was not employed there, or whether this is just an omission in the record. See *Annual Reports of the Medical Officer of Health* (1895), liv; (1925), lxiv; (1926), lxv; (1928), 80; (1929), 78; (1930), 670; (1931), 79; (1932), 76; (1933), 78-79; (1934), 84-85; (1935), 93; (1936), 86; (1937), 101; (1938), 90-91; (1939), 72; (1940), 73 [GPUCT].

Given the authority invested in attendants, it is not surprising that many of the accounts of interactions between attendants and toilet users portray attendants as gatekeepers, who helped to uphold the social hierarchy of the city, both in terms of who got access to toilets, and in terms of how they were treated inside the facility. The Medical Officer of Health was proud to be able to report to the HBRC in October of 1920 that the attendant at the Maitland Outspan public toilet was able to “reserve one of the closets for better class people” on the days when there were no queues for the facility.⁵⁹

A letter from an irate “Mr Shnaps,” in 1934, regarding “the manner in which [his] wife was treated by the officials in charge of the [Ladies] restroom” paints attendants as petty authoritarians, who took delight in the opportunity to use their power over members of the public. According to the account of his wife, Mrs Shnaps had

visited this sanitary convenience and after inserting a penny in the slot and opening the door was surprised to find it already occupied, the previous occupant, who was in the act of leaving having forgotten apparently, to slip the catch on the inside. After my wife had emerged from the lavatory the attendant demanded from her payment of one penny for the use of the closet, and barred the exit, refusing to allow her to pass. Without allowing my wife to give any explanation, this lady attendant, and two other persons (who claimed to be her daughters) insulted my wife in a most unbecoming and disgraceful manner... My wife was not unnaturally most ashamed thus to be sworn at and insulted in a public place in the presence of a number of strangers, and was greatly distressed at being treated in such a disgraceful manner by servants of the City Council.⁶⁰

However, we must be careful to avoid the trap of the colonial narrative, in which users and attendants were cast as homogenous, abstract entities, whose

⁵⁹ Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Public Health and Building Regulations Committee (7 October 1920). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File E452/5. KAB

⁶⁰ Letter from Mr. Shnaps to the Town Clerk (14 July 1934), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463 [KAB].

behaviour could be predicted by such elementary categories as race, class, gender, or vocation. Indeed, many of the interactions between attendants and users illustrate that they were constantly negotiating the values espoused in public toilets, challenging some assumptions, while simultaneously, and probably unreflexively, accepting others. Conflict was generally not the result of toilet users rejecting the very idea of an attendant overseeing their intimate business, nor because they fundamentally rejected all the values that were upheld in these facilities. Conflict generally occurred when there was some kind of inconsistency, or where one value was trampled in the process of upholding another.

For example, in September 1934, lawyers Fuller, De Klerk and Osler wrote to the Town Clerk on behalf of their client, an Indian woman named Mrs E. Baye. Mrs Baye had been denied access to the Ladies Rest Room by the attendant. Her lawyers reminded the City Council that as a ratepayer of the city, she was legally entitled to use the facility, and casually inquired whether they intended to continue with this policy – which clearly violated their own laws. The Town Clerk had no choice but to assure Mrs Baye’s lawyers that this would not happen again.⁶¹ What is interesting about this exchange – bearing in mind that Mrs Baye’s perspective is mediated through her lawyers – is that while she challenges the fact that she has been denied access because of her race, she does not question the underlying assumption that toilets were provided for ratepayers of the city only. The fact that many people of colour would have been denied access on this basis alone does not seem to have been a matter of concern for the African People’s Organisation either, who were vocal in their protest against the use of racial divisions at the Kalk Bay and Salt River facilities, but raised no objections to the penny charge.⁶² This

⁶¹ Letter from Fuller, De Klerk and Osler to the Town Clerk (10 September 1934), in *ibid.*; Letter from the Town Clerk to Fuller, De Klerk and Osler (22 September 1934), in *ibid.*

⁶² Letter from the Chairman of the African People’s Organisation, Claremont Branch, to the Town Clerk (31 May 1928). 3/CT Vol. 4/1/5/464. File E454/5 [KAB].

technical/legal distinction of “ratepayer” would not only have excluded those residents of the city who could not afford to spare a penny every time they needed to use a public toilet on their way to and from work, but it would also have excluded migrant labourers who worked in the city, but were forced to return to locations outside the city once they had completed their days work. Those working on construction, shipyards, or in other outdoor capacities, would probably not have had access to work place toilets, like those working in offices.

An example from 1935 illustrates a tension between the desire for cleanliness, and the social demands of propriety. On 4 April, a very disgruntled Mrs F.A. Murray wrote to the Medical Officer of Health to report a “most insulting” incident that occurred in connection with the attendant at the Greenmarket Square public toilet. According to Louw, she had taken her daughter into the facility, and

in the lavatory noticed she had a few spots on her legs. I took a few sheets of sanitary papers and where the wash basins are just wetted them and wiped the stains off her legs. Put the paper at the side of wash basins. As I was going up the steps the attendant there chased after me shouting as loud as she could that this was not allowed and she had no place where to put the papers.⁶³

Mrs Louw could accept being reprimanded about the tissues, and confessed she would have happily paid for the use of the washbasin had that been required. What she objected to was the fact that the attendant had drawn attention to her toilet use on the public street, in the presence of a group of strange men. Louw described herself as “unsettled for the rest of the day,” while her husband “was more indignant when I told him about it.”⁶⁴ Clearly in this situation, the attendant’s concern for cleanliness in the facility had led

⁶³ Letter from Mrs F.A. Murray Louw to the Town Clerk (4 April 1935), 3/CT. Volume: 4/1/5/463 [KAB].

⁶⁴ Letter from Mrs F.A. Murray Louw to the Town Clerk (4 April 1935), in *ibid.*

her to transgress the accepted standards of propriety by drawing attention to Mrs Louw's toilet use in front of a group of strange men – a far greater offense, we can gather, both from Mrs and Mr Louw's responses, but also from the Medical Officer of Health's response, wherein he assured the couple that he had "reprimanded the attendant for her conduct."⁶⁵

Naturally, there were also occasionally cases of attendants and users cooperating together to get around the power dynamics that prohibited equal access to toilets. For example, as mentioned in Chapter One, the public facilities provided at the Maitland Outspan did not include provision for women. After inspecting the facility in 1920, the Medical Officer of Health reported back to the Health and Building Regulations Committee that, "It would appear that as a rule the accommodation is sufficient, as for instance during the week ending 25th September, only 27 persons used it." However, he also conceded that, "ladies have occasionally enquired if a lavatory for ladies is provided in this area and on rare occasions have requested the attendant to close the doors while they are inside."⁶⁶

In a context in which the idea of women using public toilets was considered so shameful that the entrances to the facilities were frequently orientated away from the main street, and the public officials delayed the erection of toilets for women for fears of complaints, this would have been quite a radical act for both the woman and the attendant. Furthermore, considering how rare it was to get a glimpse of women's toilet related behaviour in the colonial records, it is also likely that this happened more often than the Medical Officer of Health knew, or admitted.

It is also important to note that standards of cleanliness differed according to the significance of the facility, and who was expected to use it. According to

⁶⁵ Letter from Medical Officer of Health to Mrs F.A. Murray Louw (7 May 1935), in *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Public Health and Building Regulations Committee (7 October 1920), 3/CT Vol. 4/1/5/464. File E452/5 [KAB].

the President of the WMA, “Where there is dirt, there is danger.”⁶⁷ But clearly she believed dirt to pose more of a danger to some than others. The standard of cleanliness at the Ladies Rest Room, for example, was her particular concern. According to the President of the WMA, it was “essential for the credit of the City that the cleanliness and general upkeep of Rest Room...be beyond reproach,” because, as she wrote to the Medical Officer of Health, “it [was] the only public restroom for women in the City, apart from the one at the Station, and [was] used by country visitors as well as by suburban residents who [came] in by tram and bus.”⁶⁸

The Ladies’ Rest Room may not have been the only facility open to women in the city, but it certainly was the only facility *exclusively* for women.⁶⁹ Furthermore, as the 1931, 1933 and 1939 editions of the Map of Cape Town Central and Neighbouring suburbs reveal, it was also intended to attract international visitors to the city. These maps, “issued jointly by the Cape Peninsula Publicity Association and the South African Railways Administration,” were specifically aimed at tourists. On all three of these maps, the Ladies’ Rest room is highlighted on the map and labelled in the “Index of Places of Interest,” along with the “Visitors Information Bureau,” transport routes, the post office, the bank, and various other famous buildings, theatres and recreation areas. While some of the other conveniences (labelled “lavatories” in this case) have been marked with a black dot, the Ladies’ Restroom is the only one that has been marked and labelled as a “Place of Interest.”⁷⁰ The same can be said of the Maps of Cape

⁶⁷ Letter from the Secretary and President of the Women’s Municipal Association to the Medical Officer of Health (19 November 1934), 3/CT Vol. 4/1/5/463 [KAB].

⁶⁸ Letter from the Secretary and President of the Women’s Municipal Association to the Medical Officer of Health (19 November 1934), in *ibid.*. Although there were other facilities open to women in the city by this time, the Ladies Rest Room was the only facility *exclusively* for women.

⁶⁹ By 1924, when the Ladies Rest Room was authorised for erection, there were 32 public conveniences open to the public. 18 (67%) of those that I have information for were exclusively for men (48% of which were still only open to men in 1940), but at least 9 (33%) of these included facilities for women.

⁷⁰ Cape Peninsular Publicity Association and the South African Railways Administration, “Map of Cape Town: Central and Neighbouring Suburbs.” Scale ¼ inch to English Mile (1931). Cape Town

Town (central), for which I have had access to the 1911, 1936, 1941 and 1948 editions.⁷¹ Here too, the Ladies' Rest Room has been marked and labelled in the Reference list (excluding 1911, of course), along with various other icons of the city, while the other conveniences have only been indicated with a black dot.

It is ironic, considering the City Council's initial and enduring reluctance to build the Ladies' Rest Room in the first place, that it was being promoted as an attractive feature of the city by the 1930s. Nevertheless, positioned as it was to cater to international women, as well as Cape Town's elite, there was a great deal at stake when it came to the standards of cleanliness.

Considering the type of user that was expected at the Ladies' Rest Room, it is not surprising that this was the only example that I came across where the attendant's capabilities were called into question regarding the state of the rest room – rather than the habits or behaviour of the users. In 1934, the president of the WMA and the Medical Officer of Health butted heads regarding the state of the Ladies Rest Room. After receiving "representations" regarding the facility, the president of the WMA had inspected it herself, and had been horrified to discover it "in an unclean and unsatisfactory condition and not at all up to the standard that [they] expected and which [they] consider[ed] necessary." Rather than chastising the toilet users for their "dirty habits," as we have seen in previous examples, she

Street plans [DCUCT]; Cape Peninsular Publicity Association and the South African Railways Administration. "Map of Cape Town: Central and Neighbouring Suburbs." Scale ¼ inch to English Mile (1933). Cape Town Street plans [DCUCT]; Cape Peninsular Publicity Association and the South African Railways Administration. "Map of Cape Town: Central and Neighbouring Suburbs." Scale ¼ inch to English Mile (1939). Cape Town Street plans [DCUCT].

⁷¹ Cape Peninsula Publicity Association, "Map of Cape Town (central)." Scale not given (1911). Cape Town Street plans [DCUCT]; Cape Peninsula Publicity Association. "Map of Cape Town (central)." Scale 1:354 816. 1 in. to 5.6 miles. (1936). Cape Town Street plans [DCUCT]; Cape Peninsula Publicity Association. "Map of Cape Town (central)." Scale 1: 354 816. 1 in. to 5.6 miles. (1941). Cape Town Street plans [DCUCT]; Cape Peninsula Publicity Association. "Map of Cape Town (central)." Scale not given. (1948). Cape Town Street plans [DCUCT].

questioned whether the attendants' were capable of fulfilling their duties. One in particular she considered "too old and feeble for the work."⁷²

While the Medical Officer of Health disagreed with the president of the WMA's assessment of the facility, and was adamant that the attendants were "reliable and trustworthy servants," at no point in their exchange did either of them cast any judgement on the habits of the women who used the facility – a stark contrast to the way that toilet maintenance was perceived in some of the more socially mixed suburbs of the city.⁷³

APPROACHING "ABUSE"

In addition to the fact that toilet users and attendants were mutually involved in negotiating the terms of access and the assumptions that underpinned who had access, the behaviour of the attendants and users also had the power to shape the meaning and values embodied in the space.⁷⁴ This power is perhaps most prominently illustrated in the most intimate and corporeal elements of toilet behaviour – i.e. in the way in which people managed their bodily waste within the facilities. An action that caused those mandated to clean and oversee public toilets particular distress was when toilet users did not defecate in the appropriate receptacle.

In a letter to the City Engineer in 1908, A.P. Preston, the Superintendent of the Streets Cleaning Department, lodged the following complaint about the public toilets on the corner of McGregor and De Villiers Streets, in District Six:

The above is made a great nuisance owing to the filthy habits of the persons using it. Several times a week the W.C's are choked up and the floor out to the door covered in human excrement. Sunday

⁷² Letter from the Secretary and President of the Women's Municipal Association to the Medical Officer of Health (19 November 1934), 3/CT Vol. 4/1/5/463 [KAB].

⁷³ Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the President of the Women's Municipal Association (22 November 1934), 3/CT Vol. 4/1/5/463 [KAB].

⁷⁴ Houlbrook, "The Private World of Public Urinals," 54-55.

morning it was disgusting and the Boys of this department refused cleaning it. I would suggest the police be communicated with as it appears this state of affairs is done during the evening and night.⁷⁵

The Acting City Engineer acted according to the appeal, and requested the Inspector of Police “give an eye to the place” at night, albeit leaving out the matter of the toilets being choked up, and emphasising the matter of “persons of filthy habits relieving themselves on the floor inside.”⁷⁶ The matter was not resolved however, as a few months later in July A. P. Preston wrote again to the City Engineer, this time revealing that it was not only happening at night:

Yesterday this place was washed down before 7 o clock a.m, and at 9:45 am it was filthy, and again thoroughly cleaned, and every day the W.C’s are choked and particularly so. The habits of the inhabitants are such they don’t or won’t go to the proper place to evacuate.⁷⁷

Later that same month, A.P. Preston suggested that the Council find an alternative department to maintain the facility, because, “[he] consider[ed] it [was] a waste of time for the department to have to supervise this place, as it [was] practically impossible for this Department to keep it clean, as it want[ed] watching all day.”⁷⁸

It is clear from this example that the act of defecating on the floor of the facility, instead of in the WC itself, was considered a great social transgression. Neither the superintendent nor the city engineer singled out a particular group of people to blame for the transgression, but by describing the actions as “dirty habits,” they automatically attached a value judgement to the action. It is clear that the Medical Officer of Health interpreted the event of finding faeces outside of the appropriate receptacle at the

⁷⁵ Letter from A.P. Preston, Superintendent, Streets Cleaning Department to the City Engineer (11 May 1908), 3/CT. Vol. 4/2/1/1/53 [KAB].

⁷⁶ Letter from the Acting City Engineer to the Inspector of Police (11 May 1908), 3/CT. Vol. 4/2/1/1/53 [KAB].

⁷⁷ Letter from A.P. Preston, Superintendent, Streets Cleaning Department to the City Engineer (14 July 1908), in *ibid.*

⁷⁸ Letter from A.P. Preston, Superintendent, Streets Cleansing Department to the City Engineer (28 July 1908), in *ibid.*

Greenmarket Square facility in 1923 as a deliberate act of defiance. The facility only provided urinals at the time, but according to the Medical Officer, “from time to time, especially at night, [the premises became] fouled with excreta.” As in the McGregor Street example, the Medical Officer of Health did not directly comment on the users either, but two years later, in an another discussion about the same facility, he argued that as a consequence of the lack of attendant, the toilet “[got] fouled by the class of people who use[d] it.” In addition to linking class and “deviant” behaviour, he also clearly believed that without supervision, the “abuse” of toilets was inevitable.⁷⁹

Once again, as a historian interested in everyday people, there is a strong incentive to speculate and account for the users’ behaviour, in a way that centres their agency and their attitudes and experiences. For example, there are potentially a multitude of explanations for why people would have defecated on the floor instead of in the toilets. The “choked up” toilets at McGregor Street open up one avenue: whether the result of vandalism, too large a volume of users, or poor maintenance, it is not hard to imagine that upon encountering a toilet that was choked and overflowing with other people’s waste, a desperate user might have resorted to defecating on the floor, rather than risk touching the waste. Alternatively, it might reflect the fact that many of the residents of Cape Town were not yet familiar with toilets – especially considering the influx of immigrants from all over the world at the turn of the century. In “Power, Power, Privacy and Pleasure,” Crook reflects on similar kinds of transgressions of toilet norms in Britain around the same period. He argues that “Whether conscious or not, such uses are proof, if such were needed, of the varied and creative nature of resistance and the ways power is subjectively reworked by those who are also its object and

⁷⁹ Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (12 December 1923), 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File E 449/5 [KAB].

product.”⁸⁰ The possibility that Cape Town toilet users were deliberately defecating on the floor, in full knowledge of the social norms, to make a political statement is another equally plausible explanation. Users might have been reacting to the imposition of a British style water carriage system, or expressing anger at the sub-standard construction of this facility, and the blatant racism behind it. The fact that this seemed to occur so regularly – e.g. that the toilet was “filthy” again by 9:45, even though it had been cleaned just a few hours earlier – suggests that this may well have been a deliberate act.

However, there is just as little empirical evidence to support these explanations as there are for the colonial officials’ explanations. Whether we choose to centre the experience of the officials, or the everyday users, we are still in the domain of speculation. Moreover, in attempting such conjectures, we risk perpetuating the colonial assumption that the corporeal habits of toilet users reflected their collective cultural status.⁸¹ Perhaps a more fruitful question, and one which still emphasises the agency of the everyday toilet user, without reinforcing the colonial sanitary logic, is: how did the use of the facility influence or shape the meaning of the space?

We have seen from the previous chapters that the establishment of the public toilet was intended to remove evidence of bodily waste from the public realm. However, the fact that the visible presence of faeces in a facility intended expressly for the purpose of managing bodily waste elicited such discomfort among those who encountered it reveals that there was more at stake than just shifting the location of toilet practice from the public to the private. Public toilets – and the cubicle in particular – were also intended to individualise the process of waste management – so that nobody else had to come into contact with anybody else’s waste in any sense or form.⁸² The water closet – connected to a water carriage system – had provided a way to ensure the

⁸⁰ Crook, “Power, Privacy and Pleasure,” 564.

⁸¹ Anderson, “Excremental Colonialism,” 644.

⁸² Crook, “Power, Privacy and Pleasure,” 562.

transporting process was removed from view and eliminated the need for human interaction with the waste after the point of voiding. But toilet users were actors with agency, regardless of their social standing, and neither the colonial officials, nor their new infrastructure, could control every element of toilet related behaviour – or in this case, force people to defecate in the actual closet.⁸³ By defecating on the floor of the facility, instead of inside the toilet, users made their waste clearly visible in the space, thus threatening the idea of the public toilet as a purifying, and individualising infrastructure. The sight and smell of the waste could not be eliminated with a simple flush of the chain, but had to be physically removed. Somebody else had to come into close contact with it. This would not only have forced them to interact with the sensory nature of somebody else's faeces, but it would have reminded them of their own bodily functions (which, as we have already seen, many in the "civilised" society were doing their best to deny). Therefore the specific way in which a user managed their waste inside the toilet facility was not just a matter of etiquette. It had the potential to shape the meaning and value of the facility.

CONCLUSION

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, there was a growing tension between the sanitary rhetoric espoused by the medical men of the city, and the infrastructure in place to support this ideology. One of the ways that they relieved this tension was by shifting the blame to the bodily habits of the inhabitants of the city. The transition into the twentieth century brought the Anglo-Boer war, and with it, first the influx of refugees from the rest of the country, and later immigrants from around the world, attracted by British

⁸³ Trevor Barnes and Derek Gregory (eds.), *Reading Human Geography: The Poetics and Politics of Inquiry* (London: Arnold, 1997), 293, quoted in Allen, *Cleansing the City*, 19.

dominance. This escalated fears of the white, especially British people living in the city, and, among other things, catalysed the first forced removals. Removing the black residents from the city did nothing to shift the underlying ideology however, and by 1911, the “cosmopolitan” nature of the inhabitants was still pinpointed as a significant barrier to cleanliness and civilisation. The establishment of public toilets did not relieve these fears either; they merely shifted their focus, and informed the various mechanisms of control that were inscribed in these facilities.

For the residents of Cape Town, the establishment of public toilets necessitated significant changes in the daily habits and routines. As a heterogeneous group, however, people navigated these changes in different ways. There were certainly some who continued to relieve themselves where and when it was convenient, but many people did shift their toilet practice from the street to the cubicle. Having made this shift, the inadequate provision of toilets, and poor maintenance at many facilities, became a source of distress for this latter group.

Within public toilets, various mechanisms of control were instigated. In addition to elements of site and design, attendants were employed to regulate access and behaviour inside the facilities. While attendants had the potential to enforce the social hierarchy of the time, in reality, both users and attendants constantly negotiated the values that informed who got access and how they were treated inside the facilities.

Toilet users also played a significant role in determining the overall meaning of public toilets within the urban space. While the facility itself was intended to shift bodily practices from the public to the private, the cubicle ensured that the management of waste was individualised, and the water closet itself ensured that the sight and smell of waste was removed instantly, so that nobody else had to come into contact with anyone else’s waste, or even see it transported. But if toilet users chose not to use the cubicle, or the water closet

– it not only undermined the purpose of the facility, but it changed the associations of cleanliness and purification that it was intended to symbolise. Therefore, although the values and perceptions of colonial officials shaped the control of public toilets, and had a significant impact on the everyday toilet practice of residents of the city, the particular ways in which residents used the facilities also impacted the values imbued in these spaces.

Conclusion

This dissertation builds on the small but growing body of work on the topic of waste related infrastructure and bodily practices in a global context, contributing specifically to the South African historiography. 'Sanitation' is a common theme in urban histories of Cape Town, but these histories have largely focused on epidemics of disease, and the way in which these were utilised to justify the forced removal of people of colour from the city at various points. Waste management in general has only ever been hinted at by authors describing the 'modern' amenities that the city instigated at the turn of the century, or in reference to the ways that Cape Town's city centre was fashioned after a British template. Access to toilets has featured more prominently in histories of townships in the greater Cape Town area, but this distinction between histories of the city and histories of townships in itself is worth interrogating, as it implicitly reinforces the colonial narrative that informed the deliberate 'whitening' of Cape Town.

This dissertation showed that the municipal provision of public toilets in the city of Cape Town emerged in a context of state driven sanitary reforms, in which both the material boundaries between public and private space, and acceptable bodily practices, were being re-negotiated. Far from purely "technological responses to a physical need," public toilets reflected and operationalised shifting values in three main domains. Amidst increasing

fears around the link between dirt, disease and morality, public toilets acted to contain the threat that human waste on city streets posed to a new order of sensibilities. At a time in which the body and its capacity to produce waste was increasingly considered shameful, public toilets provided a place to tend to the body away from the gaze of other people, and facilitated the facade that “respectable” people had moved beyond the basic urges of the body. And during a period of political and economic change, public toilets ensured that the elite, white supremacist and patriarchal social order was maintained and reproduced, by facilitating the performance of specifically gendered, raced and classed roles.

Concerns around cleanliness, respectability, and social order were reflected in the volume of public toilet facilities, the location of these facilities, the design of their external and internal architecture, volume and design of the plumbing fixtures within facilities, the mechanisms of control at these facilities, as well as the way in which attendants and users navigated the expectations in these spaces, and co-created the meaning of these spaces. Colonial officials essentialised toilet users, and attempted to attribute sanitary “problems” to the habits of particular users, in order to avoid the inadequacy of their own system. However, not only were both toilet users and attendants socially heterogeneous, but they also had significant agency in creating the meaning of the space, and the power to influence the values associated with the space through their behaviour.

This research aims at filling a gap in South African historiography in several ways. Firstly, it provides a basic framework by which to understand the shifting nature of waste management practices and infrastructure between 1880 and 1939. Secondly, it reveals the reciprocal (and context specific) relationship between the seemingly mundane infrastructure of public toilets, and the social values and hierarchies of Cape society. Thirdly, it adds to the growing efforts of historians to bring the everyday bodily practices of

ordinary people back into our understanding of history. Lastly, it adds an additional layer of complexity to our understanding of the way in which hierarchies of race, class and gender were created, entrenched, and navigated in Cape Town.

It is, however, by no means intended as a comprehensive study of the public toilets during this period, and is naturally limited in various ways. Locating source material was particularly challenging. Although records were kept of toilet erections, designs, and features, they were not done systematically, and these records petered out considerably after the first decade or two of toilet provision. Thus, there are gaps in the archive, and there is more material for the earlier part of the period considered than for the latter. Secondly, although many of these records have been kept, they have not been ordered and catalogued coherently. So not only are the documents difficult to find, but it is difficult to gauge at this stage of research how much of the body of material has been covered, and how much remains to be explored. These gaps, and the omission of certain kinds of people and practices are not incidental, but reflect the politics of the archive, revealing another level at which the social values of the dominant class operated.

These challenges required a creative and multifaceted approach. The use of mapping technology and a spatial analysis helped me to get a sense of the volume and locations of public toilets, as well as a sense of how these factors would have affected the toilet related routines of ordinary people in the city. Considering the architecture itself revealed disparities in the volume of plumbing fixtures, and the design and materials of these facilities. The shape of the closets in particular, and the posture that they required of the bodies that used them, revealed a powerful way in which white supremacy was performed and by which alleged differences between black and coloured people in the city were entrenched.

While this dissertation was focused on the period between 1880 and 1940, an obvious additional avenue of research would be to extend this time frame, and to consider the period from the Second World War onwards. This would open up additional public toilet facilities to consider, on the street, and in department stores, and potentially also additional sources. While finding oral testimonies for the period before 1920 was not possible for my research, there would be much more scope in this regard for later in the twentieth century.

There is also much more scope to consider additional elements of public toilet infrastructure. While I considered the provision, design, control and use of facilities, these were by no means comprehensive parameters. For example, in the exchanges between town clerks, engineers and medical officers of health found in the archives, there was evidence of a tender process for the supply of materials and labour. Tracing the companies who manufactured toilet fixtures and infrastructure, considering the market, and considering the actual people who constructed these facilities are all worthwhile pursuits.

Another point that this dissertation has tried to illustrate is that the implementation of public toilets, and their connection to a water carriage system, although portrayed as great strides towards civilisation, were in fact quite disruptive to the routines and sensibilities of ordinary residents of Cape Town. While I have only been able to consider the toilet users in this regard, there were many other social actors who would have been impacted by these changes. For example, what happened to those who worked as night soil men, collecting buckets from homes, businesses and hotels, as flush toilets replaced buckets? What were the economic and agricultural implications, of shifting from earth based to water based management systems?

In my efforts to explore the reciprocal relationship between social values of the time, and the built environment, I identified three main sets of social values that were reflected and reproduced by public toilets; the nexus of concern around cleanliness, health and morality; shame and anxiety

surrounding bodies, and a desire to distance 'civilised' society and spaces from basic functions of the body; and a desire to maintain the overlapping hierarchies of the time, in which white middle class men occupied the highest level, and poor black women occupied the lowest. While this dissertation has touched on the shifting nature of these values, and they have been explored in greater detail in a British context, it would be fruitful to explore the histories of these values themselves in the Cape context. Furthermore, there are additional avenues of seemingly mundane infrastructures relating to bodies and hygiene that these values would presumably also have interacted with – such as the provision of public bathhouses, for example. Comments and descriptions about these facilities were also littered through the *Mayor's Minutes* and *Medical Officer of Health Reports* that I came across.

In considering the social hierarchies that public toilets reflected and reproduced, this dissertation predominantly considered the overlaps between race, class and gender. In the context of the colonial archive, where references to women and their experiences were few and far between, and mediated by the perspective of middle class white men, I sought out alternative sources – such as clothing and sanitary products – to help get a sense of how women would have managed their bodily needs. But this did not give me a very clear picture of the way in which different women's experiences and attitudes differed. The use of oral testimony, especially for the period after the Second World War could potentially be helpful in this regard. There is also much more that can be done using a spatial analysis. Considering neighbourhoods and suburbs in more particular detail, for one thing, would be beneficial, as well as look at the spatial relationship between public toilets and other facilities and landmarks, such as transport hubs, hospitals, factories, offices and schools, for example. The use of maps to visually represent this information is also one way in which to make this kind of research more accessible to a wider audience.

In addition to the great need to find better ways to centre the experiences of women of colour, there are multiple other elements of identity that need to be considered in our efforts to understand a history of social differentiation and oppression – sexuality, ability, age, language, to mention a few.

In addition to the new perspectives on our historiography that public toilets open up, they also represent a number of particularly pressing contemporary issues for the city Cape Town. In the midst of “poo protests”, debates around the gender segregation of public toilets, and extreme water shortages in Cape Town, this appears to be an apposite moment in which to question the political-infrastructural decisions that shaped our current public toilets, the greater waste management system it relays to, and our attitudes and expectations surrounding toilet-related practices, and understand how these elements have interacted with and shaped the dominant social hierarchies of our time. More than anything else, this dissertation has sought to highlight that the particular patterns of provision and design of our existing public toilets was no means inevitable, but was shaped by a particular set of historically contingent values and power dynamics. This knowledge not only provides a new perspective on the history of Cape Town, but it can also help us to imagine alternative approaches to dealing with our waste in the public space in the future.

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- Opinion of Councillor Rev: A.J.S. Lewis, in an extract from minutes of meeting of the Health and Building Regulations Committee (23 February 1925) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File: E 449/5. KAB
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Appendix – A

MAPS OF PUBLIC TOILETS IN CAPE TOWN

Map 1: Public Toilets Open in 1900

Map 2: Public Toilets Open in 1910

Map 3: Public Toilets Open in 1920

Map 4: Public Toilets Open in 1930

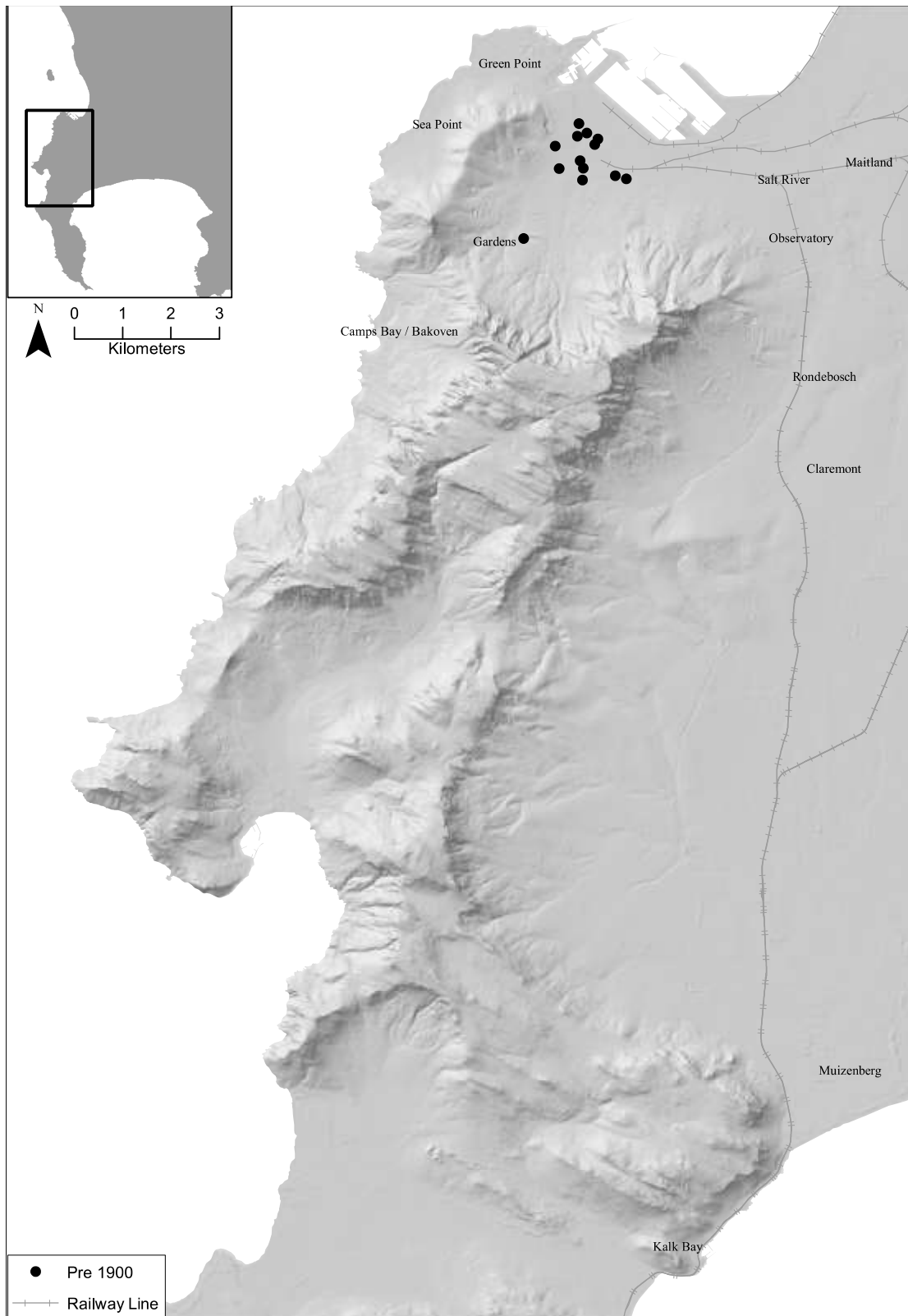
Map 5: Public Toilets Open in 1940

Map 6: Public Toilets Open Pre-World War I

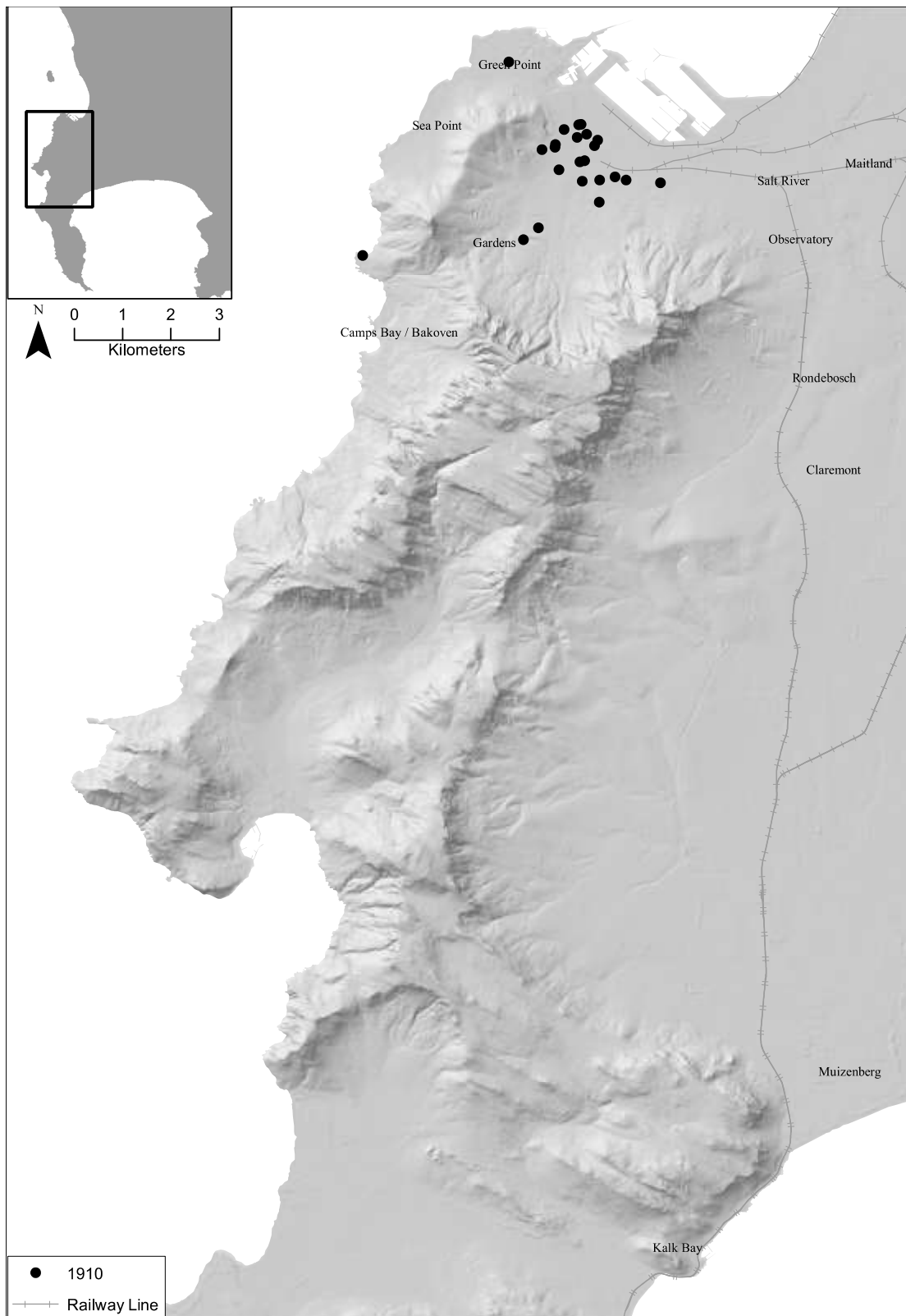
Map 7: Public Toilets Open Post-World War I

Map 8: All Public Toilets Open between 1893 and 1940

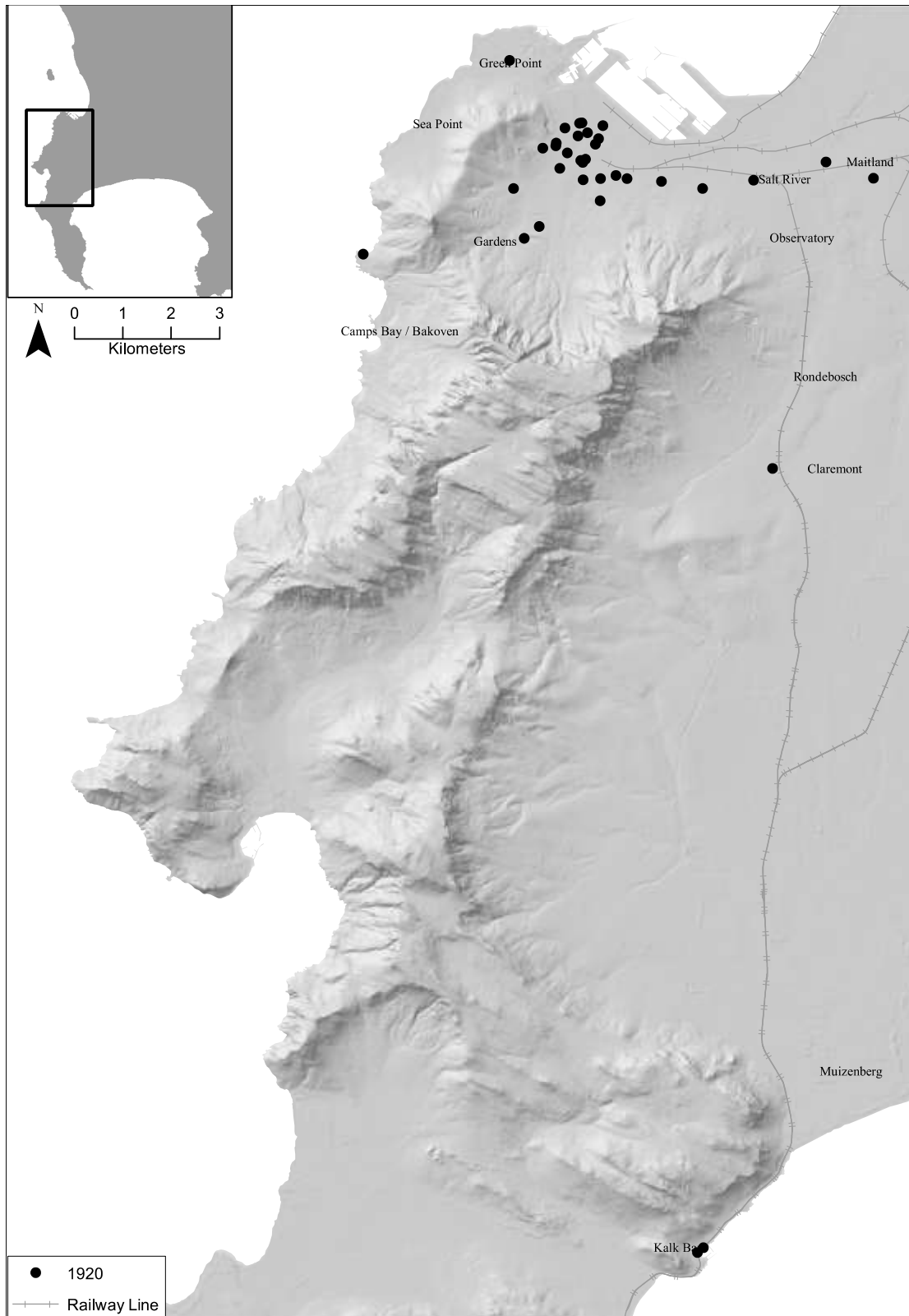
Public Toilets open in 1900



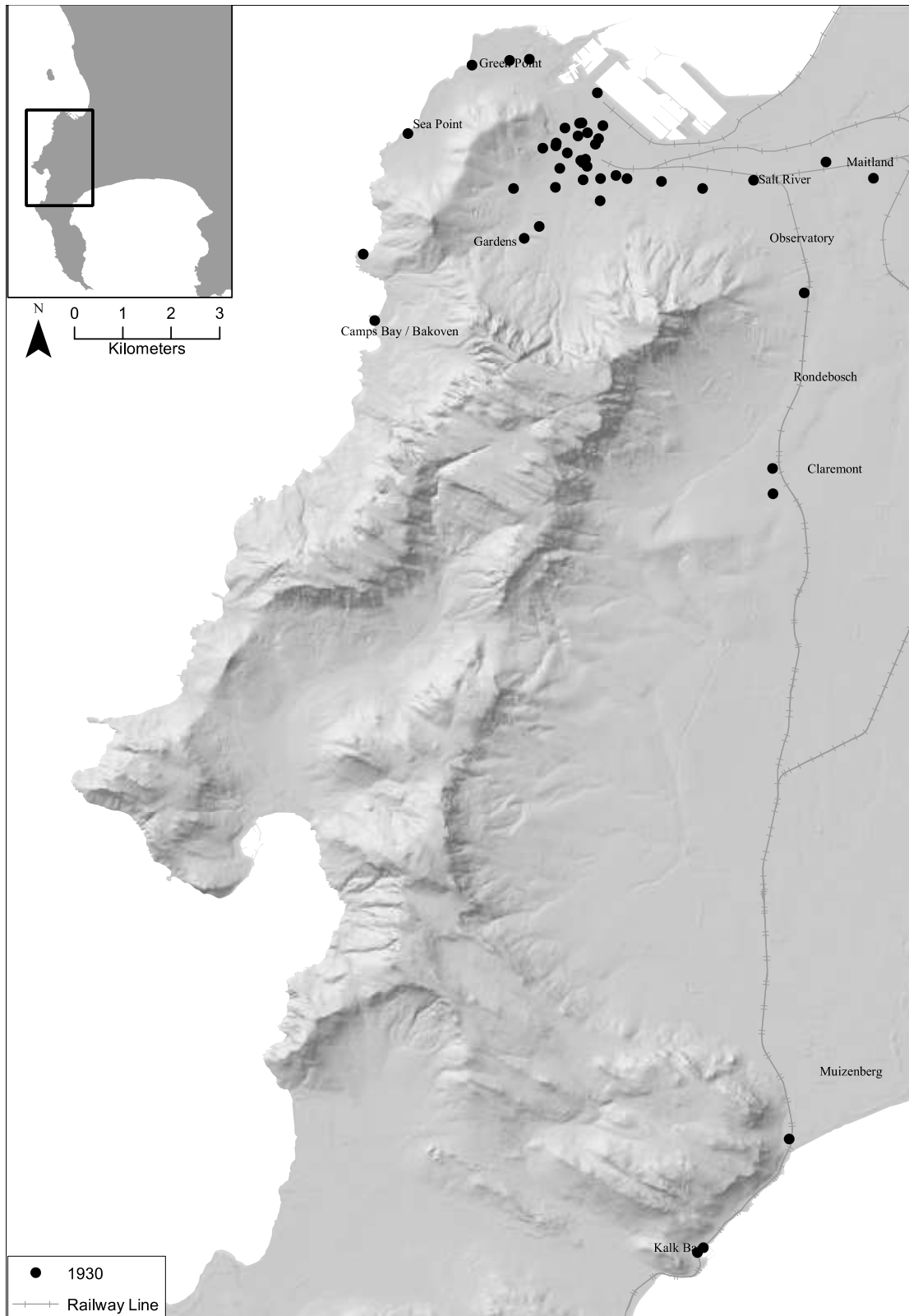
Public Toilets open in 1910



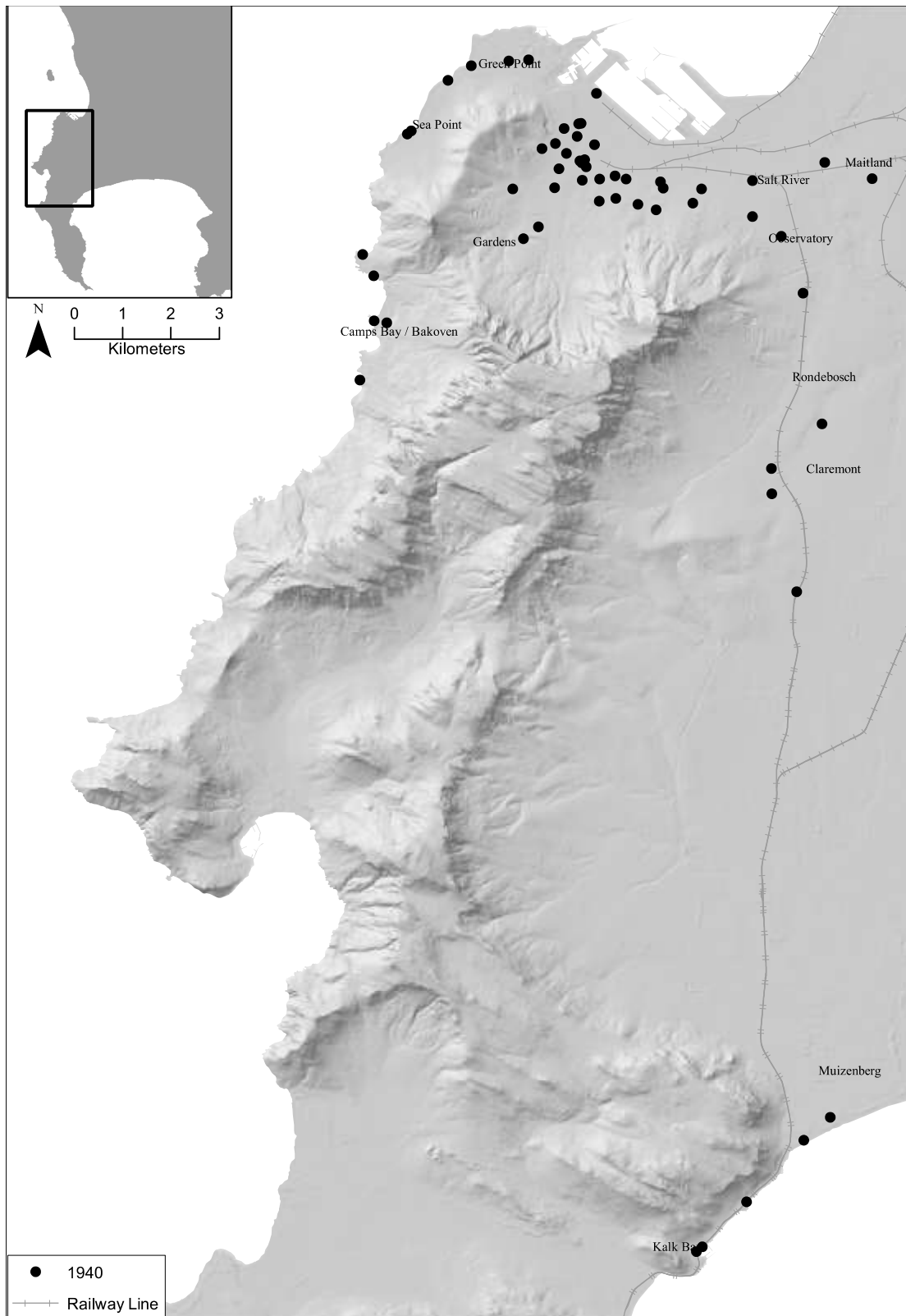
Public Toilets open in 1920



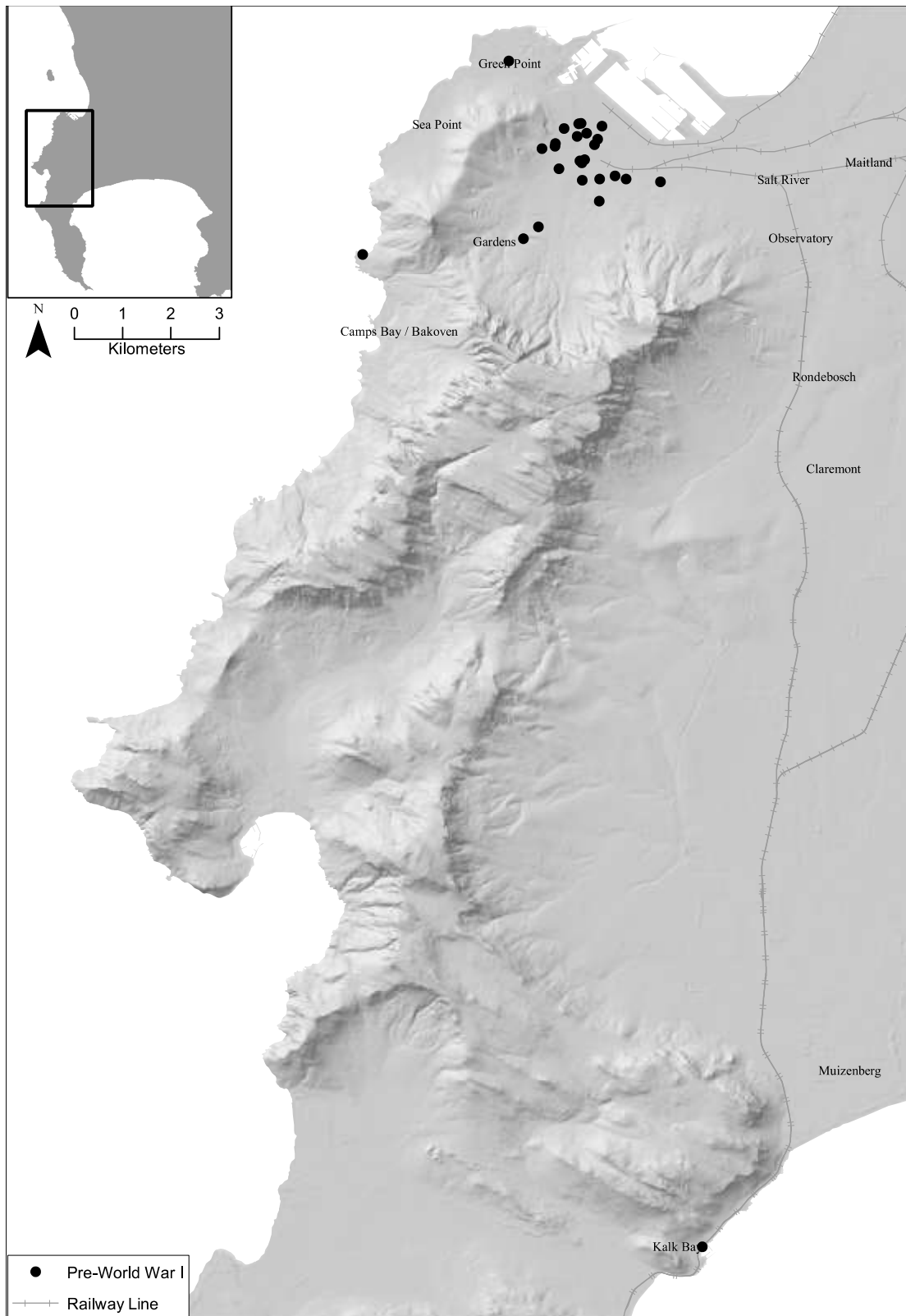
Public Toilets open in 1930



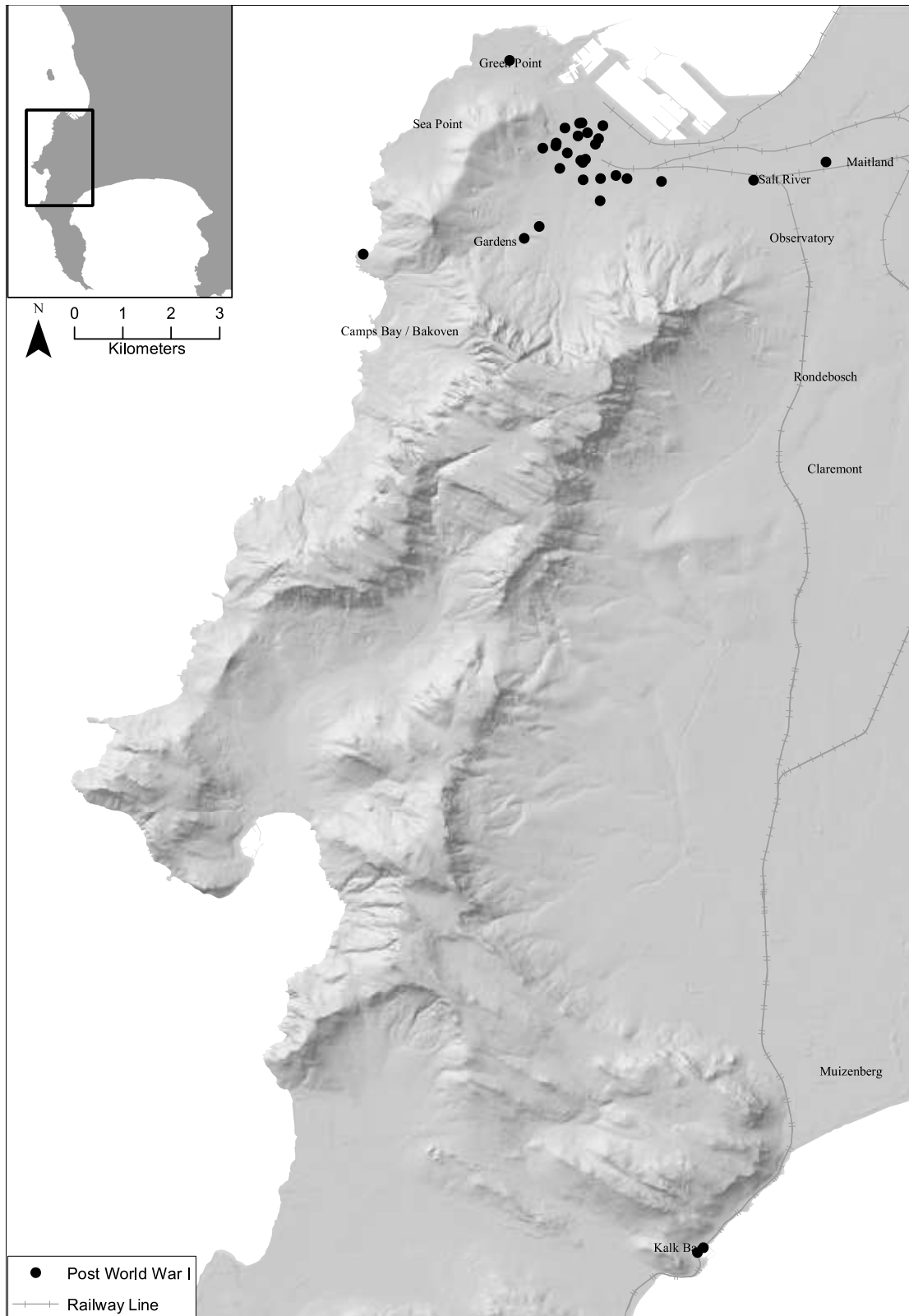
Public Toilets open in 1940



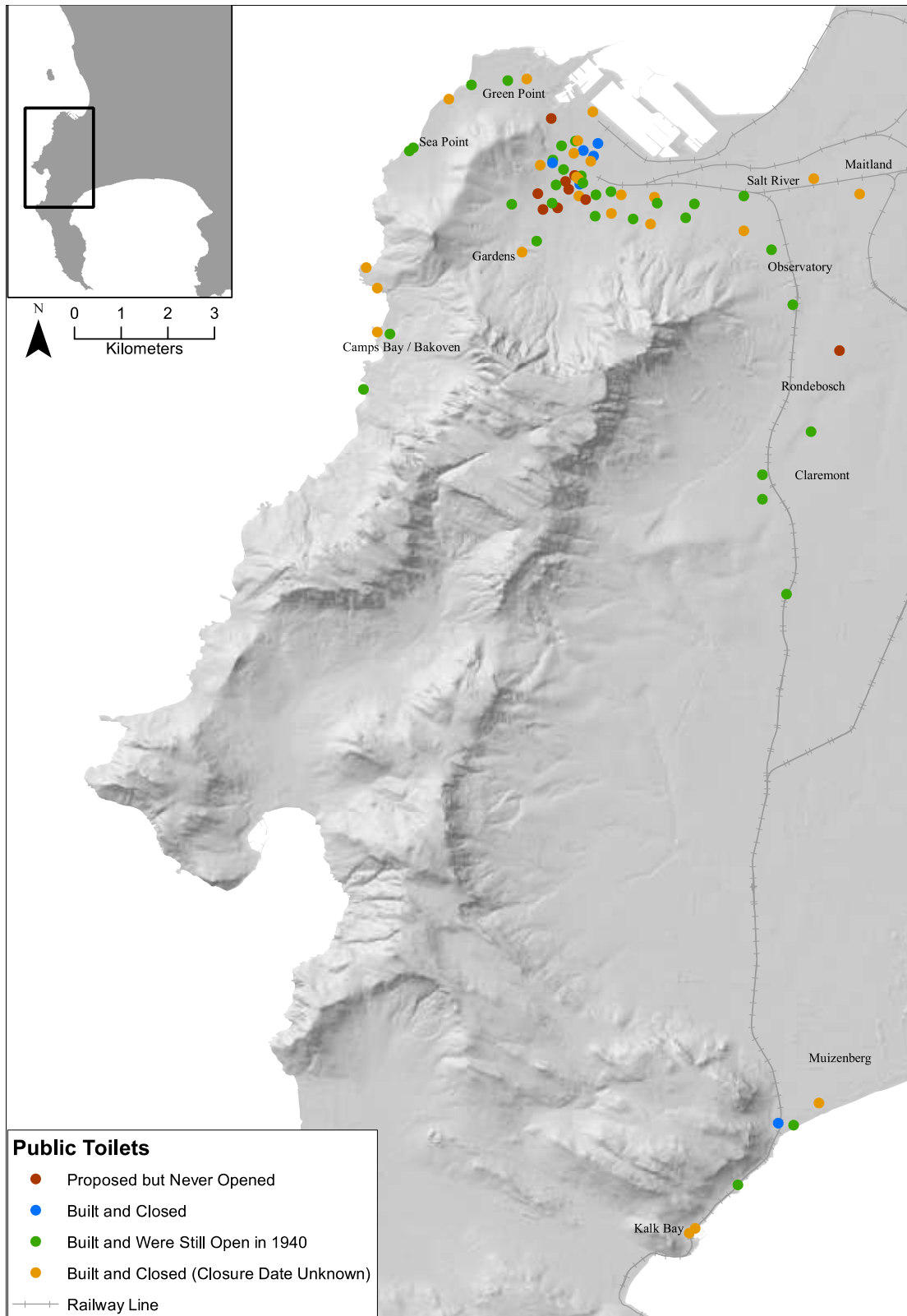
Public Toilets open Pre-World War I



Public Toilets open Post-World War I



All Public Toilets open between 1893 and 1940



Appendix – B

TABLE SHOWING DETAILS OF PUBLIC TOILETS IN CAPE TOWN

#	Location	Proposed	Authorised /prepared	Vetoe d	Erection in progress	Open to Public	Repar - ations	Closed	Status in 1940	Prop. alterations	Converted/ extended/ altered	Open to men	Open to women	Street address	Lat, long	Conf. value	Source
4	Branch Market					1893*		1904*	Closed					Between Darling and Corporation street (where city hall is now),CBD	33°55'31.62"S, 18°25'25.34"E	10	Mayor's Minute (1894), 40, GPUCT; Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1895), 111, GPUCT
5	Caledon Square					1893*		1904*	Closed					Long market and Parade street,CBD	33°55'35.88"S, 18°25'26.55"E	9	Mayor's Minute (1894), 40, GPUCT
26	Fishmarket					1893	1901	1936	Closed		1905	/	1893*	Dock Road, Foreshore	33°55'8.22"S, 18°25'28.37"E	8	Mayor's Minute (1893), 26, GPUCT; Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1895), 111, GPUCT; Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1936), 86, GPUCT
40	Long and Riebeek					1893*	1934	1940*	Open		1894	1893	/	Long and Riebeek, CBD	33°55'10.20"S, 18°25'20.65"E	9	Mayor's Minute (1893), 11, GPUCT
58	Railway Station					1893*		1940*	Open			1893	1893*	Adderly and Strand Street,Foreshore	33°55'15.83"S, 18°25'34.64"E	9	Mayor's Minute (1894), 40, GPUCT
21	Dock Road	1894				1895	1899	1940	Open			1895	/	Dock Road (now Hans Strydom Ave) and Bree street, Atlantic seaboard	33°55'1.82"S, 18°25'21.79"E	10	Mayor's Minute (1894), 11, GPUCT; Mayor's Minute (1895), 23, GPUCT
57	Public/Municipal Gardens	1894				1895		1940	Open		1903	1895	1895	16 Queen Victoria Street,CBD	33°55'32.00"S, 18°25'5.61"E	10	Mayor's Minute (1894), 11, GPUCT; Mayor's Minute (1895), 23, GPUCT
72	Theatre					1895*		1931	Closed	1895		1895	/	Riebeek Square, Shortmarket street, CBD	33°55'16.84"S, 18°25'2.69"E	4	Mayor's Minute (1895), 45, GPUCT; Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1931), 79, GPUCT
23	Early Morning Market (Sir Lowry and Stuckeris)	1895				1896		1940	Open		1899	1896	1896	Sir Lowry and Tennat Road (now Christian Barnard) where current Goodhope centre is, Woodstock/District Six (now Zonnebloem)	33°55'36.86"S, 18°25'51.13"E	7	Mayor's Minute (1895), vii, GPUCT; Mayor's Minute (1899), xxxix, GPUCT; Annual Report of the Medial Officer of Health (1895), 111, GPUCT)
52	Opera House					1896*		1940	Open	1896		1896	/	Darling street, just next to the grand parade,CBD	33°55'26.65"S, 18°25'22.75"E	10	Mayor's Minute (1895), 26, GPUCT
25	Feather Market					1897*		1936*	Closed		1909			Dock Road,CBD	33°55'1.34"S, 18°25'23.83"E	9	Mayor's Minute (1909), v, GPUCT; Letter from District Stores Clerk to [unknown], c. July 1923. 3/CT Vol. 4/1/11. KAB

50	New Fishmarket					1899	1921	1938	Closed			1899	1899	Dock Road, Foreshore	33°55'12.09"S, 18°25'36.98"E	4	Mayor's Minute (1899), xxxix, GPUCT
11	Castle Street (and Fruit and Vegetable Market)					1900		1940	Open			1900	/	Castle Street, Foreshore	33°55'25.88"S, 18°25'26.62"E	10	Mayor's Minute (1900), clii, GPUCT
29	Graaff Electric Light Station, Molteno Road	1900				1900*		1940*	Open			1900		Molteno Road, Oranjezicht	/,/	/	Mayor's Minute (1900), xxxi, GPUCT
10	Castle Bridge	1894				1901	1901	1940	Open	1939	1939	1901	1939	22 Sir Lowry Road, Zonnebloem	33°55'39.05"S, 18°25'38.64"E	8	Mayor's Minute (1894), 11, GPUCT; Mayor's Minute (1901), xi, GPUCT; Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1939), 72, GPUCT
19	De Waal Park					1903		1940	Open			1903	1903	Molteno Road, Oranjezicht	33°56'10.99"S, 18°24'49.05"E	10	Mayor's Minute (1903), xxxi, GPUCT
22	Dorp Street Electric Light Station					1903*		1940*	Open	1903		1903	/	Dorp Street,CBD	/,/	/	Mayor's Minute (1903), xxxi, GPUCT
59	Riebeek Square	1903			1907-190	1908		1940	Open			1908	1908	100 Shortmarket Street,CBD	33°55'14.84"S, 18°25'2.93"E	10	Mayor's Minute (1903), 67, GPUCT; Mayor's Minute (1908), xvi, GPUCT
68	Searle Street and Sir Lowry	1903			1907-190	1908	1919	1940	Open			1908	1908	Corner of Searle and Sir Lowry Street,Woodstock	33°55'41.07"S, 18°26'27.56"E	10	Mayor's Minute (1903), 67, GPUCT; Mayor's Minute (1908), xvi, GPUCT
70	St Andrew's Square	1903			1907-190	1908		1940	Open			1908	/	Where Waterkant, Buitengracht and Somerset make a triangle,Green Point	33°55'4.87"S, 18°25'10.25"E	9	Mayor's Minute (1903); 67, GPUCT; Mayor's Minute (1908), xvi, GPUCT
43	McGregor Street				1908	1909		1940	Open		1910	1908	/	McGregor Street, District Six (now Zonnebloem)	33°55'53.84"S, 18°25'38.07"E	9	Mayor's Minute (1908), xvi, GPUCT
16	Clifton-on-Sea					1910*	1911	1940*	Open		1927			Clifton 4th Beach, Clifton	33°56'28.73"S, 18°22'26.87"E	4	Mayor's Minute (1911), vii, GPUCT
30	Green Point Common	1903				1910*	1909	1940	Open	1928		1910	/	Vlei Road, on the common itself, Green Point	33°54'19.27"S, 18°24'25.75"E	10	Mayor's Minute (1903), 67, GPUCT; Mayor's Minute (1910), vi, GPUCT
1	Adderly Street Pier					1913	1924	1939*	Closed					The fountain on Adderly, where the Jan Van Riebeck statue is,Foreshore	33°55'3.48"S, 18°25'40.80"E	9	Mayor's Minute (1913), v, GPUCT;

54	Grand Parade (coloured)	1903	1912			1913*	1919	1940*	Open		1929	1913	/	Darling street,CBD	33°55'28.14"S, 18°25'24.30"E	9	Mayor's Minute (1903), 67; GPUCT
36	Kalk Bay Beach					1914		1940*	Open			1914	1914	Kalk Bay Beach, off main road,Kalk Bay	34° 7'37.81"S, 18°26'56.86"E	7	Mayor's Minute (1914), iv, GPUCT
41	Maitland Outspan				1915	1916	1925	1940*	Open			1916	/	Corner of Camp and Voortrekker, Maitland	33°55'28.58" S, 18°28'40.30" E	7	Mayor's Minute, (1915), v, GPUCT; Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Public Health and Building Regulations Committee. (7th October 1920) 3/CT Vol. 4/1/5/464. File E452/5. KAB.
18	Darling Street					1917		1927	Closed			1917	/	Darling Street,CBD	33°55'29.57"S, 18°25'26.24"E	9	Letter from the City Engineer to the Health and Building Regulations Committee. (6 June 1917) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. KAB; Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Health and Building Regulations Committee. (16 May 1925) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. KAB.
31	Greenmarket Square	1903				1917		1940	Open	1927	1928	1917	1928	Between Longmarket and Shortmarket streets, CBD	33°55'21.54"S, 18°25'11.86"E	10	Mayor's Minute (1903), 67, GPUCT; Letter from the City Engineer to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (1917) 3/CT Volume. 4/1/5/463. KAB
83	Government Avenue					1917		1922*	Closed					Government Avauue, CBD	33°55'42.54"S, 18°24'58.94"E	8	Letter from the Town Clerk to the Medical Officer of Health (11th June, 1919). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File E446/5. KAB

35	Kalk Bay (outspan and electric station)	1917-1918				1918	1940*	Open			1920; 1926	1918	1926	Old Outspan, corner of Main and Clairvaux Roads, Kalk Bay	34° 7'40.91"S, 18°26'51.89"E	9	Mayor's Minute (1918), vi, GPUCT; Mayor's Minute (1921), xv, GPUCT; Letter from the Town Clerk to the Assistant General Manager of South African Railway and Harbour (21 September 1918) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File. E459/5. KAB; Letter from the Town Clerk to the Assistant General Manager of South African Railway and Harbour (28 November 1918) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File. E459/5. KAB; Extract from minutes of meeting between representatives of the city council, and the railway administration (3 March 1919) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. File. E459/5. KAB.
63	Salt River (market at outspan)		1918			1918	1940	Open			1926	1918	1926	On Voortrekker/Salt River road between Alfred and Junction st, Salt River	33°55'40.48"S, 18°27'41.86"E	10	Mayor's Minute (1918), vi, GPUCT; Letter from Finance Committee to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (30th May 1918). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. Folder: E 453/5. KAB; Letter from the Medical Officer of Health to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (16 April 1924) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. Folder: E454/5. KAB; Letter from City Engineer to Town Clerk (18th February 1925) 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. Folder: E454/5. KAB. Evidence that plans were adopted and put in motion: Minutes from Meeting of Health and Building Regulations Committee (18 February 1925). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/464. Folder: E454/5. KAB.
34	Jurgen's Park		1918-1919			1919	1940	Open				1919	1919*	Corner of Burnside Road and M62, Tamboerskloof	33°55'45.31"S, 18°24'28.52"E	10	Mayor's Minute (1919), iii, GPUCT;

14	Claremont, Ralph Street					1920		1940	Open			1920	/	Ralph Street, Claremont	33°58'54.39"S, 18°27'56.14"E	7	Mayor's Minute (1921), xv, GPUCT
42	Maitland, Slaughterhouse		1918-1919			1920		1940*	Open					Berkley Road, Maitland	33°55'39.66"S, 18°29'18.45"E	7	Mayor's Minute (1919), iii, GPUCT;
80	Woodstock, Cor. Main Road and Aberdeen					1920		1940	Open		1933	1920	1932*	Cor Main Road (Victoria) and Aberdeen, Woodstock	33°55'45.87"S, 18°27'0.76"E	10	Mayor's Minute (1921), xv, GPUCT
49	New Fishing Harbour					1923		1940*	Open					Harbour, close to Duncan Road, Foreshore	33°54'41.40"S, 18°25'36.53"E	6	Mayor's Minute (1924), ?, GPUCT
6	Camp's Bay	1923			1924	1925		1940*	Open			1925	1939*	Victoria Road, between The Meadway and Geneva Drive, Camp's Bay	33°57'13.46"S, 18°22'35.93"E	9	Mayor's Minute (1924), xli, GPUCT; Mayor's Minute (1925), xlv, GUCT
48	Museum (Government Avenue)					1925		1940	Open			1925	1925	Paddock Avenue, Gardens	33°55'44.61"S, 18°25'2.06"E	10	Letter from the District Engineer to the Town Clerk (5 May 1917). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File E446/5. KAB; • Letter from the District Engineer to the Town Clerk (11 June, 1920). 3/CT. Vol. 4/1/5/463. File E446/5. KAB
55	Ladies Rest Room					1925		1940	Open			/	1925	Darling Street, CBD	33°55'30.73"S, 18°25'27.85"E	10	Letter from the Town Clerk to the City Treasurer (23 December 1924), 3/CT Vol. 4/1/5/463. KAB
65	Sea Point	1923			1924	1925		1940	Open			1925	1925*	Beach Road (presumably at the bathing pavilion), Sea Point	33°55'7.86"S, 18°23'3.43"E	10	Mayor's Minute (1924), xli, GPUCT; Mayor's Minute (1925), xlv, GUCT
73	Three Anchor Bay	1923	1925	1923		1925		1940	Open			/	1925*	Corner of Beach Road and Bill Peters Drive, Mouille Point	33°54'22.20"S, 18°23'55.55"E	9	Mayor's Minute (1926), xlviii-xlix, GPUCT; Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1925), lxiv, GPUCT
17	Cycle track					1928*	1929	1940*	Open					Fritz Sonnenberg and Granger Bay Boulevard, Green Point	33°54'18.33"S, 18°24'41.79"E	8	Mayor's Minute (1928), xlv, GPUCT
44	Mowbray, Victoria Road	1923	1927			1928		1940	Open			1928	1928	Victoria Road and Church Street, Mowbray	33°56'56.37"S, 18°28'22.38"E	10	Letter from Town Clerk to Medical Officer of Health (10 May 1927). 3/CT: 4/1/5/464. File: E455/5. KAB

45	Muizenberg	1926				1928		1934	Closed			1928	1928*	Atlantic Road, Muizenberg	34° 6'24.97"S, 18°28'6.64"E	7	Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1928), 80, GPUCT; Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1935), 93, GPUCT
13	Claremont public gardens					1929		1940	Open			1929	1929*	222 Main Road, Claremont	33°59'11.31"S, 18°27'56.13"E	9	Letter from Medical Officer of Health to the Health and Building Regulations Committee (18 April 1928). 3/CT: 4/1/5/464. Folder: E456/5. KAB; Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1930), 69-70, GPUCT
15	Clifton Street	1903	1930			1931*		1940*	Open					Clifton Street, District Six	33°55'52.10"S, 18°25'51.60"E	5	Mayor's Minute (1903), 67, GPUCT; Maintenance of Slipper baths, Clifton Street (1929) 3/CT. Vol 4/2/1/1/458. File 151/29.
32	Hanover Square/Street	1903				1931		1940	Open			1931	1931*	Hanover Street, District Six	33°55'56.00"S, 18°26'9.47"E	6	Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1931), 79, GPUCT
46	Muizenberg Beach	1930				1931		1940	Open	1935		1931	1931*	Muizenberg Beach, Muizenberg	34° 6'26.46"S, 18°28'19.43"E	7	Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1931), 79, GPUCT
62	Salt River (Rochester/Shelley)					1931		1940	Open					Between Rochester and Shelley Road, next to Recreation Grounds, Salt River	33°56'4.78"S, 18°27'41.78"E	10	Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1931), 79, GPUCT
66	Sea Point Beach (For people of colour)	1930	1930			1933		1940	Open			1933	1933*	Beach Road, Sea Point	33°55'5.78"S, 18°23'6.81"E	9	Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1933), 78-79, GPUCT
71	St James		1934		1934	1934		1940	Open			1935	1935*	St James beach, St James	34° 7'7.79"S, 18°27'32.88"E	6	Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1935), 93, GPUCT; Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1935), 93, GPUCT
3	Bakoven		1934		1934	1935		1940	Open			1935	1936*	Victoria Road, Camps Bay	33°57'53.35"S, 18°22'24.03"E	9	Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1935), 93, GPUCT
60	Rocklands Beach					1935		1940*	Open					Beach Road, Three Anchor Bay	33°54'32.03"S, 18°23'36.47"E	9	Mayor's Minute (1935), 48, GPUCT
75	Trafalgar Park					1936		1940	Open			1936	1936*	Corner Searle, Victoria Streets, Woodstock	33°55'45.20"S, 18°26'29.68"E	8	Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1936), 86, GPUCT

38	Keurboom Park, Claremont		1934			1937		1940	Open			1935	1935*	Squirrels Way, Rondebosch	33°58'24.45"S, 18°28'36.91"E	8	Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1937), 101, GPUCT
67	Searle and Windsor		1937			1937		1940*	Open					Corner of Searle and Windsor (Chester, going into what is now Keizergracht), Walmer Estate	33°55'59.80"S, 18°26'24.05"E	10	Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1938), 90-91, GPUCT
7	Camps Bay and Clifton-on-sea (For people of colour)	1936				1938		1940*	Open			1938	1938*	Victoria Road, near the rock pools, Camp's Bay	33°56'43.07"S, 18°22'35.90"E	7	Mayor's Minute (1936), 11, GPUCT
8	Camps Bay, The Camp					1939		1940	Open					Between Geneva Drive and The Meadway road, Camp's Bay	33°57'14.93"S, 18°22'46.18"E	8	Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1939), 72, GPUCT
81	Wynberg, Maynard Road		1939			1939		1940	Open			1939	1939*	Maynard Road, Wynberg	34° 0'17.23"S, 18°28'15.94"E	7	Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1939), 72, GPUCT
51	Observatory, Station Road					1940		1940	Open			1940	1940*	37 Station Road, Observatory	33°56'18.10"S, 18°28'4.78"E	10	Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1940), 73, GPUCT
79	Victoria Walk					1940		1940	Open			1940	1940*	125 Victoria Walk, Woodstock	33°55'55.49"S, 18°26'53.62"E	10	Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health (1940), 73, GPUCT
2	Avenue	1903				/			Never opened					Avenue Street,CBD	33°55'48.99"S, 18°24'54.40"E	7	Mayor's Minute (1903), 67; GPUCT
9	Canterbury Street	1903				/			Never opened					Cantebury Street, Zonnebloem	33°55'42.26"S, 18°25'30.22"E	4	Mayor's Minute (1903), 67; GPUCT
12	Church Square	1903				/			Never opened					Parliament and Spin streets,CBD	33°55'29.57"S, 18°25'13.59"E	7	Mayor's Minute (1903), 67; GPUCT
24	Ebenezer and Somerset Road	1903				/			Never opened					Ebenezer and Somerset Road, Greenpoint	33°54'46.04"S, 18°25'1.78"E	9	Mayor's Minute (1903), 67; GPUCT
28	General Post office and Standard bank (btwn)	1901	1912	1913		/			Never opened			Intended	Intended	Adderly Street,Cape	33°55'25.70"S, 18°25'21.15"E	9	Mayor's Minute (1901), 168-169, GPUCT
33	Hope street (Tuin Plein)	1903				/			Never open					Hope Street/Tuin Plein,Gardens	33°55'48.14"S, 18°25'6.70"E	7	Mayor's Minute (1903), 67; GPUCT

53	Overbeek Square	1903				/			Never opened				Intersection of Long Street, Orange Street, Kloof Street and Buitensingel, CBD	33°55'38.03"S, 18°24'50.42"E	9	Mayor's Minute (1903), 67; GPUCT
56	Plein Street	1903				/			Never opened				Corner of Plein and Barrack street,CBD	33°55'35.26"S, 18°25'15.88"E	7	Mayor's Minute (1903), 67; GPUCT
61	Rondebosch common		1933	1934		/			Never opened				Campground Road, Milner Road, Park Road, Klipfontein Road,Rosebank	33°57'28.23"S, 18°29'1.09"E	9	Mayor's Minute (1934), 20, GPUCT
82	Ladies restroom (For women of colour)	1925	1927			/			Never opened	/	Intended		Darling Street, Grand Parade,CBD	33°55'30.15"S, 18°25'27.10"E	7	Letter from Medical Officer of Health to the the Health and Building Regulations Committee (16 May 1925). 3/CT Volume: 4/1/5/46. KAB