Literature and the Littoral in South Africa: Reading the Tides of History

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work and has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores representations of the littoral in South African literature. It analyses literature published in three broad historical periods with the specific focus on the littoral as a setting from which authors imagine histories differently, often as a corrective, to challenge and wrestle with the racialized categorization of bodies in space. Littoral settings are present throughout the history of South African literature and, when placed on a linear, progressive timeline, feature as a place of first encounters, a site of segregation, and the unmaking of these boundaries. This thesis argues, however, that sequencing representations of the littoral according to this model would subsume histories by those without the power to control official narratives, or whose histories are not well represented in official archives, under rigid nation-based paradigms of typical western historiography. By employing Kamau Brathwaite's theory of "tidalectics" as a method, metaphor and model, I conduct a recursive reading of the littoral's presence in South African literature to show that littoral moments resonate with each other across different historical moments. As such, tidalectics attend to multiple temporalities in a more open, fluid way. I argue that this manner of attending to history surfaces from and sits alongside formal historiography, gently disrupting its premises by offering alternative models for recognising and recording marginal narratives. The primary texts for this thesis include Portuguese expansionist texts, novels by prominent South African authors such as Olive Schreiner, Nadine Gordimer, Peter Abrahams, Zoë Wicomb, Lewis Nkosi, and Yvette Christiansë, and a poetry collection by Douglas Livingstone. In these texts, the littoral is presented as a space which is governed by the spatial politics of that era, but also challenges them, playing a valuable part in constructing spatial politics, and in turn racial politics, in South Africa. A tidalectic reading of these literatures therefore demonstrates that the littoral allows for a different spatio-temporal approach to the long history of social injustice in South Africa.

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PREFACE

I had my first swimming lesson before I knew how to walk. Faded photos in my baby album show my mother standing waist-deep in a swimming pool, her hands supporting me as I lie suspended on my stomach in the water. I know now that infant swimming lessons are not aimed at teaching babies to swim. They are meant to accustom babies to water, to teach them to stay calm and enjoy the floating feeling that water provides. When I look at these photos and reflect on my love of water, I often think of Rachel Carson's essay "The Sea Around Us". Here, Carson writes of water's indelible mark: "each of us carries in our veins a salty stream in which the elements sodium, potassium, and calcium are combined in almost the same proportions as in sea water" (7). She explains that these elements are remnants from our original oceanic forms, reminding us that we were sea creatures long before we evolved into land dwellers. I like to imagine that my first swimming lessons awakened within me what Carson describes as "an unconscious recognition" of this oceanic lineage, stoking within me an unconscious yearning to return to my original home: the sea.

Despite my early swimming lessons, I only learnt to swim properly much later, when my cousin pushed me into a pool before I had time to put on my polyotter.[1] It was a shocking moment, but not traumatic. In this memory, I am suddenly surrounded by water; I thrash around momentarily and then I simply swim, not graciously by any means but I stay afloat. I remember the immense sense of accomplishment I felt at this, it was as though I had mastered a survival skill and grown in the process. Soon afterwards, I started a serious training programme at Stellenbosch University's gymnasium. I had a coach, swam as part of a team, and regularly competed in swimming galas. I can still recall the sounds and smells from this time: the sound of the water lapping at the pool's edges, the shrill shriek of the coach's whistle drilling diving bodies, and the smell of the chlorine and wet, musty towels. Inextricably intertwined with my childhood is also the ocean. As far back as I can remember beach vacations at my family's holiday home in Buffalo Bay, near Knysna, were a regular trip. I learnt how to surf on a foamalite board that irritated my skin and gave me an angry red rash. This time, my father was the one standing waist-deep in the water, holding the board

[1] A polyotter is a flotation device used to keep children afloat while they grow confident in their swimming capabilities. It is a swimsuit with detachable Styrofoam blocks so that buoyance can be adjusted as the swimmer's skills improve and grow stronger.

and pushing me towards the beach when a suitable wave would break. As I grew older, my father was the reliable lift to the beach on a Sunday morning, waiting patiently on the sand, regardless of the weather, as my brother and I dared the sets. On a particularly torrential morning, I looked back briefly to see if he was calling us back to the shore. Instead, I remember him huddled under the overhanging roof of the lifeguards' hut, smoking casually, waving at us to keep going. It is the only endearing memories of my father that I have left.

Surfing became an obsession after I bought my first car. I was 21 and had amassed a gang of friends equally craving stoke.[2] Waking with the seagulls to paddle out for a dawnie before the waves become populated is its own kind of religion,[3] and with it comes a shift in perspective only a surfer understands. In his surf memoir, *Barbarian Days* (2015), William Finnegan describes the "weight of unmapped worlds [and] unborn language" (203) that searching for stoke brings. Sometimes, when I'm floating on my board in the backline, I feel suspended between various places and spaces, caught between the shore, the endless watery horizon, and the secret word of the sea bottom. And all this lies under a cosmos that holds me to the earth, even as I feel suspended in the water. It is a strange movement-in-stasis and I cannot help but feel incredibly insignificant. Often, if the set is slow,[4] I do little else other than bob and wait. Over time, many friendships have been solidified in this moment, as secrets and self-conscious wishes are shared, all while waiting for the next wave.

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[2] "Stoke" is a word surfers use to describe the feeling of exhilaration, pleasure and passion brought about by surfing.

[3] A "dawnie" is a surfing session that happens at the first light of dawn.

[4] A set refers to the number of waves that would break over a certain amount of time before there is a lull. The number of waves in each set is determined by various environmental factors such as swell frequency, deep sea winds, the tide, etc. If a "set is slow" it means there is long wait between sets.

One of my first swimming lessons. Maties Gym, Stellenbosch, 1987.

My first surfboard. Buffalo Bay, Garden Route, 1991.

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I first encountered scholarly engagement on the South African littoral in 2014, at a photography exhibit called “Beyond the Beach”, in Muizenberg. In the exhibit’s catalogue, the curator Paul Weinberg describes Muizenberg Beach as “one of the surf capitals of the world, a once elitist seaside resort for the rich, a formerly once predominantly Jewish suburb, a community undergoing transformation, a haven for alternates and bohemians, a good property investment, or simply a good place to walk yourself and the dog” (*Beyond the Beach*, n.p.). Muizenberg is therefore a fascinating confluence of histories and social groups. The “Beyond the Beach” exhibit, comprising of contributions by six different photographers, captured the diversity of bodies that access the Muizenberg beach. Sandy Worm’s contribution, titled “Black People Don’t Surf”, featured a collection of snapshots of the local surfers of colour and challenged celebrated visibilities of only white surfers by constructing a post-apartheid archive of surfers of colour. Sean Wilson’s “Bayou Falso” critiqued tourism-ready vistas of Table Bay by offering viewers a multi-layered and complex representation of how personal and collective experience of place intersect. Through the exhibit, viewers thus encountered visions not commonly seen of South African beach-goers: a congregation member baptised in the ocean, naval members doing early-morning PE, and a street vendor hawking his goods.

What I found most striking about these photographs were the many different stories they surfaced of this singular space. As a surfer and ocean-lover, I was intrigued, particularly given that I had not yet encountered an academic approach to the South African littoral. Inspired by Meg Samuelson’s opening address at the exhibit, I did some further research, which showed that studies on the South African littoral, in the literary field especially, were minimal. Indeed, the only inquiry into this field was offered by Samuelson herself (see “Literary inscriptions”). This deficit in scholarly engagement stuck me as curious, especially considering the growing popularity of oceanic discourse in the Humanities, and that “littoral studies is profiting from the momentum generated by the recent maritime turn” (Kluwick and Richter 4).

Jenny Altschuler
'Muizenberg: The Face and the Façade, Phumi at the garage café, Muizenberg', 2014
Edition of 8: Epson Archival Ink on Epsom Archival Matte paper, 455 x 335 mm
Phumi is a high fashion hairdresser, living and working in Capricorn Park. She flaunts the fact that much of her free time is spent presenting herself as a modern day beauty.

Sean Wilson (b.1971)
Gordon's Bay, 2009, 1/3 From the 'Bayou Falso' series
Archival pigment ink on cotton paper 550 x 420mm

Paul Weinberg, 'Beyond the Beach series'
Church service, Sunrise Circle, 2012
Edition of 10, Archival Ink Pigments on Cotton Rag 297 x 420 mm

Sandy Worm (b.1977)
'Black People Don't Surf series' Cass Collier, Muizenberg, 2012
Silver Gelatin prints from analogue film Printed on Baryta paper in Germany 60 x 80 cm.

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In 2015, Penny Sparrow, a Durban local, published a post on her personal Facebook account after returning from a New Year's Day at the beach. New Year's Day is one of the few days of the year in which black working-class families are able to get together in leisure spaces as most people are on leave. Traditionally, families spend the day at the beach to enjoy some time in the sun. In her Facebook post, Sparrow unleashed a racist tirade against black citizens, condemning them for what she perceived to be their uneducated and uncivilised conduct. Recognisable in Sparrow's hateful language and entitlement over public space is an eery invocation of old apartheid discourses of segregated beach spaces and her post raises pertinent questions about the space of the beach in the contemporary, post-apartheid social imaginary.

Kevin Durrheim and Jon Dixon have published a vital study on the racialised rhetoric of segregated beaches during apartheid and have shown how access over these spaces continues to be influenced by these legacies, even in the post-apartheid context (see "The Role of Place"). To this argument I would add the following extension: given that beaches were largely constructed as spaces of white leisure under the apartheid regime, it is clear that Sparrow's specific ridiculing of the behaviour of "black skins" (Sparrow, qtd in Evans) at the beach is a direct product of this ideological construction. The beach still seems to demand a conduct aligned with apartheid-produced ideals of white civility. The layers of profound racism in Sparrow's statement, the treatment of humans as animals, the refusal to share the beach which essentially calls for segregation, are a reminder of the still-present racism around spaces of leisure in the national imaginary. If humans, as Carson suggests, have evolved from the sea, and we yearn to "re-enter it mentally and imaginatively" (7), then the unified path of South Africans towards the shore is hampered by racialised politics, and the Sparrow incident is a painful reminder that beautiful, natural spaces such as the beach are still too often claimed for a specific kind of white leisurely conduct only.

I have chosen to open this thesis with these anecdotes for two reasons: to inform the reader of the impetus and passion that lies behind this project and to show that littoral spaces are complex spaces; they are comprised of multiplicity, and therefore serve as crucibles in which

the personal, the social and the political mix and collide.[5] Every person who enters the intertidal space of the beach for whatever reason — be it leisurely, religiously, vocationally or professionally — does so in a political capacity. Space is, as Doreen Massey argues, the dimension where things exist at the same time, it is a dimension of simultaneity, of multiplicity, and as such it is a space of the social, determined by the interactions of bodies in space and inevitably by political narratives (*For Space* 9).

My relationship with the ocean is thus as much deeply personal as it is troubled by South Africa's political history. For example, my grandfather was able to purchase the family's holiday home in Buffalo because of the financial prosperity that accompanied his Broederbond affiliations. Like our family beach house, my relationship with the ocean is a product of opportunities I have been afforded as a white South African: the swimming camps, the lifesaving courses and "sea survival" programmes, the regular lifts to the beach, the privilege of having a swimming pool, or access to one, at every house we lived. These are all products of the economic privilege apartheid politics created, and systemically still perpetuate, for South Africa's current white population. I do not remember a single person of colour on my swimming team, nor can I recall sitting alongside a surfer of colour in the backline at Buffalo Bay during my preteens. It was this inequity which I recognised in the "Beyond the Beach" exhibit: an image of the littoral as a space of fundamental inequality. Yet, I also recognised how the littoral was more than simply this; even as it remains shaped by apartheid legacies and inherited ideologies, it is also a space of co-existence. In South Africa, each person who accesses the beach bears a complex matrix of concurrent forms of personal, collective, and national histories. And it is for this very reason that the littoral cannot be fully thought of outside the categories of the personal and the collective, the past and the present, the material and the imaginative.

[5] I was also greatly inspired by the academic creative non-fiction works of Hedley Twidle, his essay "Barbarian Phase: A Surfing Half-Life" is a favourite of mine, as well as Julia Martin's "On the Sea Shore".

Chapter One

Introduction

South Africa's coastlines and beaches are inscribed with histories of unequal interactions, constitutionalised segregation and control that limited modes of access and mobility, and enduring discourses of power that continue to trouble issues of belonging in the post-apartheid context. In South African literature, littoral zones are predominantly represented as contested sites. Littoral settings are frequently employed by authors to trouble ownership of land and space and the socio-political histories that flow from these claims. Early representations of interactions within the littoral mark the beginning stages of the categorisation of persons in the country, both in racialised and economic terms, and register as the site of first contact between foreign cultures.[6] These representations continue through later literatures as the littoral emerges as a space of leisure meant to mark racialised class differences, as site of protest, and of memory. Other literatures consider the littoral setting as ecotone, home to living organisms from microbes to animals to humans and explore the placing of the human as category within a larger environmental awareness. While there has been a small body of critical work on the South African littoral, this thesis will depart from, and add to, current scholarship by offering the first extended study of the littoral in South African literatures.

I am interested in the literary imagining of these terraqueous spaces, their representation, their narrativity, their textual attributes. As setting, the littoral underscores the diversities and complexities of South African literature and opens a space from which to imagine our terraqueous histories. The literatures discussed in this thesis engage with the making of national identities of (un)belonging in their depiction of racialised policies, spatial legislation, and the subsequent effects on categories of persons in contemporary South Africa. In South African literature, the littoral functions as a disruptive space that throws the racialised historical discourse into crisis, making, unmaking, and remaking it, in a Brathwaite-ian "tidalectic" fashion. This thesis reads certain moments in South African literature through a littoral lens to explore authors' use of terraqueous settings in their creative writings, and

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[6] Mary Louise Pratt calls this a contact zone, a term which refers to "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" ("Arts of the Contact Zone", n.p.).

argues that these fictional evocations of the beach allow for the construction of imaginary ways out of discursive histories. To do so, it considers how the littoral played a contributing part in challenging the racialised categorisation and segregation of South African people.

This introductory chapter establishes the definition, and parameters, of the term “littoral”. It then presents an overview of published histories of South African literature to argue for the legitimacy of this study and the kind of literary history that can be written when focusing on the littoral as an analytic category. Consequently, I move to existing critical and historical studies on the South African littoral and draw on publications from abroad that have influenced my approach. The prominent theoretical frameworks of this thesis are Kamau Brathwaite’s historiographical paradigm, tidalectics, and Edward Soja’s spatial concept of Thirdspace. I employ these two concepts to accommodate a multiplicity of representations that do not privilege one above the other. Chapter One concludes with the thesis’s outline, providing a summary of each chapter’s argument.

1.2 A Definition of “Littoral Zone”

As a geographical space, “the littoral zone” generally refers to the terraqueous space in which shorelines form. I say “generally” because the precise definition of how littoral zones are measured changes depending on the type of water body it pertains to and on the discipline in which the term is used. In marine ecology, for example, the littoral zone is considered to extend from the high-water mark on shorelines to the section of the ocean that is permanently submerged in water and where the water level remains unaffected by the push and pull of the tide. Lakes and rivers have littoral zones as well, but here the littoral zone is understood to span from the shore to the near shore and refers to the space of water shallow enough to allow sunlight to penetrate all the way to the bottom. The legal definition of “littoral zone” also changes from country to country. In South Africa, the Integrated Coastal Management Act 24 of 2008 defines the littoral zone as “any land forming part of, or adjacent to, the seashore that is — (a) unstable and dynamic as a result of natural processes; and (b) characterised by dunes, beaches, sand bars and other landforms composed of unconsolidated sand, pebbles or other such material which is either unvegetated or only partially vegetated”.[7] In order to limit scope to a more manageable focus, this project refers to the littoral zone as oceanic

[7] S1 of the Integrated Coastal Management Act 24 of 2008.

terraqueous spaces which contain the presence of human settlements, activity, or interaction, such as islands, beaches, harbours and ports, and does not include lakes, rivers, and estuaries.

If littoral spaces are "unstable" and "dynamic", then they are disruptive spaces, ever-changing and constantly moving. Conceptually, they are spaces that resist notions of stagnancy and fixity due to the changing nature of tides and shorelines — quite fittingly displayed in the unstable definition and designation of the term itself. Intrinsic in the littoral zone's nature, then, is a disruption of homogeneity. Additionally, the littoral zone is a space that mixes together not only water, sand, rock and sunlight, but also living organisms — from plankton, bacteria and fungi to amphibious creatures such as sea turtles and crabs. And of course, humans visit the littoral as well. It is for this reason that I further limit my study by interrogating human engagements with, and within, the littoral space and thus focus on shores that contain presences of human settlements, activity, and *interaction*.[8] I stress "interaction", as I am specifically interested in the socio-political, cultural constructions of the littoral space, as will be discussed in the section on Thirdspace in this chapter.

1.3 Literature Review

The absence of littoral histories in South Africa is perhaps informed by the absence of a literary engagement with the sea. South Africa boasts no study of the maritime in its literature akin to what Hester Blum offers to the American canon, and Samuel Baker to the British.[9] In more global studies of maritime literature, such as Margaret Cohen's *The Novel and the Sea* (2010), Joana Rostek's *Seaing Through the Past: Postmodern Histories and the Maritime Metaphor in Contemporary Anglophone Fiction* (2011), *Navigating Cultural Spaces: Maritime Places* (2014) edited by Horatschek et al, or Charlotte Mathieson's *Sea Narratives: Cultural Responses to the Sea, 1600–Present* (2018), South Africa's locality is often overlooked. From this, it may seem, at least to literature scholars, that South Africa has no literary maritime. There are a number of possible reasons for this. Firstly, South Africa is not historically renowned to be a sea-faring nation in the same pioneering sense as the Arabs, Chinese, Dutch, English, French, Portuguese or Spanish. Secondly, when it comes to South Africa's coastal histories, a Western imaginary has dominated the making of the southern

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[8] I therefore exclude uninhabited shorelines and coasts.

[9] See Hester Blum's *The View From the Masthead: Maritime Imagination and Antebellum American Sea Narratives* and Samuel Baker's *Written on the Water: British Romanticism and the Maritime Empire of Culture*.

African shore,[10] starting in the fifteenth century and leading, arguably, to the present day.[11] And thirdly, as discussed later, a comprehensive study of the making of the South African beach does not exist.

When it comes to South Africa's history with the sea, its shores have largely been shaped by Western discourse as a site of arrival and departure in varying durations. For most of the early modern period, as the making of the beach was taking place in the Western imaginary in which the shores of the planet were being invaded and colonised through maritime expansion and island hubs, South Africa's coastlines were considered as mere ports in the expansive Indian and Atlantic oceans' trading networks.[12] As John R. Gillis reminds us, "we have been taught to treat coasts as places where history begins and ends" (*The Human Shore* 3) and it is therefore no surprise that colonial histories would argue that South Africa's history proper started with Dutch arrival at the Cape, the preamble to continued European settlement.[13]

However, historians such as Gillis, Kerry Ward, and Josiah Blackmore have done valuable work to argue for the significant roles coastal spaces play in the development of a society. Ward argues that South Africa's early modern history should be reconceptualised so that the Dutch Cape be considered a littoral society.[14] Ward suggests, by illustrating how legitimate and illegitimate shipping occurred on the sea as much as legal and illegal trade occurred on

[10] I use "Western" here to reflect the same binary as Stuart Hall's dichotomy of the "West and the Rest" as he discusses in his influential essay, "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power".

[11] That is not to say there is no South African history of the sea, both from or within its shores. Archaeological evidence such as shell middens and indigenous burial sites testify to human presence in Table Bay between 300000 and 1,4 million years ago (Werz 78). Prehistoric fish traps along the West Coast and caves and rock shelters used by indigenous people along the south east coast attest to the fact that "[a]ll along the approximately 3000km long coastline, traces of the human past can be found" (77). This includes the prehistoric, early and modern periods, and testifies to the fact that "[t]he marine cultural heritage of South Africa is considerable and diverse". While these findings suggest the presence of humans, consensus is that the shores are "ephemeral occupation sites" (78) and that the orientation of indigenous societies in the Western and Eastern Cape prior to Dutch settlement "was not primarily towards the sea" (Ward 143). The irony is, of course, that I have footnoted this brief mention of autochthonous peoples' interactions with the coast, while the Westerners continue to receive attention in the main text.

[12] On this point, see Kerry Ward, "Tavern of the Seas", and Meg Samuelson, "Rendering the Cape-as-Port" for contributions that shift attention to the Cape's peninsular position and for perspectives that write *from* the Cape.

[13] See Witz.

[14] Ward uses Michael Pearson's definition and use of a "littoral society". Pearson observes that societies situated in littoral spaces scattered across the world share more similarities with each other than their "inland neighbours" ("Littoral Society" 353).

land, that "[a]ny history of the Dutch Cape needs to keep both land and sea in sight, as this was the contemporary perspective of the world inhabited by those who came to the Cape" (137), thereby "integrating the harbor town with its hinterland" (146). Such an historical reconceptualisation, argues Ward, would place the "growth of Cape Town within its cosmopolitan transoceanic empire" (141). By moving the terraqueous nature of coastlines to the forefront of her analysis, Ward reconceptualises the significance of littoral spaces in shaping South Africa's history, specifically with regards to the encounters and interactions that transpire there.

Josiah Blackmore makes the point that the littoral serves as a contact zone. Blackmore writes that the pauses or stops in coastlines "typically allow for the encounters between Africans and Europeans, the dynamic of human interaction that serves as the backbone of military, commercial, and religious imperial pursuits" (*Moorings* xvi). Littoral encounters in the fifteenth century therefore brought racialised discourses onto southern African shores. As a result of the British occupation, colonial expansion moved inland and with it came a mobilisation of discourse that secured the landscape as the central focus of imperial interest. These pursuits resulted in a long history of territorial claims in southern Africa accompanied, ironically, by a landed discourse that is owed to its littoral origins.

This thesis is part literary littoral history, part South African history of literature, and part history of the South African beach — though all parts are not necessarily weighted equally. My interest lies in discourse and representation, and how the creative imaginings of the littoral engage history, categorisation, memory, being, and belonging. Part of the project of this thesis is to provide more focused scholarship on the political and social significance of terra *and* aqua in literature in order to argue that the very site of the shore itself played, and continues to play, a part in persistent racialised discourses of belonging. Through an analysis of South African literary texts, I aim to offer supplementary readings of the littoral in South Africa and an alternative historical discourse that emerges through engagement with the representation and narrative strategy of this setting. I propose that the littoral is significant in South African writings and warrants a degree of attention it has yet to receive because it provides a space for authors to imagine the interplay between humans' physical and psychic selves, and in so doing, register a disruption in rigid homogenous discourses.

1.3.1 Literary Publications on the South African Littoral

Thus far, the only literary exploration of the beach in South Africa is Meg Samuelson's book chapter (2015), "Literary Inscriptions on the South African Beach: Ambiguous Settings, Ambivalent Textualities" (see Kluwick and Richter). In this chapter Samuelson discuses "various narratives of encounter" (123) stretched over three periods: the colonial contact zone, sites of segregation, and post-apartheid.[15] Samuelson analyses the beach as littoral space that troubles neat notions of binaries and boundaries. As such, the littoral functions, Samuelson suggests, as a site that ultimately "elicits and enables a post-apartheid aesthetic by providing a setting in which to imagine the emergent state" (123).[16] Samuelson's focus is on troubling race and culture binaries, and she uses the littoral setting's ambiguity to do so.

The length of my project lends itself to a more comprehensive selection of works, enabling me to undertake a more expansive exploration of the littoral in South African writing. To this end, I read the littoral as a continuous presence in South African literatures and argue that this reveals a consistent presence of tidalectic histories generated by the intertidal zone. Tidalectic histories disrupt discursive archives and thereby challenge the foundation upon which these archives were written and the histories they continue to lay claim to. In South Africa, this is intrinsically entangled in discourses on race. My approach to littoral studies departs from Samuelson in that I consider littoral literatures to surface a tidalectic archive in South African writings which disrupts foundational discourses generated by racist histories and ideologies.

In historical disciplines, *Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures, and Transoceanic Exchanges* (2016), edited by Jerry H. Bentley et al, includes Kerry Ward's chapter, "'Tavern of the Seas'? The Cape of Good Hope as an Oceanic Crossroads during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries". This essay considers the Cape as port in the network of empire and conducts a reading of the various oceanic networks that amalgamated in this terraqueous setting. While her chapter is instructive for its focus on the littoral's significance, it remains historical and historiographical. Glen Thompson's doctoral dissertation, *Surfing, Gender and Politics: Identity and Society in the History of South African Surfing Culture in the Twentieth–Century* (2015) provides a comprehensive socio-cultural history of surfing in

[15] In "Sea Changes, Dark Tides and Littoral States" (2013), Samuelson explores representations of the South African coast in post-apartheid narratives and their articulation of South Africa as "a nation in and after transition" (9).

[16] Inklings of the littoral as oceanic component also occur in Samuelson's earlier work. In "Oceanic Histories and Protean Poetics" (2010). Samuelson positions inscriptions of the sea in Zoë Wicomb's fiction as a "fluid archive" that "casts up into official, land-centred narratives the flotsam of lost, scattered and repressed histories" (543).

South Africa with specific reflection on the political nature of the sport. Thompson's work explores how land politics control free access to open water and how the backwash of this is in turn reflected onshore in a surfer culture comprised of a very specific kind of demographic: white and male.

Collections on the littoral from the broader humanities are informative for theorisation but often exclude the South African space from their scope. *The Beach in Anglophone Literatures and Cultures: Reading Littoral Space* (Kluwick and Richter, 2015) is a formative contribution to studies on the littoral in international literatures. This edited collection offers diverse readings of the littoral and encompasses varying definitions of the beach, the topographical zone, and expansive constructs of the littoral itself. It is the diversity in engagement of the littoral space and its inimitable definition contained in this collection that informed useful modes of reading the littoral in South African literatures. *Something Rich & Strange: Sea Changes, Beaches and the Littoral in The Antipodes* (Hosking et al, 2009) offers various analyses of the Australian coastal edge in its myriad forms but is clearly location specific.

Historian John R. Gillis (2012) has written on coastlines as offering up social histories of nations and their people. Gillis's *The Human Shore* considers the history of the sea in its relationship with coastal dwellers and civilizations. Congruently, Michael N. Pearson's "Littoral Society" (1985) questions whether societies situated in littoral spaces across the world share more similarities with each other, than their "inland neighbours" (353). Pearson argues that it is the "mixture [of] maritime and terrestrial influences that makes a study of littoral society a paradigm for maritime history" (354). Drawing on Pearson's suggestion, my study considers whether this paradigm can extend inland as well, and whether the ebb and flow between maritime and land histories allow for the littoral to resonate as space of interaction and contention.

From the above it is evident that while there are many histories of South Africa and its literatures, there are far fewer histories of its oceans. And there is no compiled history of the making of the South African beach. The representations of the littoral offered in South African writings are therefore of interest for both South African literary studies and global beach studies.

1.3.2 Published Histories of South African Literature

This project seeks to make a contribution to the oceanic humanities in South Africa and to draw attention to South African littoral literatures. Most focused historical studies of South African literature omit literary discussions of the ocean in favour of writings on the landscape. Major studies on South African literatures therefore present a lacuna in littoral discussions. Malvern Van Wyk Smith's *Grounds of Contest: A Survey of South African English Literature* (1990) is marketed as the first general study of South African English literature since 1925. In his introduction to the book, Van Wyk Smith notes "the quintessentially South African landmarks in our writing" (iii), and thus unsurprisingly makes no mention of the littoral, or any of its congruent associations, shore, beach, sea, and ocean, in his glossing of the national English literature. Malvern Van Wyk Smith's *Shades of Adamastor* (1988) traces the presence in South African literature of Adamastor, Luis Vas de Camões's infamous anthropomorphised imagining of the Cape of Storms — and the earliest representation of the Cape littoral available in English translation. However, as Meg Samuelson ("Literary Inscriptions") points out, the collection mostly focuses on the figure of Adamastor itself and rarely expands the discussions to other littoral, or beach, scenes. To Samuelson, this "once again bears out the point [...] on the relative obscurity of the beach-as-setting in South African literary culture and criticism" (123).

Despite its promising title, "Southern African Writing: Voyages and Explorations", a special issue of *Matatu* (1994), similarly fails to provide reflections on the physical sea voyages of South African writers, or their shores of departure, and locates the authors under discussion as already located in other countries. This is also the case in Bernth Lindfors's *Early Black South African Writing in English* (2011). While Lindfors dedicates a chapter to the author Peter Abrahams, he neglects to mention that he spent two years at sea, and makes only a passing mention of his "transatlantic context" (19). Michael Chapman's *Southern African Literatures* (1996) makes only one reference to the littoral: Douglas Livingstone's poetry collection *A Littoral Zone.* Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly's *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid, and Democracy, 1970–1995* (1998) provides no mention of oceanic or terraqueous imaginings. Nor does Michael Chapman and Margaret Lenta's *SA Lit Beyond 2000* (2011) include any mention of the littoral or littoral literature in South Africa. The most recent publication on a history of South African literature, David Attwell and Derek Attridge's *The Cambridge History of South African Literature* (2012), provides a significant collection of scholarship on the diverse literatures in the national literary canon. Its selection

of texts spans the entire history of South Africa, from the oral literatures predating colonial settlement to post-apartheid writings, but remains landlocked in its vantage point.

One of the only pieces of scholarship on South African littoral literature is Stephen Gray's *Southern African Literature: An Introduction* (1979). This manuscript includes a discussion of Captain Maryatt's novel *The Mission, or Scenes in Africa* (1970), which opens with a shipwreck, "but [one] which symbolises an unleashing of chaos. Terra Firma […] is then awarded the psychic equivalence of another island with all its enchantments […] and a shore that is in fact a succession of tidemarks, of borders against the dark and formless inland" (116). Following this shipwreck scene, Gray's attention turns inland and the littoral is left unconsidered as the point of entry into and out of the 'dark' African interior. This is similarly the case for his argument concerning Adamastor in Chapter Two of *Southern African Literature*. Here, Gray present a reading of Adamastor as "the white man's creation myth of Africa" (15). Gray, much like Van Wyk Smith, remains equally focused on the myth itself and overlooks not only Adamastor's littoral qualities but, again, other littoral scenes as well.

1.3.3 History of the South African Beach

No comprehensive history of the South African beach has yet been written. Of the limited existing scholarship, Durban's beaches have received the most pointed focus. Much of Robert Preston-Whyte's academic writings, for example, consider how the seaside is socially constructed ("Constructed Leisure") and the impact surfers have on constructing beaches as spaces of leisure-making ("Constructions of Surfing"). For Glen Thompson, focus on the sport of surfing provides what he describes as "a starting point in considering how to write the history of the beach in South Africa as a social and cultural space at the edge of the city" ("Reimagining Surf City" 2115). Thompson's research also explores the effects surfing culture have had on the construction of the apartheid and post-apartheid beach. Kim Prochazka and Lisa M. Kruger ("Trends in Beach Utilisation") offer an examination of the recreational use of the Cape Peninsula's beach from apartheid to post-apartheid. They present the demographics of beach utilisation, and offer insight into beachgoers' needs for partaking in beach leisure time.

Two key insights can be gained from these studies on the use of the beach in South Africa. First: the emergence of 'the beach' as category accompanies an increase in the need for leisure-making. Second: this association of leisure-making with the beach or 'sea-side' is

rooted in a racialised discourse produced during early seashore development, which took place against a backdrop of colonialism and apartheid.

The construction of the seaside as leisurely space in South Africa emerged from a turn in European conceptualizations of the ocean in the mid-eighteenth century. As Peter Westwick and Peter Neushal point out, "[a]round 1750 Europeans started to change their views, in what the great French historian Jules Michelet called 'the invention of the sea'" (*The World in the Curl* 23). This turn signalled a change in attitude towards the ocean: from fear and avoidance to seeing the positives and benefits the seaside brings. It was during this time that philosophers and medical practitioners first perceived the seaside as beneficial to one's health. "Seaside resorts", write Westwick and Neushul, "sprang up in Europe and America offering sea bathing as therapy" (23) and "[s]ea bathing became a way to heal the spirit as well as the body" (24). During the early- to mid-twentieth century, tourists who visited the South African seaside were usually of upper-middle class and of British descent, and thereby ensured "the dominance of British culture [which] meant that seaside leisure spaces were shaped in accordance with the cultural tastes and preferences of this group" (Preston-Whyte, "Constructed Leisure" 584). Accordingly, Durban beach came to be modelled and marketed as "the Brighton beach of South Africa", with beachfront amenities being "able to compare favourably with those to which one is accustomed at the best holiday resorts in the Old Country" (584). Preston-Whyte argues that such post-war British jingoism further imbued Durban's beaches with racialised discourse, later compounded by apartheid ideologies and spatial practice.

Vivian Bickford-Smith explores the nineteenth-century making of the seaside in the Cape in "Leisure and Social Identity", in which he similarly attributes its construction to an increase in the need for leisure.[17] Nigel Worden, Elizabeth van Heyningen and Vivian Bickford-Smith's *Cape Town: The Making of a City: An Illustrated Social History* (1998) focuses on the general orientation of the emerging city, from the Waterfront to Muizenberg up to 1899, and shows how Muizenberg looked to England in order to model its beachfront on Brighton. According to Worden et al, Muizenberg was first marketed in 1909 as "The Brighton of South Africa" to appeal to local and overseas tourists (Worden et al 41).

[17] See Nigel Worden's *Cape Town Between East and West: Social Identities in a Dutch Colonial Town* for a social history of eighteenth-century Dutch Cape Town that provides a prelude to the making of the English seaside in Cape Town.

These studies draw attention to "how a white dominant class attempted to maintain its hegemony" (Bickford-Smith, "Leisure and Social Identity" 103). Albert Grundlingh provides a study on the making of the Afrikaner beach resort at Hartenbos, close to Mossel Bay on the South-Eastern Coast. Grundlingh argues that the resort was created to

> patrol leisure time, especially activities which they deemed as demoralising and *volksvreemd* (alien to the nation). The cities gave rise to what was characterised as a "bohemian lifestyle" – pretentious artists who, it was claimed, was obsessed with smoking, drinking and "shameless" indulgence in sex. (41)

If, as Preston-Whyte claims, "The echo of geographies of social action and the remains of territories that functioned as spaces of power and exclusion are contained and integrated into the contemporary seaside landscape" ("Constructed Leisure" 582), then what emerges from the making of the seaside is "a sub-set of arguments that constructed black beachgoers as an alien presence on white beaches and, more specifically, as a threat to the integrity of beaches as the preserve of the (white) family" (Durrheim and Dixon 435). This very brief history of the beach in South Africa suggests that the country's history of colonialisation and apartheid, as well as racialisation and segregation, not only encoded the beach in the cultural imaginary, but also elaborated its politics through the beach. As such, the beach must be understood as a space constructed in the image of a prevailing racialised ideology, an ideology which it, in turn, projects and therefore continues to construct and perpetuate.

However, if "seaside leisure space may be conceived as a production of the material environment used and recognized via complex cultural and symbolic images" (Preston-Whyte, "Constructed Leisure" 581), then the disruptive nature of this environment challenges the making of the space in this way. Consider, for example, the long and vexed practice of realising the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, 1953 (Act No. 49 of 1953). Jayne M. Rogerson ("Kicking Sand" 97–103) details the many obstacles in implementing the segregation of the beach once the Act was passed. The definition of "beach occupation" had to be revised, including whether swimming constituted an "occupation". According to the Separate Amenities Act, city planners could only legally segregate "land", which started above the high-water mark.

Moreover, under the Sea Shore Act, 1935 (Act No. 21 of 1935) the Queen of England was declared the owner of the South African seashore and its terrestrial waters. In 1960 the Amendment Act was passed. It "stated that the sea is 'the sea and the bed of the sea within

the three miles limit' and that the sea-shore is 'the land situated between low-water mark and high-water mark'" (Rogerson 98). In Cape Town, specifically, the peninsular nature of its beaches further troubled the demarcation of exclusive spaces, especially since the Group Areas Act, 1950 (Act No. 41 of 1950) dictated that "non-whites" could not be allocated beaches in "whites only" spaces. City officials where therefore put under pressure to re-zone amenities. The result of this constant revision and amendment is that 'beach apartheid' was only fully implemented in the 1970s, a full twenty years after the Separate Amenities Act was first introduced.

The more poignant point here is that the beach, due to its nature, does not easily give over to apartheid racialisation. It was not only the discourse of the Separate Amenities Act, which conceptualised the beach in the image of apartheid's spatial ideology, that proved unstable; the turning of this discourse into reality was also a vexed affair. Key here is that the beach space was and is simultaneously *real-and-imagined*, a constituent of Edward Soja's conceptualisation of "Thirdspace", discussed further below.

Part of the intention of this project is to challenge, or displace and enrich, readings of the littoral as liminal space. To do so, I hope to find new ways of engaging the littoral: as a space that permeates with a complexity that emphasises tensions in multifarious categories of being. As such, the littoral is a space of simultaneity, (en)tangled and messy, rather than synthesised. To this end, I will employ Kamau Brathwaite's concept of "tidalectics" which provides a suitable theoretical framework for such a reading.

1.4 Tidalectics: Method, Metaphor, Model

As a concept, "tidalectics" originated in late twentieth century Caribbean intellectualism during a time in the Caribbean's literary history when a prominent characteristic was the "development of a broadly conceived 'global Caribbean' literature, [which] incorporate[d] multiple language groups and a diaspora stretching to a number of different metropolitan locations" (Dalleo 1). A popular trend in the novels of this moment was the use of a family tree motif signalling rootedness,[18] ties to ancestral lineages, as well as the complex histories

[18] Dalleo mentions the likes of Zadie Smith, Andrea Levy, Patricia Powell, Lawrence Scott, Robert Antoni, Julia Alvarez, Rosario Ferré, Cristina García, and Dionne Brand, among others, as favouring this technique (1).

of uprootedness and diasporic networks produced by the Caribbean's long history of colonialism and the Atlantic slave trade.[19]

As a result, writers and critics began to conceptualise an appropriate metaphor for Caribbean identity that would capture "the interplay of movement and rootedness" that characterised the archipelago as "a world of flux and fragmentation [since] the swelling tide of what has come to be called postmodernity, postcoloniality, and globalization" was growing (Dalleo 1). In his collection of essays, *Poetics of Relation* (first published in French in 1990), Martinican author and critic Édouard Glissant critiques the fixed idea of rootedness as suggested by the tree-root motif, which he associates with "fixed identity and racial purity, tracing the origins of European nationhood and imperialism to this root" (Dalleo 3). Glissant rejects the tree-root motif in favour of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's conceptualisation of the rhizome,[20] as this concept gives him "a way of imagining identity as both rooted and in process" (Dalleo 3). The rhizome also informs Glissant's concept of "errantry", meaning "wandering" but with "a sense of sacred motivation" (Wing in Glissant 211). Significantly, Glissant writes that "the root is not important. Movement is" (*Poetics* 14). More specifically, Glissant's concept of errantry emphasises non-patterned movement, which he deems most favourable for capturing Caribbean identity as "the subject-in-process" (Dalleo 5).

Errantry thus stands in opposition to the fixed path of conquest, discovery, and the expansion of territory, which Glissant describes as "arrowlike" (*Poetics* 12, 18–19). Yet he also insists that errantry is not "circular and repetitive like the nomad's, it is not idle roaming" (Wing in Glissant 211). Glissant's search for a suitable image or metaphor for Caribbean identity captures the need for a concept that simultaneously evokes movement *and* the specificity of location, a sentiment that Kamau Brathwaite shares and adopts in his later concept of "tidalectics".

In an interview with Nathaniel Mackey, published in 1999 as *ConVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey*, Brathwaite offers a different image to Glissant's as a potential metaphor for the complicated concept of Caribbean identity: an ebbing and flowing tide. Brathwaite explains that the tidalectic image originates from his wrestling with the "on-going question" of "What

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[19] This far-reaching process of social injustice is succinctly described by Carmin Llenín-Figueroa when she refers to the archipelago as "extensively colonized and recolonized lands, seas, histories, peoples, thoughts, imaginations" (1).

[20] Glissant described the rhizome as "an enmeshed root-system" (*Poetics* 11) which maintains "the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root".

is Caribbean/the Caribbean? […] What is the origen [sic] of this…this paradoxical and pluraradial situation?" (*ConVERSations* 29). And the answer comes one morning on the north coast of Jamaica, where he was staying in a house on a cliff. Brathwaite describes seeing an old lady sweeping her yard:

> and this old woman is sweeping, sweeping the sand of her yard away from her house. Traditional early morning old woman of Caribbean history. She's going on like this every morning, sweeping this sand – of all things! – away from…sand from sand, seen?... (30)

He explains that she is "in fact performing a very important ritual" (32) which he could not comprehend. To Brathwaite, this seemed a purposeless task yet it was repeated relentlessly every day. Then, one morning, he sees

> her body silhouetting against the sparkling light that hits the Caribbean at that early dawn and it seems as if her feet, which all along [he] thought were walking on the sand…were really…walking on the water…and she was travelling across that middlepass age, constantly coming from where she had come from – in her case Africa — to this spot in North Coast Jamaica where she now lives… (33)

He explains that the tidalectic image is "that humble repetitive ritual action" (*ConVERSations* 33), of being "always on this journey"; of walking on water, perpetually leaving a continent and arriving at a new shore. This is evoked in the to-and-fro motion of sweeping, which is not linear, yet not cyclical either. This movement of the woman sweeping thus mimics the tidal motion of waves as they wash onto the land in a perpetual back-and-forth motion. With its qualities of a never fixed inter-tangling of ocean and landscape, history and locality, and a backwards (then) and forwards (now), tidalectics refers to a patterned interplay of space, place, and time.

To understand the spatio-temporal aspects of tidalectics one first needs to unpack the movement inherent in the image, regardless of whether it is employed as method, metaphor or model. Ralph Dalleo describes the tidalectic model as an "image of movement based on ebb and flow [which] emphasizes the circular and repetitive, rather than the progressive and teleological" (6). It therefore opposes what Brathwaite has dubbed the missile of European movement, much like the arrow-like movement in Glissant's analogy, which represents "a progress-driven movement foreign to the Caribbean reality of what Brathwaite calls

tidalectics" (6). Elizabeth DeLoughrey, a key proponent of the tidalectic method, describes tidalectics as "a cyclical model, invoking the continual movement and rhythm of the ocean" (*Routes and Roots* 2). Nisha Manocha usefully adds that "the ocean's cyclical, unceasing rhythms" (37) are a "perpetual act of advance and retreat [that] is *generative*" (36; my italics), while Anna Reckin points out that tidalectics "present a kind of recursive movement-in-stasis that is anti-progressive (the tidalectic) but also contains within it specific vectors" (1–2).

I find Carmen Llenín-Figueroa's conceptualisation of tidalectics the most useful of these definitions because she draws attention to the patterned but capricious nature of tides. She argues that while tidalectics produce "a constant and coastal back and forth movement — a repetition of the 'coming out' of Africa and of the 'arrival' on this 'set of islands'" (6), one should remember that "the movement of the tides is not exactly cyclical. What makes the concept of tidalectics fascinating is that [...] the tide is, in fact, never exactly the same nor does it retreat or return to the same spot of 'origin'" (7). A tidalectic movement is therefore patterned and repetitive but not predictable. It is dynamic, always in progress but anti-linear and never complete. It is recursive, yet constantly moving, and most importantly it is generative.

My own use of a tidalectic method adopts the forwards and backwards, recursive/generative movements as a method for placing, reading, and discussing the literatures in this thesis. Adopting a tidalectic method allows me to anticipate and revisit moments in the succeeding, preceding, and receding discussions that emerge from different chapters across the thesis. I have selected the focal texts in this study for their use of the littoral as an integral part to their narratives' structure and discourses, either as spatial setting or trope. They are grouped chronologically into three parts, with each part pertaining to a broad period in South African history: the settlement/colonial period, apartheid, and post-apartheid/revisionist histories. These three parts are sub-divided into seven chapters in total, with each chapter reviewing literature published during a seminal moment in South Africa's history. To this end, my study covers the period from early Portuguese expansionism at the Cape through to the post-apartheid present.

I am aware that the chronological structuring of the texts in a thesis such as this may seem counterintuitive given my espousal of a theoretical framework that is explicitly anti-linear. However, I have decided to structure the project in this way for the following reasons: Firstly, as I am interested in reading texts across a spectrum of historical periods in order to

garner points of similarities, differences, and contiguities in their use of the littoral, I find that a chronological placing of texts makes it easier to identify when the littoral enters South African literature and whether it continues to function as a significant trope throughout the course of South African literary history. Secondly, this thesis is interested in disruptive, recursive, and generative readings. This means that one first needs a sense of the sequential in order to understand its (dis)rupture — and South Africa's history is nothing if not a product of the (con)sequential. As such, the linearity used here provides a foundational understanding for the tidalectical, especially as a postcolonial method.

Tidalectics is a postcolonial response to Hegel's concept of dialectics, which follows a thesis, antithesis, synthesis model for reasoning. Brathwaite rejects the Hegelian dialectic model for its inability to successfully convey the Caribbean psychology "in the way that Western philosophy has assumed people's lives should be" (*ConVERSations* 34) with "the resolution in the third" (qtd in Reckin 1). It challenges "the binarism of Western thought" (DeLoughrey, "Revisiting Tidalectics" 94) by drawing on the movement inspired when "the ocean and land are seen in continuous relation—as shifting points of contact, arrival, departure, and transformation" and forms "a counter-response to the linearity of the Hegelian dialectic" (Manocha 36). Creatively, a tidalectic "model of metaphor" (*ConVERSations* 35) allows Brathwaite to break free of the (Western) "school-book imposed" meters for poetry which failed to capture the "movement, grace and terror" of Caribbean being (35). As literary technique, tidalectics is where influences, imagery, and formal aspects "meet and overlap in his work without privileging synthesis as an outcome" (Manocha 36).

As metaphor, tidalectics connote and accommodate contradiction and distinction simultaneously. The gravitational pull on the tides do not always line up or work together. Tides are created by the force of the moon orbiting the earth, and both the moon and earth orbiting the sun. This means that once a month the sun and moon's gravitational pull works together as these cosmic bodies line up on the same side of the earth. It also means that once a month the moon and sun are on either side of the earth, lined up but pulling in opposite directions. These two instances result in spring tides.[21] Twice a month, the angles of the sun and moon's gravitational pull sit perpendicular to each other, effectively nullifying each other's effect and resulting in a neap tide.[22] Tides are therefore formed by forces that

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[21] A spring tide is generally noticeable by a very high, high tide and a very low, low tide — in other words when the difference between the two tides is the greatest.

[22] During a neap tide there is very little noticeable difference between high and low tide.

sometimes work together, and other times work against each other. They are produced by harmony, balance, and a coming together of various forces, but *also* by tension, incongruity, dissonance. Therefore if, in practice, tides work according to a propensity for push *and* pull, then as a metaphor, tidalectics "insists on the need of the both… and rather than the either…or" (Llenín-Figueroa 7).

However, tides are also influenced by meteorological elements such as barometric pressure and winds ("Meteorological Effects"). Winds blowing towards the shore — "onshore" — push water towards the coast, essentially piling up the volume of the tide, affecting its size. When this happens, tides appear larger than forecasted. Winds blowing from the shore towards the ocean — "offshore" — have the opposite effect, flattening out the tide and therefore also the swell. A wind blowing parallel to the coast — "cross shore" — creates long waves travelling along the coast, sometimes resulting in storm surges in which the crest of the wave is heightened and the trough is lowered.

Thinking about wind can elaborate — and calibrate — the concept metaphor of the tide in valuable ways. This is an important point, for it would be concerning if all discussions in this thesis did manifest "tidalectics" as conceived by Brathwaite, given that South Africa is not the Caribbean, albeit that there are connections and many points of comparison between these two regions. A loosening of the framework to allow for the formation of one that works with *water and air* movements would allow for a discussion of tidalectics in a South African context. This thesis is therefore structured according to wind and wave movements, two of the most visible components of tides. In this case, the three historical parts of the project are framed by winds, and the seven chapters by tidal and wave movements. Each of the three historical parts is named after the wind directions that have effects on tides: Onshore, Cross-Shore, and Offshore. I apply onshore, cross-shore, and offshore to conceptually refer to the historical period under review and the racialised ideologies disseminated through discourses of space and power. Each of the seven chapters in this thesis is named after a wave action, to draw emphasis to the link between air and water and the metaphorical relationship between discourse and space, history and politics, being and becoming.

As a postcolonial method, tidalectics depart from reading the movement in Brathwaite's image of the tide, its disruption of synthesising linearity, and the resultant historiographical model one draws from it. Brathwaite constructs tidalectics from a compound between "tide" and "dialect". He draws on the tidal motion of the ocean to describe the constant interaction

between history, place, and (present) being in an effort to think through a very complex Caribbean heterogeneity. Thus, for Brathwaite, the tidalectic model is not only a "new, more native way" of representation, but one that also reaches "far far beyond" to a history that starts before colonialism (*ConVERSations* 37). DeLoughrey applies this concept to a historiographical paradigm, which considers tidalectics as "an 'alter/native' historiography to linear models of colonial progress [which] foreground alter/native epistemologies to western colonialism and its linear and materialist biases" (*Routes* 2). To think of tidalectics as a postcolonial method in a (South) African context would therefore require drawing on the disruptive quality of alternative histories, as present in both Brathwaite and DeLoughrey's formulations, and attend to the multiple temporalities a tidalectic model suggests.

Brathwaite's description above is suggestive of multiple temporalities in the placing of "new" and "native" alongside each other, as well as "far" and "beyond" (which has connotations of a forward motion but is used to mean backwards). This is meant as the opposite of a linear progression associated with Western colonisation. Usefully, tidalectics also evokes Achille Mbembe's thinking about Africa as a postcolony, which he argues means to think about "multiple durées made up of discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another, and envelope one another: an entanglement" (*On the Postcolony* 14). A tidalectic history of South Africa disrupts the landed centre of Western discourse as originating from a *terra nullius* and allows alter/native histories to emerge in which a reckoning with autochthonous presence takes centre stage.

Lastly, tides and littoral spaces impact each other. The shape of a coastline, for example, a wide continental shelf, can increase the level of the tide. Tides can also erode coasts, breaking away rocks and transporting sediment along the shores, and thus alter the shape of the littoral space in turn. Tides and the littoral therefore have a dynamic and reciprocal relation. DeLoughrey's concept of the "alter/native" draws attention, then, to thinking not only of alter/native as alternative but also of altering *native* histories, of how native histories can alter and change. Tidalectic histories therefore cycle back to the oceanic routes that brought the period of slavocracy to the Cape, and as such extends South Africa's history beyond its shores, disrupting the *aqua nullius* on which expansion at the Cape is written. Explicitly, tidalectics emerge in this thesis in the moments when authors present alternative histories to their littoral settings. Implicitly, tidalectics are present in the metaphorical movement in my reading across texts, and the littoral archive that surfaces from the conversations between them.

1.5 Trialectics: A Theory

Tidalectics push me to consider the spatiology of the littoral but not as an in-between, liminal space, nor as a dialectic between land and sea. Rather, I want to attend to the littoral as situated within *and* outside of this binary, a trialectic rather than a dialectic spatiology. In this sense, the littoral mediates land and sea, but also stands in contradistinction to land-and-sea.

To this end, I have found Edward Soja's concept of trialectics or Thirdspace useful. Trialectics is a pertinent spatial theory concerned with "critically revealing ways of looking at the combination of time and space, history and geography, period and region, *sequence and simultaneity*" (Soja, *Thirdspaces* 2; my emphases). Although Soja is known for the significant work he has done on developing spatial theory in urban settings, his insistence that we think of the non-hierarchical interdependence of the social, historical, and spatial lends his work to thinking about littoral spaces. If space, as Soja repeatedly argues, is at once material and abstract, political and social, real and imagined, then his work is useful for the study of the littoral in South Africa for precisely these reasons. I am particularly drawn to how a trialectics of space accommodates simultaneity *and* sequence with no hierarchy. That is, it is a spatial theory that asks us to "set aside the demands to make an either /or choice and contemplate instead the possibility of a both/and also logic" (*Thirdspaces* 5), which is the same principle that tidalectics affords.

In *Postmodern Geographies* (1989), Soja argues that modernism places too much emphasis on history as progressive and linear and overlooks the significance of geography. In *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (1996), Soja develops a lot of the implicit arguments in *Postmodern Geographies* to challenge modernism's dialectic between sociality and historicality (sic), arguing that space needs to be considered in a trialectic fashion in which space comes to mean the spatial, the social, and the historical. He develops this theory from Henri Lefebvre's work on spatiology and the spatial triad that Lefebvre identified in *The Production of Space,* (1991[1974]) in which he argues for a "unitary theory of space" (11). Lefebvre's treatise was a response to divided conceptualisations of space developed in the fields of philosophy and science. Eschewing these theories, Lefebvre proposes a "theoretical unity" between the physical (nature), mental (abstract conceptions), and social (human interaction) fields of space, which he maintains should be considered as dialectical. His theory, termed *spatiology,* reflects on the production of space and the ways in which space "can be decoded [and] can be *read*" (17). Lefebvre

therefore calls for a praxis, which he calls a "conceptual triad" (32) which involves the intersection of three notions of space: 1) *representational space*, meaning perceived space or *lived* space, 2) *spatial practice,* which structures lived reality such as routes and networks, and 3) *represented space*, or conceived space, which is space constructed by professionals, such as the built environment. Under this conceptual triad, space is therefore produced at the overlap of conceived space, which is the space where ideology "lurks" (Merrifield 109), the experience of that lived space, and its spatial practice.

Soja renames Lefebvre's triad as Firstspace, Secondspace and Thirdspace, and is mostly interested in the third component of this theory: represented space. Soja argues that most spatial theorists are concerned with First and Second spaces and that this produces a binary in spatial thinking. A dialectics of space would essentially argue that space is produced as a synthesis (following Hegel's model of dialectics) of perceived and conceived space. A trialectics of space considers how Thirdspace is a "recombination and extension" (*Thirdspace* 6) of First and Second spaces, therefore *more* than a synthesis: "the original binary choice is not dismissed entirely but is subjected to a creative process of restructuring that draws selectively and strategically from the two opposing categories to open new alternatives" (5). As a "purposefully tentative and flexible term that attempts to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings" (6), Thirdspace challenges traditional binaries and pushes at something beyond mere synthesis. Thinking of space trialectically therefore means resisting producing neat conclusions and creating a third option beyond the "either/or choice" – what Soja calls the "combinatorial openness of the both/and also" (35).

Brathwaite describes tidalectics in similar terms, as a "third" concept where synergy is produced between three concepts that does not necessarily mean synthesis and resolution. He explains that he prefers the "ripple and the two tide movement" (qtd in Reckin 1). This leads Anna Reckin to draw our attention to the idea of threes in tidalectics. She writes that firstly "[o]n a larger scale, Brathwaite has suggested that it describes the structure of trilogies" (1) and secondly, "[i]t has access to something 'beyond'; typical of Brathwaite's work is a fantastical layering of New, Old, and other worlds" (2). What, then, is the relation between tidalectics and Thirdspaces? DeLoughrey argues that a tidalectic approach "highlights the intersections between space and time, place and history" (DeLoughrey, *Routes* 2). While this application of tidalectics to littoral spaces is useful, especially in thinking about how it surfaces the entangled histories of our shores, DeLoughrey's formulation presents an

inclination to think in binaries: space and time or place and history. Treating littoral spaces as Thirdspaces would mean that the littoral is analysed in terms of its spatiality, temporality, and historicality. This means to consider the littoral as a real-and-imagined space in which authors simultaneously represent the real political contexts of their texts and imagine contesting or alternative possibilities. In turn, this produces tidalectic histories which challenge the hegemony of the present space.

Finally, the relation between material and creative space should be addressed. On the narratological topic of "setting", Sheila Hones warns against the simple translation of material space to narrative setting. Hones argues that this simple categorisation implicitly suggests that space is "something stable and fixed" ("Literary Geography" 686–7), the opposite of what social geographers attest. Taken as such, it follows that setting's literary counterpart must likewise be treated as an unstable entity. Zoë Wicomb adds, for example, that "more than supplementing character description, setting is the representation of physical surroundings that is crucially bound up with a culture and its dominant ideologies, providing ready-made, recognizable meanings" ("Setting" 146). The littoral spaces discussed in this thesis are at once real and imagined spaces and therefore pertinent to Soja's trialectics. The literature under study here takes as settings real, physical terraqueous spaces that are imagined and represented in two instances: 1) on the pages of the various fictions I discuss, and 2) historically and culturally. A tidalectic reading of the littoral allows me, therefore, to explore the cycle between the real (the material space of the littoral), the creative imagining (how it is represented in literature), and the social/cultural imagining of the littoral (the image of the beach in history and society for example as space of [white] leisure).

Thirdspace, writes Soja, encourages "opening up and expanding the scope and critical sensibility of [our] already established spatial or geographical imaginations" (*Thirdspace* 1). Reading littoral spaces as Thirdspaces encourages the recognition of "ready-made-images" of the beach in South Africa's cultural imaginary, while forcing us to re-engage and think through these images in new, critical ways. By asking, "what part does littoral representation in South African literature play in laying bare spatial structures, both past and present?", this thesis will shed new light on power structures within the country, and help to further understand the spatial structuring of power and race across history.

1.6 Categories of Persons

Spatial theory can assist us in understanding the production of space in South Africa, and how it was aimed at racialised constructions of categories of persons, nationhood, and the nation state. While Lefebvre's spatial theory is useful for understanding the power relations in the production of space, *spatiology* is predominantly applied to understanding relations of class. How might one therefore understand Lefebvre's theory when it comes to construction of race in South Africa's cultural imaginary?

By way of answering these questions, I would like to consider Doreen Massey's discussion of space. Massey argues that space is intrinsically social because it is the "product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions" (*For Space* 9). More importantly, space is also the sphere of multiplicity; of what Massey terms "contemporaneous plurality" and "coexisting heterogeneity" (9). Firstly, time and space must be considered in terms of their dynamism. The problem, as Massey argues, is when spaces and the interactions that happen within spaces are forced onto a unilinear trajectory of progress. To do so would mean that social relations in space become relations of power, "since social relations are bearers of power, what is at issue is a geography of power relations in which spatial form is an important element in the constitution of power itself" (Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* 22).

To this Brooke Neely and Michelle Samura add that "The meanings and uses of space have much to do with defining who does and who does not have the power to define and control space" (1939). This is particularly pertinent when considering the relationship between space and identity given that identities, their relation, and their spatiality are all "co-constitutive" (Massey, *For Space* 10). The one, in other words, does not precede the other. Following Omi and Winant, Neely and Samura argue that "while race may be a durable concept in society, it must be understood not as a fixed thing, but as a fluid and contested 'complex of social meanings' that have tangible material effect" (1941). As a material reality of social meaning, race is therefore a cultural production. Spaces, as I have argued, are equally material realities of social meaning. Lefebvre's theory argues that no space is free from power relations, and that these power relations intersect not only with spatial practices, but also with the production of knowledge in and about spaces. Massey adds that these power relations are intrinsically linked to the social production of space.

This thesis considers how representations of the littoral space are used to reflect on the construction and re-construction of categories of persons. My use of the term "categories of persons" purposefully recalls the title of Megan Jones and Jacob Dlamini's excellent

collection of essays by the same name. As Jones and Dlamini describe it, the book is about "South African bodies: how bodies move, the spaces they are allowed to occupy, the identities they are expected to claim, the relationships they should forge" (2). Jones and Dlamini maintain that space in South Africa allows us to read ways in which "the body is encoded, empowered, abused and represented" (2). It is this spatial framework that I have applied in my literary investigation into the littoral space and its complex interconnectedness of history, being and racialised belonging.

1.7 The Chapters

The first part of this thesis — "Onshore" — comprises Chapters Two and Three. It explores how inscriptions of the littoral are informed by ideologies brought onshore by foreign explorers and occupants. Chapter Two traces emergent literary inscriptions of the littoral in literatures written and produced during Portuguese expansionism. With maritime traffic around the Cape increasing during the seventeenth century, ships often found themselves wrecked on the South African shore. Records of these wrecks were written and kept for imperial administration. Often, stories of these wrecks were so adventurous in nature that they were first reproduced in publicly-sold pamphlets, and were popular reading materials in expansionist Europe at the time due to their adventurous content. They were later collected and re-printed in volumes (Blackmore, *Manifest* xxii). In the first section of Chapter Two I analyse shipwreck narratives for their representation of encounters in the littoral and encounters with the littoral. These encounters render imperial discourses as washed up, marking their affirmation and negation, disrupting the foundational discourses they are meant to carry. Here I follow Josiah Blackmore's argument that shipwreck narratives were meant to render imperial maritime supremacy successful, yet speak, instead, of imperial wrecking. As such, I suggest that in the making of the shipwreck narrative lies its unmaking. I read the littoral as a site that renders this ambivalence palpable. In these tales, the littoral emerges as the site in which expansion is not only present, but also thrown into chaos, and thus marks the ways in which empire both washes up, and becomes washed up.

I then turn, in the next section of the chapter, to a discussion of Luis Vas de Camões's *The Lusiads*, the first translated English text that offers a literary representation of the littoral in South Africa. As the first European to round the Cape in 1488, Bartolomeu Dias's exploit opened the possibility for Vasco da Gama's subsequent journey from Portugal, via the Cape, to Asia. In the Portuguese cultural imaginary, these sailing exploits constitute some of the

most formative moments in establishing the Lusophone global trading network. It is this history that informs Camões's historical epic. My focus is on the three littoral encounters in Canto V in which the Lusiads (the Portuguese sailors) round the Cape. As encounters with/in the littoral, these moments mark a washing up of Eurocentric racialised discourses that mobilised later expansion across its shores, and therefore register foundational moments in South African history.

With the fall of the Portuguese empire came the demise of their monopoly on the trade and import networks to the East. Sailor and historian Robin Knox-Johnson (*The Cape of Good Hope: A Maritime History,* 1989) writes that reports from individuals who had navigated the Cape emerged, and the competing colonising nations of the Netherlands and England set their sights on the lucrative Cape trading route. By the start of the seventeenth century, traffic around the Cape had increased exponentially. Yet interest in the Cape as a potential settlement was tepid until a Dutch ship, the Nieuwe Haerlem, ran aground in Table Bay in 1647. That the shipwrecked sailors survived by living off the coast was owed largely to the hospitality with which they were received by the local inhabitants they encountered. This, along with the fact that they managed to preserve the salvaged cargo, was the motivating factor for the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), in English the Dutch East India Company, to put up a small settlement in the bay that would provide respite for their passing ships. The Dutch landed at the Cape 1652. The Cape would remain a Dutch settlement until 1795, before falling into British hands until 1803, after which it fell under Batavian rule for three short years, and then back to British colonial control in 1806.

Chapter Three discusses three novels from the period of late British colonial rule: *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) and *Undine* (published posthumously 1929) by Olive Schreiner, as well as *Piet of Italy* (1913) by Dorothea Fairbridge. This leap from pre-settlement to British occupation is deliberate. Most of what was written during Dutch settlement at the Cape was heavily censored, kept secret, and meant for limited (VOC) readership. In addition, most of the writing occurred in very strict parameters and was aimed at increasing VOC profit.[23] Due to this, this body of work offers little for a study focused specifically on literature and the littoral zone. Equally, as Matthew Shum argues, "not much happens in the official genres"

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[23] See Carli Coetzee's excellent chapter in *The Cambridge History of South African Literature* for more on the nature of writing practices during Dutch settlement and examples of available texts written during this time.

("Writing settlement" 185) during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[24] The wreck of the Grosvenor in 1782, the shipwreck that "looms largest in the South African literary imagination" (Samuelson, "Literary Inscriptions" 127), would seem an obvious inclusion given the limited availability of littoral texts from this period. Seeking to avoid rehearsing existent arguments,[25] I turn instead to Schreiner's writings. Schreiner's Karoo settings have been much celebrated in literary scholarship,[26] yet her littoral literary settings have been largely ignored. Curiously, amidst her descriptions of the lonely *kopje's* and relentless heat,[27] the shore surfaces often: five times in *The Story of an African Farm* and regularly in *Undine*. In this chapter, I thus approach Schreiner's fiction by way of reading her littoral moments through a literary frame I term "bathymetry": a narratological lull which engages time, history and space and which, I argue, situates Schreiner's characters outside of imperial ideologies. To this end, I read the littoral in *Undine* and *Piet of Italy* as a wrack zone of empire: a space which operates on the margins of empire and which disrupts the ideologies washed up here.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six make up the second part of this project, "Cross Shore". This section broadly spans the unionisation of South Africa in 1910 to the post-1994 era. The section falls under the conceptual metaphor of the "cross-shore" wind, a wind that blows across the shore and thus manipulates the waves to run parallel to the beach. Responding to this metaphor, the chapters here deal with regulated spatial politics in the form of legislation and rhetoric, and my reading across these boundaries. In the legislature leading up to and during apartheid, the common agenda was to regulate the movements of "non-white" peoples in order to effect economic privilege for the minority population group classified as "white". Key, then, to my analysis is the restriction placed on the navigation of bodies in public spaces by the various Acts introduced in the legislation of South Africa during this period. Following the unionization of South Africa in 1910, a rising tide of segregationist legislation steadily overflowed the country as the government was challenged with designing a single

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[24] Shum concedes that testimonies to literary output can be found if the boundaries of literary history are broadened. Ian Glenn ("Eighteenth-century") argues for the inclusion of travel writing in the South African literary canon, while Shum considers "diaries/journals, letters, articles in the periodical press [and] politically motivated writing" (185) to be of equal significance.

[25] See Samuelson, "Literary Inscriptions". Also see Glenn, "SA Lit" for his argument on the wreck as marking the start of SA lit.

[26] See, amongst others, Clayton; Coetzee; Freeman; Young; Wylie.

[27] "Kopje's" is a Dutch word for a small hill. Characteristic of the Karoo plains are their flat surfaces, dotted with these hills.

land and labour dispensation for South Africa ("Control"). The result was a Native Policy, implemented by successive post-Union governments, which "entrenched racial segregation, repression, subjugation, disenfranchisement and exploitation of black South Africans" (Peterson 303). The most crucial of these Acts were: The Native Labour Regulation Act (Act No. 15 of 1911), the Mines and Works Act (Act No. 12 of 1911), which introduced the colour bar by certifying white and coloured people for skilled mining jobs only, the Natives Land Act (Act No. 27 of 1913), which segregated land ownership and prohibited black people from owning land in most of the country, the Native Urban Areas Act (Act No. 21 of 1923), which segregated urban areas, and the Native Administration Act (Act No. 38 of 1927). Notably, these Acts were aimed at regulating movement, labour, and citizenship, and thereby essentially entrenched white supremacy in the Constitution.[28]

The texts in Chapter Four take as context the post-Union period. The chapter opens with a discussion of *Tell Freedom* (1954), Peter Abrahams's first memoir. Born in 1917, Abrahams bears witness to a post-Union South Africa in which the reality of a segregated country was becoming more and more evident. This realisation is communicated by the author through the consistent attention he pays to legislated spatial regulation and growing disenfranchisement, especially in the wake of the passing of the Representation of Natives Act (Act No. 12 of 1936), which removed all people of colour from the voting roll in Cape Town.[29] There are two key littoral moments in Abrahams's text. I read these two littoral moments in juxtaposition with the memoir's central concern with spatial regulation. Because beaches were not yet officially segregated at the time of Abrahams' writing, I suggest that the littoral scenes in the memoir are representative of "in-between" moments in Abraham's life, when he was offered a vantage point from which to reflect on the political reality of his life and his country. Writing from the other side of the colour bar, Nadine Gordimer's short story "The Catch" (1953) equally treats littoral settings as spaces situated outside of socio-political regulation. Indicative of what Gordimer calls "borderlands" or "half-worlds" (Bazin and Seymour 20), the littoral moments in this text function as spaces in which her characters socially interact across imaginary segregated lines, uninhibited by overt political restriction. I also include a discussion of Gordimer's debut novel, *The Lying Days* (1953). The beach scenes in this novel stage a romantic rite of passage for the protagonist, Helen, in the novel's

[28] Cf. Peterson 303; Worden 36, 82-83; "Apartheid Legislation 1850s-1970s".

[29] A significant moment for Abrahams as up to this point the Cape had been exempted from imposing racialized voting rights on men, under the Cape Qualified Franchise.

bildungs structure. I argue that the littoral moments elucidate the character's privileged position, especially when read comparatively with the beach scenes in Abrahams's memoir.

While Chapter Four explores littoral scenes as spaces of respite from the rising tide of segregationist legislation, the texts discussed in Chapter Five were published during the high tide of apartheid, a time when "a barrage of legislation codified and extended racial discrimination […], and legislative discrimination was taken much further than before" (Worden 104). With national election victory by the National Party in 1948, the "compartmentalization of the population" was quickly brought into effect, most notably by the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (Act No. 55 of 1949), and the Immorality Act (Act No. 21 of 1950), both of which criminalised interracial sexual contact. The Population Registration Act (Act No. 30 of 1950), quickly came into effect and was responsible for classifying the population into four racial categories: White, Coloured, Indian, and Native (Worden 104–105). Additionally, the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (Act No. 49 of 1953) unequally allocated public infrastructures, such as beaches, parks, and toilets, to different race groups.

The texts discussed in this chapter specifically draw on the littoral to challenge the regulation of spatial movements and larger discourses of gender, race, and body politics. Zoë Wicomb's collection of short stories *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* (1987) weaves the narrator's corporeal experience of space constructs into her stories before introducing the metaphorics of the littoral as a means of exposing them. Similarly, in Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds* (1986) the littoral functions as a space in which the narrator must navigate his way between ambiguous boundaries of a regulated space that is both racialised and gendered.

Chapter Six makes a conceptual shift towards thinking of the human as a category of the environment. This chapter adopts an ecocritical approach to reading the littoral space as a site which reveals humans' impact on the environment. While I do not suggest that the literature discussed in this chapter marks a turning point in environmental criticism in South African literature, I do argue that these texts present an emerging engagement with the ecology of the littoral in South African writings. I therefore read Douglas Livingstone's poetry collection, *A Littoral Zone* (1991) and Zakes Mda's novel, *The Whale Caller* (2005) using the tidalectic lens Elizabeth DeLoughrey employs in her book, *Allegories of the Anthropocene* (2019). As a lens which zooms in and out to consider the local within the global, this tidalectic lens reads the littoral as a site which registers the interplay between physical and psychic experiences of

the environment. I extend this reading to engage the interplay between materiality and imagination, and consider the genre and form of my primary texts as conducive to engaging environmental concerns. My reading of Livingstone's poetry follows a geo-poetics and blue ecology line of inquiry. Borrowing from DeLoughrey, I read *The Whale Caller* as an allegory of the Anthropocene.

While the littoral evinces an ecological tension between nature and human, it also becomes a site of "backwash" — that is, a site in which history is spilled onto the shore. The final section, entitled "Off Shore", aims to use the littoral as a form of connective tissue that looks backwards at a revision of the past from the present, and challenges the onshore perspective of colonising entities moving to shore. The texts in Chapter Seven therefore employ the littoral zone as a site which imagines the alternative sides of history that are surfaced by a tidalectic modality. Here, I discuss Yvette Christiansë's novel *Unconfessed* (2007) and K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (2000), focusing on their engagement with discursive histories, and how a tidalectic approach helps us to recognise the way the novels disrupt these histories.

ONSHORE

CHAPTER TWO

"The Swash and the Washed Up": Littoral Encounters in Portuguese Expansionist Literature

2.1 Introduction

Portuguese expansionist literatures provide the earliest literary representations of the littoral in South Africa. The littoral, as the space of first encounters between foreign pioneers, explorers, and the local peoples of the country, is frequently presented in these texts as an ambivalent space that registers both imperial conduct and its undoing. It is in this space where the expanding imperial gaze washes up onshore, depositing expansionist epistemes.[30] In this chapter I aim to establish a preliminary littoral position, one akin to Mary Louise Pratt's idea of the "contact zone".[31] Borrowing from Pratt, I read the primary texts in this chapter, Portuguese shipwreck narratives and Luiz Vas de Camões's *The Lusiads* (1572), in two ways: encounters *in* the littoral, and encounters *with* the littoral. Present in these littoral encounters is a discourse that I take to reflect the "swash" of expansionist epistemes. Swash refers to the turbulent water that washes up on the beach after waves have broken. Significantly, swash movement alters the geography of the beach; it has the power to move and transport sediment along coastal lines and thereby effect terrestrial change. Swash also evokes an archaic understanding of the word and thus conjures up images of mariners who flamboyantly swagger around with their swords on the beach. As such, my use of swash as conceptual metaphor is meant to evoke the beginning stages of the reconfiguration of the southern African littoral in the Western imaginary. It brings into focus both the washing up of expansionist epistemes onshore and the proprietary licence to the littoral that these epistemes enabled. As a result, the littoral is here shaped as a space which is conscripted into the

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[30] I use imperial gaze as defined by Bill Ashcroft: "the imperial gaze defines the identity of the subject, objectifies it within the identifying system of power relations and confirms its subalterneity and powerlessness" (*Postcolonial* 207).

[31] Hoskins et al use Pratt's concept to frame their study of the littoral in Anglophone literary culture and engage the beach as "a contact zone where a broad array of interactions, from hospitality to hostility, are performed" (2).

expansionist discourses of a nascent empire and an inaugural moment in European colonialism.

Shipwreck narratives shore up some of the dissolution of the imperial episteme that *The Lusiads* represents. As the "earliest surviving shipwreck account" (Blackmore, *Manifest* 29) off the South African shores, the wreck of the *Saõ Joaõ* provides the occasion for a literary representation of the littoral in South Africa that predates *The Lusiads*. The first section of this chapter analyses Portuguese shipwreck narratives, published in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, for their representation of encounters with the littoral and the flotsam of expansionist discourse this zone rendered. Shipwreck narratives form a curious part of imperial discourse, as Josiah Blackmore argues, because they reveal the floundering of the discourse in their very attempts to solder it. In these narratives, the littoral space is represented as the site that contains this simultaneity; it is the site in which expansion is thrown into chaos and in which the flotsam — the wreckage of both the ship and its symbolic nature — is washed up.

My discussion of *The Lusiads* is introduced by way of Adamastor, an infamous figure in South African literary histories and the anthropomorphised promontory of the Cape of Storms. Camões's poem is a sixteenth-century epic poem in the style of Virgil's *Aeneid*, which relates, over ten cantos, the heroics of the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama as he sailed around Africa to India. It was written and published at a time when the myth of Africa was starting to take root in racialised discourse. This, I suggest, was a foundational moment, and one which I discuss in order explore the littoral setting in *The Lusiads* as representative of moments of encounter. These moments I read as sites of first contact and as the washing up of imperial ideology upon the South African shore. While I approach my analysis of *The Lusiads* through a discussion of Adamastor, my reading of this mythic figure challenges existing scholarship for reinstating the land/sea binary in favour of considering the titan as littoral presence and therefore representative of the tidalectic nature of land and sea. I then turn to the two littoral encounters in Canto V.

The Lusiads is a text whose narrative discourse arises from an imperial history of dominance over both land and water, a history that Camões commemorates.[32] In the opening lines of the

[32] Historically, in just 17 short years after Da Gama's journey, Portugal dominated and controlled the most important networks of trading systems in the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, and the South China seas. And most importantly "it was a ruthless demonstration of naval might, and the first instance of a new concept of empire built on control of the oceans" (White ix).

first canto, Camões stages "Africa's land and Oriental seas" as the "theatre" of the empire's victories. The terraqueous connotations this setting of the poem conjures up cannot be ignored. Located entirely in a movement between "land" and "sea", and at times in settings which comprise of both at once, *The Lusiads* is awash with terraqueous language – the metaphorics of the littoral. My aim is to place *The Lusiads*'s littoral metaphorics at the heart of my literary exploration, which is akin to Bernhard Klein's excellent reading of Camões's "maritime imaginary". Klein convincingly argues that the rhetorical power of *The Lusiads* lies in Camões's "poetic projection" of his imperial vision onto the "vast 'blue water' expanse of the Indian Ocean" (158). And yet scholars largely forego analyses of the poem's representation of the sea in favour of discussions that focus on its expansionist and imperial discourse. I explore the poem's poetic language, and the reflection of Camões's representation of a discourse as necessarily located in descriptions of maritime surfaces and how these are "washed up" on to the land. It is this discourse that is carried in the text's language of the sea and that swashes up on South African shores, and which remains washed up in encounters within the littoral in the post-imperial context. In the fifth canto, in which the Cape is rounded, the sailors land on the southern African shore twice. It is here where they encounter and interact with the local people. The first moment of contact is one of violence, while the second remains amicable. Through a comparative reading of these two littoral scenes, I show how they are indicative of categorical thinking about persons.

2.2 Littoral Encounters: The Imperial Episteme

For V.Y Mudimbe, the creative minds responsible for the earliest myths of Africa date as far back as the classical times of Graeco-Roman texts (see *The Idea of Africa*). The early texts of Greek writers such as Philostratus feature some of the first representations of Africa in the Western imaginary. Significant to these writings are the anthropological philosophies on the place of human beings (their similarities and differences) in nature, some of which feature the people living on the African continent.[33] Mudimbe makes the point that while these classical writings note and speculate on these differences and similarities, they are not yet taken up in racialised discourse, though the seeds of prejudice are visible.[34] Josiah Blackmore shows how

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[33] Born in A.D 170, Flavious Philostratus produced the *Icones* (date unknown) a description of 64 works of art seen by the author in a gallery in Naples. One of these, a depiction of Hercules amongst the locals (called "Pygmies" by Philostratus) of Libya (Africa) forms the point of departure of Mudimbe's debate concerning the "history of the histories of Afra".

[34] See Artistotle's *Problems*, for example.

Africa was "at once a historical reality and a vast, limitless land of myth, monsters, and biblical time" before Portuguese sailors ventured below the equator and rounded the Cape (*Moorings* 1). This is largely because in the early fifteenth century the oceanic passage between Algarve in Portugal and Ceuta, on the northern coast of Africa, was a familiar trading route, while the southern parts of Africa were completely unknown. As sailing exploits moved down the West African littoral, Africa became "a laboratory of expansion, the primordial space of imperial and colonial campaigns [and] the continent and its inhabitants became a motor of textual productivity in the form of chronicles, letters, reports, navigational rutters, and geographic treatises" (Blackmore, *Moorings* 1). It was the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century sailing exploits of the Portuguese nation that reintroduced the classical writings on Africa to the eyes of the West, as the explorers turned to ancient Greek and Roman literature for a language to express the difference and strangeness they encountered. By the time Luis de Vaz Camões published *The Lusiads* in 1572, "[i]nformation and descriptions about the newly discovered 'savages' found their way into European consciousness", leading them to strive towards a "definition of radical difference" (Mudimbe 28). Shipwreck narratives, in their attempts at reconciling tragedy with triumph, played a notable part in disseminating representations of southern African shores, and the peoples encountered there, as simultaneously threatening, dangerous, and inferior, but also useful.

2.3 Flotsam: Shipwreck Narratives

Blackmore has written extensively on the discursive practice of shipwreck narratives and the "disruptive chapter in expansionist historiography" (*Manifest* 28) they have come to emulate.[35] If expansionist epistemes rely equally on geographical expansion and the discursive dissemination of this practice, then shipwreck narratives come to embody "a narrative practice representing disaster that (partially) establishes itself outside the official parameters of textual production and authority by which the workings and benefits of empire enter narrative representation" (28). In this sense, the shipwreck narrative becomes "a resistance to order and cohesion" (28–29) given its representation of a failed imperial voyage. The narrative strategy of shipwreck authors can be understood, then, as an attempt "to recuperate or repair loss through the agency of narrative" (29) especially since "the

[35] Another notable contribution on the disaster of shipwreck is by Steve Mentz, author of *Shipwreck Modernity: Ecologies of Globalization, 1550–1719* (2015), though the eco-cultural content of the book falls slightly outside of the scope of this chapter.

shipwreck author looks back on a voyage textually, within a discursive culture that demands that such historiographic reckoning inexorably leads to a position of knowledge and power" (31). Narratively, shipwreck authors are challenged with presenting failed voyages favourably, emphasising how control is restored to the (ship)wreck of which they speak. In this way, some measure of success may still be mined from the failed voyage. This strategy is achieved through a variety of narrative techniques that I touch on briefly in the following two sections, though I am mostly concerned with one in particular: the cataloguing quality of the shipwreck text.[36]

My interest in attending to shipwreck narratives is in reading for moments of encounter *with* and *within* the littoral, encounters which I discuss in two separate sections below under a framework of cataloguing, one of the narrative strategies that authors employ in attempting to restore triumph to the turmoil of the shipwreck. First, I discuss how the littoral is represented as the site of dis/order and safety/danger. I argue that while these thematics might seem to exist in binary opposition, they are also present as a simultaneity. As such, I suggest that the littoral comes to resemble Thirdspace. Secondly, as a space of danger, the littoral leaves shipwreck survivors vulnerable, as they see it, to encounters with the local peoples. In encounters in the littoral, the survivors' racialised discourse is made most prominent.

2.3.1 Cataloguing the Littoral

The overarching strategy of the shipwreck author is to reconcile failure to success. One way of doing so is through the cataloguing of detail pertaining to weather conditions, coordinates, the (often derelict) state of the ship, its cargo (both human and material), the location of the wreck, and most importantly, the experiences of the survivors in their interactions with the local inhabitants. The agenda behind this cataloguing is expressed by the author of the wreck of the *Saõ Bento* (1554). In the opening pages of the text, the author is at pains to show that it

> is of great importance to our navigators, and very useful as a warning to them. It teaches them what they should do in a similar case, what advantageous means of safety they should use, what is apparently most prejudicial and to be avoided, what precautions should be taken to reduce loss by sea and render their journey by land more secure, and how they may disembark with the least peril. The cause of the loss

[36] For a detailed discussion of these strategies see Blackmore, *Manifest Perdition.*

> of this ship (which is the same in nearly every case of wreck), and the account of the journey, show what should be followed and what avoided what preparations should be made in view of a march of such length and difficulty, how the [---] should be treated and communicated with,[37] and by what means the necessary commerce with them should be carried on. The barbarous nature and customs of those people are also exemplified. (Theal, *Records Vol II* 283)

The informative function that shipwreck narratives occupy is clearly illustrated here. The failure of the voyage is presented as instructive and thereby redeeming to the expansionist project. Failure thus becomes useful. Indeed, succeeding moments in the narrative of the *Saõ Bento* return to the instructive sentiments reflected in this introductory passage. Other shipwreck narratives, while not explicitly locating their narration within the cautionary framework of the *Saõ Bento* author, contain similar moments that equally speak of the value of the narrative that he mentions.[38] I describe these descriptions as 'cataloguing' in order to consider their narrative inscription as a literary mapping of the littoral space, and to situate my reading within precursory conventions of colonial mapping.

As discursive colonial strategy, geographical mapping, as Harry Garuba points out, is a "well-worn colonialist strategy", implemented in an effort to "make certain claims about the world" (91). Maps, then, re-inscribe territories textually in alignment with colonial ideologies. The Portuguese expansionist period I investigate in this chapter and the colonial projects Garuba references are of course not situated in the same historical moment. However, the shipwreck narratives I discuss are collected in a compilation called *Records of the Cape Colony* and contain the Colonial Office in the Cape and the Public Record Office in

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[37] I have omitted the racial slur here and everywhere else, not only due to the discomfort the reproduction of this word brings, but to alert the reader to the racist discourse in the "colonial library" and the expansionist approach to the South African territory. In present-day South Africa, the use of racial slurs is illegal and a hate crime. For a full genealogy of the term and its origins and assimilation into racialized discourse see Gabeba Baderoon's work on the history of Islam and its representations in South Africa.

[38] The author of the wreck of the *São Thomé* tells the reader that "The officers assisted to remove everything from that part of the ship, and they found that the leak which was great was occasioned
by the forcing back of the seams of oakum and the sheets of lead nailed upon them, which was owing to the caulking, a matter that causes the loss of many vessels, but to which very little regard is paid, and the officers do not give it sufficient attention, as if the safety of so many lives and so much merchandise on board did not depend upon it" (Theal, *Records Vol II* 188).

London, between 1793 and 1827. The inclusion of shipwreck narratives serves as a "recording" of early Portuguese encounters with the Cape territory and its people.

I would like to propose that in their cataloguing of specific details, shipwreck narratives espouse a literary mapping of territory and that this mapping is a precursory practice that informs early categorisation of peoples and space.[39]

For example, if one considers that the colonial map is a practice "in which the insecurities arising from the physical terrain are transferred into the domain of textuality and some illusion of security is achieved by textual stability" (Garuba 93), then shipwreck narratives, by way of their dis/ordered nature, fall into the tradition of claiming power and control through textuality. I am aware of Blackmore's cautioning against reading shipwreck narratives as texts that confirm ideologies of expansionism, especially since

> [t]he presence or fact of ideological moments in the disastrous context of shipwreck troubles a reading that would make the shipwreck text a platform for expansionist thinking, and speaks to an emptying out of such claims, to a hollow discursive practice that has lost validity". (*Manifest* 41)

However, it is precisely this contradiction that I am interested in: this tension is rendered visible in the littoral space through representations with the littoral and in the littoral, which I read as a mapping of an ideological project that inadvertently fell apart.

2.3.2 Encounters with the Littoral

While I follow Blackmore's readings of dis/order and consider moments in selected narratives that present this dualism, [40] I want to extend his reading to consider these representations of encounters with the shore as a literary mapping of the South African littoral. In this sense, the shore is meant to provide a referential point against which

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[39] To some degree, this kind of cataloguing is reminiscent of the colonial catalogue or inventory associated with the "cabinets of curiosities", sixteenth century versions of museums, which Robert Denning explains are to be thought of as "grand experiments in maintaining, interpreting, and transmitting past cultures and artifacts [to] audiences who may have been curious about non-Western cultures but had no desire to engage them in their own context. In many ways, this was another manifestation of colonialism, where people in power, mainly in the West, imposed their views of the world on people who were not in power" (30).

[40] In order not to belabour the point, I cite from one or two significant shipwreck narratives and relevant moments as necessary. The narratives I exclude all contain similar moments, and can be consulted in Theal's volumes I–VIII.

disorderly movement across the ocean can be ordered and navigated. And yet, the littoral is also the site of the wreck, the disorder of the voyage. Most specifically, it is the site that exposes the washing up of this dis/order, and therefore of the expansionist project of empire.

The wreck of the *São João* (1552) opens with specific details pertaining to the date the ship departed and the tally of the merchandise it was to transport from Cochin, Kerala, to Portugal. The author writes that the cargo amounted to "twelve thousand" of pepper, and "was well laden with other merchandise" (Theal, *Records Vol I* 149). We are also told that a ship this size and so heavily laden was exposed to "great risks" on the voyage because of the material worth it carried. Thus, by way of immediate introduction, focus is drawn to the project of economic gain and the wealth these ships carry. The ship left Kerala on the 3rd of February 1552 and on the 13th of April "got sight of the coast of the Cape at 32 degrees" (129). They were "long in reaching the Cape because of the bad sails which they had, which was one, and indeed the principal, cause of their loss" (129). When they finally caught sight of the shore "the wind was favourable, and they ran along the coast taking constant soundings, till they sighted Cape Agulhus" (129). The littoral, as shown here, thereby offers a point of (navigational) reference and guides the sailors in their movement. Various details are also noted by the author: the journey's duration, the coordinates of the Cape's coast, the date, and the wind conditions at the time.

However, it is not long before things change. Soon, we are offered descriptions of the weather changing, and of the galleon being forced to adapt its course and head for the coast of modern-day KwaZulu-Natal. Again, the narrator takes great care to offer details pertaining to the condition of the weather and the ship's consequent movement in relation to the shore and the Cape of Good Hope:

> The winds were such, that if it blew from the east one day, the next it came from the west, and it being now the 12th of May, they were south-west of the Cape of Good Hope at a distance of twenty-five leagues. There the wind blew west and west-north-west with great fury. (Theal, *Records Vol 1* 129)

These details all perform a certain kind of cataloguing that is aimed at providing information for subsequent Portuguese ships that will round the Cape. The details the author provides not only describe the weather conditions and seasons under which these calamities occurred, but also provide the exact coordinates of where they took place. This passage therefore offers a tracking of the weather and wind conditions that might aid other ships in rounding the Cape

without disaster in order to secure the success of expansionism. Of course, these cataloguing moments do not strictly resemble ships' logs or maritime reports, but the information they contain fulfils a similar purpose: to report, caution, and educate.

The *São João*'s dates of departure and arrival indicate that the journey takes roughly two months, especially if the ship's maintenance is poor and conditions of the sails are not kept up to standard. This serves as a further caution and critique of the expansionist enterprise, as it was a tendency by trading companies (ironically) to run ships into the ground.[41] Thus, the shipwreck narrative warns that ships should be serviced and maintained at a good standard despite the cost to company. Additionally, since the ship caught sight of the Cape in April, this places their arrival in autumn. Along with seasonal wind directions, coordinates, and distances from the shore, these details provide tools with which navigational paths can be plotted for subsequent journeys. One such moment in the wreck of the *São Bento* (1554) presents itself when the ship runs into trouble and the nearest land is a "wide expanse of sandy shore in latitude thirty-two degrees and a third, at the mouth of the river Infante [...] if we had gone ashore where we intended, the sea being now almost at low tide, there was left a band of rocky shore, over which the sea burst in foam all along the coast" (218).[42] Again, the description of the shoreline, with special attention drawn to tidal conditions, and therefore shore conditions, is of significance for succeeding journeys.

The cause of the disaster in the wreck of the *São João Baptista* (1622) comes from a different phenomenon: a battle with two Dutch vessels, which the *São João Baptista* survives but at the cost of great damage to the ship. After much telling of the torment and suffering of those onboard, for the ship is sure to sink, "in this confusion and extremity, on the 29th of September [they] found [themselves] at daybreak two leagues from land, in latitude 33⅓°" (74). Here, the sight of the coast brings order to the "confusion" as it once again presents a navigational point to turn to. The movement of the ship thus transforms from confusing to purposeful, underscored by the reference to latitude. In their representation of the disorder of imperialism, littoral encounters in these narratives reveal attempts at its reconciliation. That is to say, it is in the encounter with the littoral, its unpredictable weather changes and hidden shorelines, that the expansionist episteme is thrown into crisis. If "order is granted to the

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[41] The narrator of the *São João* mentions in detail the dilapidated state of the ship's sails, the dangers of having no reserves, and the silencing of the ship's carpenter who identified a problem with the woodworks (Theal, *Records Vol 1* 129–130).

[42] Assumedly what is known today as the Breede River, located just north of Cape Infanta, which in turn is named after João Infante, a captain of one of Dias's caravels.

body of the ship" (Blackmore, *Manifest* 34) by the author's fixation on the desperate attempts at keeping the structure of the ship intact, and therefore afloat and on course, then the littoral becomes the site in which the destruction of this order is washed up. The evidence of this destruction, the flotsam of empire, is represented in the material loss suffered in the wreck, and the Portuguese survivors that make it to shore.

In seeing that the ship was taking on more and more water, the officers of the *Santo Alberto*, resolved to cast some of her goods overboard so as to lower the weight of the ship and raise her stern. The narrator mentions that "some who were attached to the baubles in their chests…hesitated to cast them overboard, still hoping to save them and themselves as well" (Theal, *Records Vol II* 285). It is only after Nuno Velho Pereira, the recent captain of Sofala, promised to give them each "forty-five quintals of cloves" that "this hope of profit was so powerful that the deck was immediately cleared" (285). There is a pause in the narration here to comment that "the sea was covered with treasures, most of them thrown away by their owners, to whom they were now as hateful and valueless as they were formerly beloved and esteemed" (285). Here we encounter, amidst descriptions of the chaos of the ship and crew, an emphasis on material loss and a fixation on the cost to the empire. More importantly, it is the littoral space which inverts the valorising of goods brought along for trading purposes. In the face of impending demise, the materiality of the ship is undone by the wrecking in the littoral space as survival supersedes money. However, this is not without its own irony. The survivors were only willing to jettison their valuables once they were promised "profit": cloves that could be bartered or sold.

In the *São Thomé* (1589) a pause in narration equally registers loss of wealth:

> They were left astounded, as men in a dream, seeing the ship in which they had so lately been journeying, laden with riches and merchandise almost beyond estimation swallowed by the waves and sunk under the waters, burying in the caves of the ocean everything belonging to those in her and to others in India. (Theal, *Records Vol II* 196)

A similar scene of loss washed up or wealth rendered useless in the littoral is described by Manuel de Mesquita Perestrello, the author of the narrative of the wreck of the ship the *São Bento*. Of the destruction, Perestrello writes:

> No small space was occupied with the property cast up from the wreck, for as far as our eyes could reach, both sides of the shore were covered with scented drugs and

> infinite diversity of goods and precious things, many of them strewn round their owners, to whom they were not only worthless in their present necessity, but many by their weight had caused the death of those who had been excessively attached to them in life. (Theal, *Records Vol 1* 222)

In these passages, the sea comes to engulf the wealth of the empire and the oceanic space comes to stand for the limits of mercantile capitalism and is situated outside of its reach and power, despite it being the very canvas on which the empire is built. Imperial values of materiality and wealth are therefore rendered useless in the littoral, and the space actively undoes the project of economic gain and empire and exposes its failure.

2.3.2. Encounters within the Littoral: Racialised Shorelines and the Disruption of Empire

The narratives contained in Theale's collection would suggest that for survivors of shipwreck, the South African shore presents a paradoxical ambivalence of safety from the sinking wreck and encroaching danger as they move closer to the shore. While the shore might provide a point of destination for a ship that has veered off course, a haven to steer towards, and relief to those cast into the ocean as a ship goes down, racialised perspectives of the South African territory simultaneously cast the arrival onshore as dangerous and potentially fatal due to the perceived threat posed by the local people. Here, it is in the racialised discourse of the text and the literary mapping of the littoral that the flotsam of Portuguese expansionism is most prominent.

Of the conditions aboard the *São Thomé* at the time of its impending wrecking, the narrator hopelessly recalls that

> Everything they could see represented death. Beneath them was a ship full of water, above them a sky covered with the deepest gloom and darkness, as if conspiring against all. The air moaned on every side, as if it was calling out death! death! (Theal, *Records Vol II* 190)

The odds of survival are carefully represented as being near impossible. "Death" is repeated twice, and the narrator continues to linger on this mood, stating that "[w]ithin the ship nothing was heard but sighs, groans, wailings, moans, and prayers to God" (190). These descriptions set up the antithesis that follows in the eventual sighting of "land! land!" (191). The drawn-out focus on the dire state of the *São Thomé*, and the sure "death" of its crew, provides the antithetical point of comparison with the relief accorded to the sighting of land

and the littoral. This is underscored by a mirroring in typographical representation — the words "land" and "death" are both repeated twice with exclamation points following each word — and the shore is imbued with safety and respite. D'Almada, a sailor aboard the *São João Baptista*, describes sighting the shore as follows: "such was the joy of all on board that it might have been Lisbon harbour" (Theal, *Records Vol VIII* 74). Here, the foreign shore is reconfigured as a familiar space – and perhaps even symbolic of a hopeful wish for a return to the home country. Preceding the descriptions of the strife and turmoil ships were facing are descriptions of the littoral, which are placed at a point of juxtaposition in the text to relieve tension and inspire hope. The renaming of the alien South African coastline as Portuguese territory speaks to expansionist taxonomy and imperial practice. Additionally, the reproduction of the act of renaming in the shipwreck text itself aims to narratologically recycle the flotsam of empire.

However, for those who make it there, the shore quickly becomes a hostile space which collapses distinctions between refuge and danger – the result of which is an ever-shifting ambivalence which disrupts expansionist hierarchy. When it becomes clear that the *São João* will sink, the most pressing concern is to arm those decanted onshore so as to protect the survivors against the local inhabitants, who the sailors believe will rob them in their vulnerability. As the narrator puts it:

> It would truly inspire men with horror to think of their case. They were running aground with the galleon in the land of the [---], judging it, however perilous, to be their only hope of saving their lives. (Theal, *Records Vol I* 133)

The melodramatic tone and the use of derogatory language to describe indigenous people who are in possession of the territory (it is their land) is telling of the expansionist episteme. The description of the southern African territory speaks to the depth of the myth of the dark and dangerous interior of the country and reveals the cracks in imperial discourse: to the Portuguese, what could be more horrific than to be rendered defenceless and vulnerable in a space that has actively been constructed as primitive and savage, ironically in order to legitimise control? Present in these lines, then, is the flotsam of empire that shipwreck narratives inadvertently come to emulate for the Other now stands in an oddly empowered antithesis to the ailing might of the expansionist sailors.

As the littoral space becomes neither safe nor dangerous and also both at once, the nature of the encounters with the local people changes accordingly. Soja's Thirdspace is instructive

here. He writes that Thirdspace “can be described as a creative recombination and extension, one that builds on a Firstspace perspective that is focused on the ‘real’ material world and a Secondspace perspective that interprets this reality through ‘imagined’ representations of spatiality” (Soja, *Thirdspace* 6). Thus, read with Soja, the littoral can be considered as both real-and-imagined space. After all, it combines both imagined and material spatiality; it is the materiality of the environment that caused the wrecking, and the imagining of the space that renders it home to the mythic “savages”. Seen as such, the Portuguese/Other binary is thrown into crisis by the narrative frame of the shipwreck and the littoral setting as space of encounter.

This crisis is most usefully represented in the mapping of territories in shipwreck narratives. Once onshore, shipwreck survivors had no other recourse but to advance to familiar points on the coast, usually already established trading zones. This gives cause to the narrator of the *Saõ Thomé*, to claim that

> Before continuing to relate the events of the journey of these castaways in [---], it seems proper to give a brief description of those parts, as we have done of all the others in our ninth Decade, where we treat of the conquest of the gold-mines by the governor Francisco Barreto and Vasco Fernandas Homem. (Theal, *Vol II*, 199)

The narrator continues to dedicate several pages to descriptions of the area, the coordinates of known rivers, and villages open to trading with the Portuguese. He takes special care to conclude these pages with the following entry:

> All the kingdoms mentioned in this description are well known to the Portuguese, who resort to them from Mozambique to trade for ivory. Upon which we will say no more of them; and though it would not be out of place to treat of the barbarous customs and laws of these [---], I will not do so here, because it is foreign to my purpose, which is only to relate what befell the people of this wreck upon their way until they reached the river of Lourenjo Marques. (Theal, *Vol II* 202)

It is tempting to read these pages as reflective of the re-inscription of “the names and languages of the indigenes [that] are replaced by new names, or are corrupted into new and Europeanized forms by the cartographer” (Ashcroft 28), in addition to the erasure of the

documenting of the local people's customs and cultures. The space afforded to the mention of these people is qualified by a description that casts them as savage and uncivilised, thereby recategorising them to align with an expansionist ideology that falls into the Portuguese/Other binary. This aligns with colonial discursive practices of mapping, be it literal or metaphorical, to ultimately emulate "not geographical fixity, but the fixity of power" (32). However, this mapping also introduces a discursive tension that sits at odds with the strategy of the narrative. In moments where the narrator refers to Portuguese mapped areas, the detailing refers to both the inscription and erasure of local territory. For example, the narrator states that

> the place where the boat came ashore is commonly known to our navigators as the land of Fumos, and is so marked upon our charts, which name was given to it by the first of our people who visited it, from the quantity of smoke which they saw on the land at night; but the native [---] call it the land of the Makomates, from some [---] so named who live along its shores. (Theal, *Records Vol II* 199)

While the territory here is represented as being renamed, the local name for the area remains in the Portuguese text. It therefore still remains visible, despite the re-inscription this it is meant to reflect. Additionally, and perhaps more significantly, the littoral here evokes a conceptualisation of the space in which the Portuguese name sits at odds with the original. In other words, the area was named by the first Portuguese to land at this specific shore and named after the smoke they saw rise from land, the smoke being a sign of habitation. The naming arises, then, from the perspective adopted by the Portuguese as they approached the land from the sea. To the local people, however, this perspective is challenged, and the pre-existing naming of the area is provided by people who live *in the littoral.* The preservation of this detail in the shipwreck narrative presents a disruption to the narrative strategy here and the history that the discursive mapping is meant to eradicate lingers, nonetheless.[43]

Finally, despite the narrator's attempts at presenting the purpose of his text as being a tale of the hardships that befell the survivors and their heroic endurance of unjust treatment at the hands of the indigenous people, the expansionist text, as Blackmore reminds us, is ultimately

[43] See both Stephen Greenblatt's *Marvellous Possessions* and Patricia Seed's *Ceremonies of Possession* for influential scholarly pieces about this kind of act of naming, and other performative gestures, as acts of conquest.

one of failure. In encounters within the littoral, the terraqueous site becomes a space in which European notions of social order are disrupted, despite attempts at the preservation of expansionist hierarchies, further destabilising self/other, or Portuguese/African binaries. Blackmore makes the point that Sepulveda, the leader of the survivors of the *São João*, organises their party into a linear hierarchy in which he, his wife and children, some Portuguese and slaves (assumedly to carry provisions), the pilot and the vanguard make up the top tier in the social hierarchy. Placed under this tier was a second group, which included the master of the galleon, the sailors, and women slaves. Bringing up the rear were the rest of the Portuguese and slaves (*Manifest* 67–68). Blackmore writes the following of this social hierarchy:

> The arrangement of the survivors into a marching line symbolically represents the attempt to re-establish order after the chaotic experience of shipwreck; it constitutes an effort to reconstruct the order of class and status typical of Portugal, to unify a society on the verge of anarchy, marooned from the home nation and its structures of power and position. (68)

This order, however, is quickly rendered fragile when the *São João* party loses "ten or twelve of their number" (Theal, *Records Vol 1* 137) during the first month onshore. Included in the casualties is Sepulveda's illegitimate son, who was, unbeknownst to the captain, merely left behind because he was too weak to continue.

The party of the *São Bento* suffer equal number in loss due to starvation, illness, and rogue attacks by the natives who plunder their provisions as they journey up the coast. As hunger and starvation troubles the representation of the party's ordered movement, it disintegrates to the point where Perestrello relates that "they fell into disorder" (Theal, *Records Vol 1* 251). He writes that "all were reduced to such insensibility, and were so affected by their suffering that even those who remained behind did not realise that they must die in a few hours in abandonment…Thus they passed over each other without showing any sign of feeling, as if they had been a herd of irrational animals grazing in that place" (251). Here, the company becomes so disordered that their humanity is reduced to the state of irrational animals, so chaotic in their conduct that "there were often disputes between relations and friends over a locus, beetle, or lizard" (252).

Perestrello also tells of the weakened state of his brother, who could not continue, and thus the party was tempted to leave him behind. To Perestrello, this rationale makes sense "since

our Lord was pleased that of father, sons and family who came in that ship not one should escape, each seeing the disastrous death of the others" (253), and he resolves to stay behind with his brother (he does, however, encourage and help him to carry on and they both survive). Perestrello's reference to the destruction of patrilineality suffered by shipwreck describes the disastrous blow to the notion of empire, of which the ship and its crew are key symbols. Indeed, as they leave the site of the wreck, Perestrello describes how they

> could not refrain from looking back many times at the ruin of that beautiful and unfortunate ship, for though not two timbers of it held together, but all was shattered on the rocks, still while [they] could see the wreck it seemed to [them] a relic and a certain portion of [their] desired country. (228)

In both these accounts, the attempt at preserving the unity of the social order of the home country is disrupted in the littoral. The patrilineal line is therefore disrupted in the littoral space, not just in the destruction of Sepulveda's lineage, and the deaths described by Perestrello, but in the weakening of the party leaders. Thus, encounters with the littoral in these narratives throw the construction of empire into crisis. If expansionist practice is to re-possess nature by the "(pioneering) acts of civilisation" (Driver, "Women and Nature", 460), then the littoral encounters discussed in this section speak of the failures of this practice. The ambivalent representation of the littoral space reveals both expansionist discourse and the limits of empire.

2.4 Shipwreck Shored

Camões's *The Lusiads* proposes an interesting confluence of the early Greek mythologising of Africa and the later fifteenth and sixteenth century European anthropological philosophies of the continent. There is perhaps no better example of the superimposition of myth and anthropology than the figure of Adamastor, the "highly consequential linkage between classical epic […] and the discovery narratives of Portuguese explorers" (Crewe 79). Canto V depicts the Portuguese sailors, led by Da Gama, rounding the southern tip of Africa as they sail to the East. And it is in this canto that Camões depicts two encounters in the South African littoral zone: the first on the West Coast, at what is now known as St Helena Bay, and the second, at present-day Mossel Bay on the South Coast. It is between these two encounters at the tip of Africa that the reader is introduced to Adamastor, the monstrous anthropomorphised promontory of Cape Point.

The figure of Adamastor looms large in the South African literary imaginary. Malvern van Wyk Smith has traced over fifty poetic re-emergences of Adamastor in South African writings, starting from the 1800s to the present (see *Shades of Adamastor*). "It all begins with the myth of Adamastor", declares Stephen Gray, and "[t]o follow the myth and its transformations might be a convenient entry into the field of South African literature" ("The Myth of Adamastor" 1). For Gray, Adamastor's image symbolises "the white man's creation myth of Africa" (22). Dorothy Driver disagrees. From a feminist perspective, she reviews Gray's argument that Adamastor "has always been taken to be about race" ("Women in Nature" 455) and instead situates a reading of Adamastor at the intersections of race and gender. "If Adamastor is black", writes Driver, "he is a white man's idea of black [and] expresses anxieties which are specifically male" (456).

I find Adamastor's narratological position in the text a detail worth considering more explicitly and one that scholars tend to overlook. Key here is that Adamastor is placed in the middle of the two littoral encounters. From this, it is possible to suggest that the structure of both Canto V and the entire epic follows the moment "before Adamastor" and the moment "after Adamastor". Thus, he is decidedly a littoral figure, as he mediated between the two littoral moments. Reading Adamastor as a mediation of the littoral itself allows me to challenge terracentric notions of Camões's mythological titan in South African scholarship. Adamastor as a littoral figure introduces a triangulation of the Cape and its shores that extends to trading routes to the East and West and situates South Africa's littoral imaginary in a global literary context.

When Adamastor speaks, he does so "with a coarse, *gravelly* voice/Booming from the *ocean*'s depths" (Camões, 5.39–40; my emphases). The synergy in these lines, between images of the earth and water, establishes his terraqueous nature. In the Portuguese imaginary, Adamastor goes by the moniker "the Cape of Storms", a title meant to evoke the gales and turbulent waters that render the nautical navigation of the Cape "implacably hostile" (5.43) and dangerous. Yet he is also described as being where "Africa ends" (5.50), where "its coast concludes". The description is undeniably terraqueous; Adamastor is littoral.

Such a littoral reading of the figure of Adamastor is evocative as it challenges the foundational boundaries that land-focused South African scholarship has thus far produced.[44]

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[44] The exception is the work of Meg Samuelson (see "Literary Inscriptions"; "Rendering the Cape-as-Port").

John Purves, for example, cites Braga's idea that Adamastor is "the synthesis of all the famous disasters of the unimaginably tragic maritime history of Portugal" (735). Yet this perspective remains one that approaches from the sea and looks to the land. Gray argues, meanwhile, that Adamastor should be engaged from a "reverse angle shot", that is, "from the vantage point of the cruel, dark and vengeful interior" (2). Thus, he looks out at the sea and the Lusiads (the Portuguese sailors) from the perspective of the land. The issue here is that both these perspectives reinstate, rather than trouble, land/sea binaries. Reading Adamastor as littoral would attend to this issue, as it would engage the interplay between land and sea. On this point, Meg Samuelson has usefully made a case for reading Adamastor as a figure of ambivalence by way of reading "the ambiguity of the beach and its ambivalence as a literary figure" in South African texts ("Literary Inscriptions" 123). Samuelson's argument opens a space for my own point of departure.

The limited South African approaches to *The Lusiads* essentially argue that what the poem initiates is a kind of terrestrial discourse. I want to suggest that the "land" and "sea" figuration present throughout Camões's representation of the southern African space encourages a rethinking of foundational discourses in South African literary scholarship. Adamastor's positioning in the text becomes particularly intriguing when one considers that the littoral is a crucial element in expansionist literature, precisely because it is here where personages either go onshore or are confronted with their terrestrial goal. Blackmore makes this point emphatically: "it is this kind of mooring or pause [that] permits the realization of an expansionist design: moments of suspended nautical movement allow the personages of *Os Lusíadas* to construct historical narratives" (*Moorings* XVI). Camões's epic poem is a weaving together of the fictional, the historical, and the personal, and one aimed at restoring national pride to ebbing Portuguese patriotism.[45] By the time Camões sailed to India himself, the imperial prosperity built on Da Gama's explorations was becoming rapidly undone and "*The Lusiads* was employed to [b]olster a bruised national pride" (White x, xi). The historical narrative that emerges in the littoral pause with Adamastor's introduction is meant to insert Lusophone history into classical history, elevating the Portuguese nation's feats to the status of epic heroes in the cultural imaginary.

Adamastor is Camões's mythological invention. Imagined as one of the titans, the children of the primordial gods in Greek mythology, he has been banished to the southern tip of Africa

[45] Camões conflates three narratives in his work: Classical literature, Da Gama's diaries, and his own personal experience of sailing the same route years later.

for attempting to rape Tethys, a sea nymph.[46] As his punishment, he is turned into the rocky promontory where he guards the sea route to the East. Described as

> Grotesque and of enormous stature,
> With heavy jowls, and an unkempt beard,
> Scowling from shrunken, hollow eyes,
> Its complexion earthy and pale,
> Its hair grizzled and matted with clay,
> Its mouth coal black, teeth yellow with decay (5.39)

In these lines, Adamastor embodies the fearful myths of the savage, dark continent of Africa. The terrestrial language used to describe his form is compounded by evocations of the primitive and threatening, all under the guise of Greek mythology. Described as an "earthy" being made up of "clay" and "coal", he is an anthropomorphic representation of The Cape of Storms. And yet his "grotesque", "scowling" and "grizzled" nature is also meant to carry a sense of menace and threat of the unknown continent and the "awe with which Africa was regarded in early experiences of the untamed" (Gray, "The Myth" 27–28). Additionally, he is described as "unkempt" with "grizzled and matted" hair and "teeth yellow with decay". Such descriptions are meant to simultaneously speak to an ancient state, which has hitherto been dormant and untroubled, but also to notions of the "primitive", designating "the uncultivated" (Mudimbe 27) and therefore standing in opposition to ideas of "culture" and "civilization".

In the very next lines, we read that

> So towered its thick limbs, I swear
> You could believe it a second
> Colossus of Rhodes, that giant
> Of the ancient world's seven wonders.

[46] The attempted rape of Tethys has sparked some notable scholarship on gender discourse in *The Lusiads*. To Driver, Camões's casting of Adamastor as violent and lustful towards Tethys, is also "specifically about the black man's frustrated desire for a white woman" (455). To Driver, then, Canto V is "a story about masculinity and femininity" in which Adamastor represents masculinity in its crudest sense — power and violent domination — and Tethys "a symbol of indestructible nature, unharnessed femininity, the sea" (456–457). See chapter one of Lucy Graham's *State of Peril: Race and Rape in South African Literature* for a reading of Adamastor as inaugural metaphor for "black peril" in South African writings about rape.

Gray argues that the turn to Greek references here are indicative of Camões's attempts as "a writer at home in his own European literary environment" to "deal with an essentially African experience" ("The Myth" 17). In other words, Camões is imagining the myth of the African continent through his familiar epistemological lens. However, what Gray fails to address explicitly is that at the time Camões was writing, the reinvigoration of Greek classical texts for their representation of Africa was actively being mobilised, as Mudimbe shows, towards establishing an anthropological dichotomy that would eventually validate imperial and colonising projects (*Idea of Africa* xi–xii, 1–37).

In many of Graeco-Roman texts, for example, the "savage" is deployed as the dichotomy to the citizen of the *polis*. "The 'savage' is the one living in the bush, in the forest, [...] and by extension, 'savage' can designate any marginal being, foreigner, the unknown, whoever is different and who as such becomes the unthinkable" (Mudimbe 15). The discourse of this dichotomy, "savage" versus "polis", "uncultivated" vs "culture", was aimed at placing anthropological difference on a linear chain of civilisation and modernity. Achille Mbembe reminds us that Africa "is the very figure of 'the strange'" and "still constitutes one of the metaphors through which the West represents the origin of its own norms" (*On the Postcolony* 3). As subordinate binary against which the West defines itself, Africa is largely considered to be "predominantly ahistorical in that it is always more or less the same" (Blackmore, *Moorings* 77) regardless of the historical moment in which this binary is placed. If colonising structures "organize[d] geographies of modernity by framing the temporal horizons of their being as if in an uneven state of development nonetheless arched on a singular teleology" (Mkhize 76), the figure of Adamastor becomes symbolic of this practice and *The Lusiads* marks a moment in South African literature where Western artists are actively thinking through and constructing the expansionist episteme to insert Africa into the Portuguese historical imaginary.

Adamastor's disruptive quality resonates with the shipwreck narratives I discussed in the previous section of this chapter. Blackmore makes the point that "Adamastor is also shipwreck awesomely incarnate because the Cape and its vicinity were the site of numerous wrecks on the India route" (*Manifest* 22). Vexed by the Portuguese's discovery of the Cape, and because they "have breached what is forbidden", "desecrated nature's/Secrets and mysteries of the deep" and "betrayed [him] to the world" Adamastor curses them:

> Year by year your fleets will meet,
> Shipwreck, with calamities so combined
> That death alone will bring you peace of mind (5.44)

Camões is no doubt here thinking of the *Saõ Joaõ,* which was damaged while rounding the Cape and wrecked on the coast of Kwa-Zulu Natal in 1552, twenty years before *The Lusiads* was published. Nearly 500 of those on board the ship survived the wrecking. The captain Manuel de Sepulveda, his wife Leonora, and children were Portuguese, while the rest were slaves. After some days encamped on the beach, the party set out on foot towards Delagoa Bay, current-day Maputo, in the hopes of finding relief. Only twenty-five members of the original party completed this journey. Blackmore argues that the inclusion of a shipwreck narrative in *The Lusiads* speaks to "the relationship between national glory and failure in equivocal terms [by] weaving shipwreck and disaster into the very fabric of imperial design" (*Manifest* 26). Shipwreck narratives form a precarious part of imperial discourse because they simultaneously speak of the might of the empire and its potential demise. If ships are taken as cogs in the machinery of the expanding empire, their wrecking speaks to the failure of this expansion. As Blackmore put it, "disaster exists coterminously with an espousal of imperialist ideologies, so there is no cause and effect between the two: empire exists alongside shipwreck, alongside its own undoing" (26).

2.5 Swash: *The Lusiads*

My point of departure in reading *The Lusiads* follows Purves, who writes that "the note struck at the very outset is the note of maritime adventure" (741). I argue that a literary approach to the littoral encounters in *The Lusiads* is contingent upon reading the poetic streams that build to these climactic moments. Before I turn to the two littoral encounters I wish to discuss, I would like to reflect on the descriptions of the waterscape that precede the Lusiads' landing on South African soil in order to tease out the watery expansionist discourse that washes up onshore. As I aim to show, this discourse is central to these encounters, for they both inform and trouble the categorisation of the local people.

The Lusiads opens with a dedication by the poet to King Sebastião, the last remaining heir apparent of Portuguese descent and whose ascension to the throne in 1568, aged 14, prevented the crown from being passed to King Phillip II of Spain (White 229). The language

employed in this opening, presents the water- and landscapes as promised property of the king, delivered by the gods through the Portuguese sailors, who are framed as their vessels of conquest. We read that “Tethys, Neptune’s bride, has prepared/The world’s green oceans as a dowry” (1.16.5–6) for the empire before we encounter the sailors, “midway on the wide ocean/Cleaving the ever-restless waves” (Canto 1 stanza 19) as their “Mighty prows sped on/Cutting the sacred waters” (1.19). The representation of the ocean as “wide” and unknown emphasises the daring of the sailors, who are represented as violently claiming maritime territory. Every mile they progress over the “unchartered” waters, they in fact “cut” and “cleave” a now known route, creating a foreboding tension. The seascape is presented as daunting, unknown, growing “ever-restless”, offering “opposition” to the sailors’ intrusion, but only “emboldening” these “men of war” (42). Here the expositional representation of the ocean as moving from “un-possessed” to “possessed” – in terms of charting, mapping, and thus “discovering” and “controlling” – bestows on the sailors entitlement and ownership over the ocean. It is the Lusiads’ stage, their space on which, and in which, their pioneering exploits are celebrated. This attitude, established on the text’s waterscape, is later washed up in the littoral zone, and in turn swashes on to land.

Canto V traces Da Gama’s voyage from “the loved harbour” (5.1.5) in Lisbon, Portugal, around the Cape to Malindi and onto present day Kenya’s Indian Ocean coast. At this point in the narrative, the Lusiads have found safe harbour in Malindi and are the Sultan’s guests. Hoping that the sultan might provide the Portuguese with a pilot who can guide them to India, Da Gama must convince him, through the narration of their exploits, that their efforts are worthy of such a gift. As the Lusiads were “navigating waters only/Portuguese had sailed before [them]” (5.4.1–2), Canto V opens with Da Gama presenting their course mapped against the listing of territories known and claimed by them. They sail past Madeira, “known/More for its name than its ancient past/For we were the first to people it” (Stanza 5), and the Cape Verde islands which they “christened afresh” (7) with this name. They pass “Sierra Leone’s lion mountain/And the cape which [they] call Cape Palmas” (Stanza 12), the River Niger where they hear “Breakers pounding beaches that are [theirs]” (12). The Congo had “been brought to [them] by faith in Christ” (13).

Da Gama’s speech aims to impress the Sultan with the power of the Portuguese empire and the pioneering feats of discovery, and therefore legitimise their request for a pilot. On a narratological level, the language Camões employs here — the possessive pronouns, the listing of Lusophone territories — again establishes an imperial attitude necessarily located in

the oceanic space.[47] It is the maritime stage that constructs and carries the Portuguese imperial conduct. Once the Lusiads cross the equator and Da Gama "looked [his] last/At the constellations of the north" (5.13.5–6) the narration then turns to emphasise the strangeness of the unknown waters, and the "new hemisphere" and "new heavens" (5.14). At this point in the canto, a juxtaposition is introduced between charted co-ordinated movement in known waters and an absence of references to navigation, direction, and in fact movement at all. Instead, Camões has his narrator embellish the "sea's dangers"; the "catastrophic thunderstorms", "black squalls" and "earth-splitting claps of thunder" (5.16) in an attempt to convince the Sultan of Malindi, and the readers of *The Lusiads*, of the fortitude of the sailors. This absence of movement constructs a curious suspension in descriptions of the sailors' journey, and therefore also in the dramatic action in the canto. Progression, in both a travel and narratological sense, is lulled and the ordered advancement of both the sailors and the narrativisation of their movement, is paused, halted, or disrupted. It is only when a "keen-eyed sailor" spots "Land! Land!" that the plot is taken up again — that is to say, when a terrestrial goal appears. "Land! Land!" therefore marks not only the introduction of the South African coast in *The Lusiads*, but also reintroduces a point of navigational fixity in the text, a landed one, and reasserts a terracentric goal amidst the previous oceanic discourse.

Da Gama and his crew then aim for St Helena Bay so they may "discover in parts/So remote, precisely where [they] were" (5.25.4–5). The South African littoral space first appears, then, as a space which allows the Portuguese to re-align their co-ordinates on their voyage of discovery, fix their navigation forward, and re-order their forward progression. Even before it is entered, the South African landmass therefore appears in a capacity of not only purpose, but also investment and control. Referring to this moment, Samuelson makes the point that "In the first lines of its literary appearance, then, the beach is invested with a duality of purpose, signifying both license and fixity" (171). Samuelson employs the descriptor "licence" to mean a "freedom of behaviour", in that the Lusiads engage the beach as a *tabula rasa* despite the presence of local inhabitants. The casting of the littoral space here as a blank slate is a necessary constituent to the modernist project Klein identifies in his reading of *The Lusiads*. As "willing participants in an imperial mission but also as brokers of the cultural encounter on the sixteenth-century ocean" (Klein 160), these littoral encounters reflect the poet's representation, and making, of space in the expansionist episteme. The littoral space

[47] Subrahmanyam and Thomaz explain that "over the period 1415 to 1500, the Portuguese has developed three distinct models of imperial organization" (300) based on thalassocracy.

has been wiped clean with the pre-existing presence of the locals and reinscribed with the Lusophones' claim to it.

Historically, Da Gama and his crew cast anchor in St. Helena Bay on Wednesday 8 November 1497 to stock up on fresh water and ascertain their latitude (Colvin 30). The sailors encountered a local on the shore who took one of the Portuguese crew back to his village. Here, something occurred that made the encounter hostile. While documents in the "colonial library" offer different speculations as to why this encounter turned violent,[48] all reports align in one aspect: the indigenous peoples' perspective is silent. Camões's representation of this event manages to capture the perplexity in the exchange, but it is a perplexity rendered from their perspective alone. In Camões's rendition, it is the Portuguese who are cast as the "aggrieved" in this exchange; the hostility is presented as occurring due to the growing threat posed by the locals. Veloso is painted as a heroic escapee who foiled a plot to ambush the sailors.

Describing the first sighting of the locals, Camões's Da Gama tells of "a stranger with a black skin/ [his companions] had captured" while "making his sweet harvest/Of honey from the wild bees in the forest" (5.27). Da Gama describes this local as looking "thunderstruck" for "He could not understand [them], nor [they] him/Who seemed wilder than Polyphemus" (5.28). This reference to Polyphemus provides another example of the poet reaching for a classical framework to mark the encounter with a stranger and an attempt at making the strange familiar. In the next lines, Da Gama tries to enter into an economic conversation, one he assumes the man will understand. Thus, he attempts to barter. Imperial wealth is emphasised as Da Gama shows him "pure gold/the supreme metal of civilization/Then fine silverware and hot condiment" (5.28). However, when none of these treasures excite the man, the appraisal of the "stranger" is revised and Camões recasts him as a "brute" (5.28).

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[48] The "colonial library" records that to the Portuguese, their "prisoner was at first greatly terrified, but upon food being offered him his fears were dispelled" (Theal, *Short History* 3). He was allowed to depart the next day having been offered trinkets to take back to his group. More returned the day after and it is here where one of the Portuguese sailors, Fernão Veloso, volunteered to accompany the locals to their homes so as to investigate their cultural practices. Accounts differ on the reason for Veloso's swift departure from the village, but records agree that the Portuguese spied him again as he was running back to the shore. Theal speculates that Veloso mistook the food offered to him for human flesh, while Robin Knox-Johnston is of the opinion that Veloso "probably became overfamiliar" (34), meaning sexually predatory. Whatever the reason for the littoral interaction, all historical accounts agree on the outcome: the exchange ended in violence. On this, Theal makes a provocative point: "Such was the first intercourse between white men and [---]" (*Short History* 4; I have omitted Theal's use of derogatory offensive language to refer to the local people).

This moment is telling of what Klein calls the "trial-and-error" rhetoric in his reading of the poem. The language of this encounter shifts from a supposed equivocal attitude to a superior one and back again. The first mention of the indigenous person is as "stranger". The "thunderstruck" confusion, the indifference to his language, and the reach for the classical point of reference, are all rhetorical devices aimed at documenting the differences between the Portuguese and local. However, the display of "civil" wealth, wealth that is meant to translate to a mercantile language that is decidedly monarchic capitalist at this stage,[49] is inconsequential. The local man is subsequently categorised as "uncivil" and by extension "savage"; he is called a "brute", a savagely violent person or animal.

Ian Smith states that any conceptualisation of race in the pre-modern European moment must accompany an understanding of the rhetoric of language in Greek and Roman literatures and its effects on defining cultural identity. Barbarian, for example, a connotation suggested by "brute" in Camões's text, "is a technical term taken from classical rhetoric and grammar to denote linguistic vices, errors in language that were specifically associated with foreigners or cultural outsiders", as Smith explains (1). Barbarians were considered incompetent elocutionists when compared to a Eurocentric "linguistic eloquence" (Smith 1). Thus, *The Lusiads* presents us with the categorisation of the person in the littoral as subordinate. This subordination is based on an inability to communicate according to imperial standards, both in a linguistic and capitalist sense. When the local finds the "simpler things" (5.29) such as beads and a colourful bonnet enticing, the language changes back to descriptions of the people as "gentle and well-disposed" (5.30).

The next day, when more locals arrive, the language Camões employs changes back to the discourse of categorisation, one that is based on difference and strangeness. The people are described as "Naked, and blacker than seemed possible" (5.30). It is notable here that this entire first encounter takes place in the littoral space. Narratologically, the perspective remains on the beach, for Camões resists an imaginative indulgence into Veloso's conduct at the locals' village. From the moment the local man is sighted through to Veloso's disappearance as "anthropologist", and then to his return and the ensuing violence, the narrative perspective remains in the littoral. Camões's narrator therefore remains fixated on adjusting their course towards their (littoral) goal: the coastal trading emporia of India. The space does not only serve as a "contact zone" between Portuguese foreigner and South

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[49] See Subrahmanyam and Thomaz (301).

African local, but it also enables the reversal of roles in which the Lusiads are the known entities and the local inhabitant is the foreigner.

Despite the fluxes in representation of the locals, the narrative perspective remains one sided. Camões is incapable of considering the subjectivity of his black characters, whose language, culture, and economic conduct are inaccessible and therefore rendered strange to the Portuguese. As such, the littoral space comes to resonate with the rhetoric of expansion. There is nothing more telling of the ideologies of the imperial project than a discourse in which a foreign body moves to a "new" space, encounters its local peoples, and casts them as the strange, as the Other. In the poem, it is predominately within the littoral in that this reconfiguration occurs.

Blackmore draws attention to Camões's specific use of "black" (from the Portuguese *preto*) rather than "Moor" (*mouro*) in this encounter. He argues that moor is generally understood to be "the blanket term used to cast African and natives of India as inimical to expansion as practitioners of Islam" (89). The categorisation here is interesting because Camões is noting a difference, albeit a vague one. After all, at this point in the narrative, Da Gama and his crew are guests of the Sultan of Malindi. As such, the vantage point from which these encounters are related is the Swahili littoral. This means that a triangulation starts to emerge. In "Portuguese Conceptual Categories and the 'Other' Encounter on the Swahili Coast", Jeremy Prestholdt argues that the "totalizing concept of the 'Other' as a unit for analyzing European/non-European social relationships does not fit certain historical circumstances" (383) especially concerning Luso-Swahili relations in the sixteenth century. He claims that European conceptual categories of the West African coast should rather be understood as falling into the "degrees of familiarity" evidenced by the fact that "from the first encounter, Portuguese authors fit Swahili-speakers into such a category of the 'known' one created expressly for Muslims" (384). The result was that the Portuguese developed familiar relationships with "coastal Muslims" (385) on whom they depended for aid, goods, and services. Reading these littoral encounters as a triangulation between Portuguese, Muslim, and the "black" people they encountered registers early categorical thinking in Lusophone discourse. Such a triangulation opens up the categories beyond a strict binary of Portuguese/Other, and shows that littoral encounters were foundational in the formation of this racialised discourse.

The second littoral encounter in the poem takes place at Mossel Bay. It transpires more amicably, predominantly because the group of local inhabitants that the Lusiads encounter here are willing to barter. In other words, the local inhabitants here are prepared to engage in an economic language of trade that aligns them more closely with a mercantile capitalism the Portuguese operate under, and therefore find useful. In this second littoral encounter the rhetoric of the space speaks to an established trading zone, allowing for the Portuguese episteme to wash up more successfully. Consequently, the local people are categorised for their economic value. Here, contrary to the previous time the Lusiads go onshore, their meeting with the natives goes pleasantly, and the humanity of the local people is emphasised. The locals are described as "cordial", "humane" and "as their smiling faces promised, dealt with [the Portuguese] as fellow humans" (5.62). Furthermore, Camões takes great care to mention the "humped cattle which looked sleek and thriving", thus emphasising the attractiveness of the local's bartering goods. Indeed,

> These, as their smiling faces promised,
> Dealt with us as fellow humans,
> Bringing sheep and poultry to barter
> For the goods we had on board (5.64)

Key here is that this amicable exchange is able to occur, despite the lack of a common language, because the local inhabitants are able to barter. That is to say that they reflect a cognisance of the same kind of economic attitude that the Portuguese consider 'civil'. It is their possessions and their "wealth" that therefore allows them to be constructed as "fellow humans" in the eyes of the Portuguese, because they afford a "mutuality of exchange" (Samuelson, "Literary Inscriptions" 124). Here, the littoral zone is represented as a space in which notions of economic capital translates into amiable exchange. A tidalectic history of this encounter, one which I have here presented, considers the littoral as space in which expansionist epistemes swash onshore. These scenes register the early categorical thinking of persons in their encounters in and with the littoral. Such thinking is then taken up in the Lusophone cultural imaginary and disseminated along with expansionist practices, only to return in subsequent settler-colonial encounters.

2.6 Conclusion

My focus in this chapter has been on the capacity in which the littoral first enters the literary imaginary of South Africa's coastlines. It has been my objective to explore the nature of the first representations of the South African littoral in order to establish launching pads for ensuing discussion of the trajectory of these representations, and to register that they include disruptive qualities.

If the image of the ship, as Blackmore argues, is at once a symbol of empire, order, "the full expression of maritime supremacy" (*Manifest* 54) and "material acquisition" (44), its wrecking and the recording of this wrecking is "located problematically between an exercise of empire and its attendant textual culture and the reality of the cracks and breakages the shipwreck writers record" (45). I have argued that this fissure is located in, and made prominent by, its situatedness in the littoral zone. Encounters with the littoral in these early text form an intrinsic part of later imperial discourse, as they mark the sites of first contact. These representations of the littoral come to reveal both the expansionist imperial desire and its limits. As such, shipwreck narratives speak simultaneously of the "far-reaching" might of expansion and its failures. Additionally, these shipwreck narratives reveal an entanglement of racialised discourse with the presumed dangers in which they cast the space, and the peoples they might encounter there.

From the maritime setting in Camões's *The Lusiads* arises a poetic language that constructs an imperial licence brought onshore by the Portuguese protagonists. Here, the littoral space is the site of first contact and the setting for Camões's categorisation of the southern African indigenous peoples that his protagonists encounter. This practice is not only indicative of the expansionist episteme but also forms a precursor to the ensuing racialised discourse that is taken up in the subsequent colonial history of the country. The figure of Adamastor features prominently here, for his presence as littoral figure comes to represent the placing of the African territory in the Lusophone cultural imaginary as primitive, savage, and uncivil. As guardian of the Cape, Adamastor comes to mediate the passage across oceans towards terracentric goals. I read Adamastor's littoral presence as mediation between the two littoral encounters on either side of the Cape, and also between the many littoral encounters that are to follow in the coming centuries as settlement and colonising interest grows. Adamastor conjures up the disruption of the country's shorelines, both in the ensuing imperial discourses that will decant there and in the washed-up histories that follow in their wake. In the next chapter, I analyse texts that address these washed-up histories and resultant ideologies. I

argue that the littoral setting is used to generate tidalectic histories that challenge the essentialist racial categorisation of people according to imperial discourses.

ONSHORE

CHAPTER THREE

Littoral Time: The British Colony

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the littoral space as situating moments of contact between foreigner and local. Early in the colonial encounter, the littoral functions as a site in which a rhetorical negotiation of identity categories in expansionist discourse transpires in the representations of encounters with/in the littoral. As such, the littoral comes to resonate with a rhetoric of imperial ideology washed onshore. This chapter explores texts which represent the littoral as destabilising or disrupting washed up ideologies of empire in a tidalectic fashion. The texts discussed here were written during the British colonial period and the transition into the South Africa Union. The chapter focuses on two novels by Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) and *Undine* (posthumously published in 1929), as well as select moments from Dorothea Fairbridge's *Piet of Italy* (1913). I read these texts' littoral moments against a literary-critical tradition that has been mined for analyses that situate the land as the central setting and concern. Olive Schreiner's Karoo settings are often the topic of scholars' inquiries. For many critics, the South African landscape lies at the centre of her novels' narrative discourse.[50] Consequently, scholars have failed to consider that the Karoo was once an inland sea. Schreiner herself, in fact, directs attention to this in a key scene in *The Story of African Farm*. This scene, I argue, invites us to listen to the deep history written on this surface by what were once ocean depths.

The Story of an African Farm follows the story of three young protagonists, Em, Waldo and Lyndall, who must navigate life on a farm in the Karoo and the ideological pressures of colony and family that weigh on them as they mature (Clayton, "Olive Schreiner" 395–407). I begin my analysis of this text by engaging with J.M. Coetzee's (in)famous statement that

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[50] See for example J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing*; Hannah Freeman, "Dissolution and Landscape in Oilve Schreiner's *The Story of An African Farm*"; Gerald Monsman, *Olive Schreiner's Fiction: Landscape and Power*, Bart Moore-Gilbert, "Olive Schreiner's Story of an African Farm: Reconciling Feminism and Anti-Imperialism?".

Schreiner's farm is ahistorical (*White Writing* 63), and then shift my focus to a bathymetrical reading of Schreiner's landscape. The first section of this chapter therefore discusses concepts of time and history as evoked by the landscape in *The Story of an African Farm,* but, as I show, it is a landscape that is an ur-littoral space. As such, I make the claim that time in the novel becomes bathymetrical, extending to ideas of deep ocean and deep time. My own employment of bathymetry considers the term's spatial connotations and extends it to a narratological method for reading deep time and history, specifically in littoral spaces which emanate a tidalectic underbelly.

I then move to Schreiner's first novel *Undine* in order to read the text's littoral space as on the fringes of empire, a metaphorical position I refer to as the "wrack zone". In coastal ecology, the wrack zone is formed by organic ocean debris that washes up onshore during high tide. The materials deposited here are not taken up again by the backwash and remain on the beach, generally forming a line of debris running parallel to the water's edge. As a working metaphor, "wrack zone" is informed by this chapter's section heading, "Onshore", which I have discussed as connoting the colonial discourses decanted and disseminated in South African space during the sixteenth to early twentieth century. Conceptually, "wrack zone" not only marks the spaces where these ideological deposits are visible, but also forms spaces where the racialised categorisation of people meets and intersects. It is on this point that I conclude with a reading of *Piet of Italy*. Published three years after the unionisation of South Africa, the novel concerns the upbringing of a young boy in a Muslim community in Kalk Bay. Taking Kalk Bay's history into account, I read the space as a wrack zone of colony in which Fairbridge's littoral aesthetics produces a re/construction of the protagonist's identities, ironically surfacing disruptive histories in her attempt to unwrite them.

3.2 "Bathymetry": Littoral Lulls and Tidalectic Histories of Empire

Space and setting in Olive Schreiner's work, specifically her treatment of the South African landscape, have all been read through the rubrics of postcolonialism, feminism, environmentalism, and the form of the novel.[51] The common path taken by critics is to read Schreiner's literary representations of land and farm as metaphors for imperial consumption and power, with implications for constructions of categories of persons. My focus, however, is on the ocean and littoral in Schreiner's novels and the unique narratological presence of

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[51] See, amongst others, Barsby, Clayton, Driver, Esty, Green, Huggan and Tiffin, Knechtel, Moore-Gilbert, and Waterman.

these spaces. Roxanne Mountford writes that Lefebvre's spatial theory positions material space and social imaginary as working "in tandem" ("On Gender and Rhetorical Space" 49). Mountford argues that space holds rhetorical power, and that creative minds manipulate the materiality of space into a communicative event. Closely reading literary representations of space, or setting, can assist in identifying the intersecting production of material and cultural space. In this chapter, I analyse material and cultural space's "communication" by adopting a bathymetrical lens.

Bathymetry describes the measuring of the depth of water and the charting of oceanic floor beds. Charne Lavery refers to bathymetry as "the underwater equivalent of topography" ("Indian Ocean Depths" 26). She analyses the materiality of deep ocean beds for the "imaginative potential of the undersea cartographic imaginary" (26). When mineral resources, deepsea fishing practices, and oceanic life are placed under scrutiny, they speak both to interconnectedness and disconnection.

Narratological time is intrinsic to my use of a bathymetrical lens, since I employ this lens to consider histories that emanate from littoral moments in South African literature. In *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1983), Gérard Genette distinguishes between three concepts of time in the diegeses of a written text: story time, discourse time, and narrating time. The first two concepts are of interest to me. Simply put, story time recalls the length of time evoked in the text and as such places parameters on other narratological elements, most importantly on plot but on characters and setting as well. Thus, a plot that evokes a sense of time spanning a century has a story time of one hundred years.

Discourse time, by contrast, refers to the amount of time it takes to relate the discourse of the text. In some sense, it describes the reading process and can be taken to refer to the materiality of the text. The number of pages, chapters, or even sentences themselves all engage discourse time.[52] Discourse time therefore engages the temporal construction of the text, through devices such as the order, frequency, duration of events. Discourse time becomes significant when considered in relation to story time. Genette distinguishes between four categories in the story-discourse relation: scene, summary, ellipses, and pause. I am interested in the "pause" relation between story and discourse time, that is, the moment when

[52] To clarify with an example: The story time of *The Story of an African Farm* covers the transition of Em, Lyndall and Waldo's childhood to adult years, but the discourse time is considerably shorter. In other words, it does not take five odd years to tell (or read) their story.

the story time lulls or stops and the discourse time continues. When applied to my bathymetrical lens, the vectors would assumedly present as follows: the horizontal axis represents discourse time as it engages the ordering of temporality in the text, which is a linear concept regardless of its chronicity, leaving the vertical vector to communicate the story time *of that particular discourse time*.

Littoral scenes in Schreiner's novel can narratologically be considered pauses. For my purposes, I call these pauses lulls, because these moments are situated outside of the novel's plot (or its horizontal linear placing of events). In other words, the littoral moments have no bearing on the immediate dramatic action of the plot; they serve no purpose in forwarding the sequence of events and therefore disrupt the narratological time by lulling it. My analysis of *The Story of An African Farm* therefore reads these moments through a bathymetrical lens to surface tidalectic histories, generated by the littoral environment in the novel.

On the topic of time in *African Farm*, Hannah Freeman has written of Schreiner's contrasting uses of masculine and feminine time. Freeman argues that "masculine time" evokes the placing of time in androcentric terms and is a linear "westernized rendering of events and their consequences" and thus a "controlling force" (22). Comparatively, "feminine time" disrupts masculine time through its contribution of dreamlike sequences told from the perspective of the environment. Freeman makes the point that these two rivalling temporalities are depicted in the novel through "opposing ways of remembering events in the natural world" (22). As such, these temporalities are firmly tied to a spatial, environmental awareness. Freeman fails, however, to distinguish explicitly between the *narrated* component of time in her discussions. To my mind, her argument concerning the depiction and employment of masculine and feminine time collapses story time and discourse time. A bathymetrical lens differentiates between these two temporal vectors, and addresses both narrating and narratological aspects of the text.

Littoral lulls in Schreiner's work are moments where time pauses, and inserted, in the place of the pause, is a moment of reflection. The narrative's sequential placing of events is momentarily interrupted, and the narrated time moves between present, past, and future in a non-linear sequence. Key here is that this moment is situated in the vantage point made possible by a littoral space. My employment of bathymetry is therefore indebted to interflowing concepts of time and space. The suspension, interlude, or lull which affords a

unique perspective is specifically owed to the position of the littoral space, from which multiple perspectives arise.

The most striking littoral lull occurs in an imperative moment in *The Story of an African Farm* where the three children, Lyndall, Waldo, and Em, sit on the farm's koppie and look out over the arid Karoo landscape. They are net yet privy to the arrival of Bonaparte Blenkins, who, Machiavellian in nature, is to become the children's adversary. It is a tranquil scene, which opens with Lyndall and Em sitting together, reflecting on what awaits them when they become adults. Em is content with a life on the farm, which she will inherent once the current owner, Tant Sannie, passes away. Unlike Lyndall, Em "should not like to go to school" (45) and seems satisfied with a future that holds only marriage and farming. Lyndall, however, is intent on going to school, for "There is nothing helps in this world [...] but to be very wise, and to know everything – to be clever" (45). She "shall be rich, very rich" (45) and wear diamonds in her hair, and pure white silk and embroidered petticoats. Waldo soon joins them, bringing news of Blenkins's arrival. The mention of the Blenkins name compels Lyndall to recall another "living man called Bonaparte" (47) of whom she read in a history book. This, of course, is Napoleon Bonaparte, a figure who she admires and with whom she greatly identifies:

> He was one man, only one [...] yet all the people in the world feared him. He was not born great, he was common as we are; yet he was master of the world at last. Once he was a child, then he was a lieutenant, then he was a general, then he was an emperor. (47)

Desiring to rise above the bleak future a life on the farm, Lyndall sees great appeal in Napoleon's ability to rise in social ranking and stature. Despite being a common man, who wasn't born great, Napoleon finally became "master of the world" (47) and it is this rise to fortune which Lyndall so admires. She continues:

> They sent him to an island in the sea, a lonely island and kept him there fast. He was one man, and they were many, and they were terrified at him. It was glorious!
>
> Then he was alone there in that island with men to watch him always [...] and in the long, lonely nights he used to lie awake and think of the things he had done in the old days, and the things he would do if they let him go again. In the day when he walked near the shore it seemed to him that the sea all around him was a cold chain about his body, pressing him to death. (48)

Striking here is Lyndall's speculation on Napoleon's subjective experiences, with which she clearly identifies with. For Lyndall, it is the isolation of the island setting of Napoleon's exile that generates a shared feeling of incarceration and a desire for departure.

Lyndall's desires are all attempts at escaping the farm for, as J.M. Coetzee puts it, "to accept the farm as home is to accept a living death" (Coetzee, *White Writing* 66). The farm, then, is representative of the stifling ideologies imposed by imperialism, in this case specifically upon women. But key to Schreiner's text is that a connection is drawn between environment, space, identity, and subjectivity. This connection is inscribed upon and experienced by the body.

This scene intrigues me for a different reason, however. Two important things happen with regards to time in this scene that require attention. Firstly, narratively and narratologically, this scene constitutes a lull in the forwards trajectory of the novel's plot and structure. Monica Fludernik describes structural moments such as this as pauses because they do not "correlate at all with any action in the world of the story" (33), and therefore sit outside of the immediate dramatic action of the narrative. These pauses often depict descriptions of landscapes, mental states, or socio-political histories. Secondly, this scene not only lulls the dramatic action in the novel, to allow for characters to reflect and imagine, but it also renders time tidalectic, as it ebbs and flows between temporal states that fold back upon themselves, which I discuss below.

Behind the children, on the shelving rock under which they are sitting, are "Bushman-paintings" of "grotesque oxen, elephants, rhinoceroses, and a one-horned beast, such as no man ever has seen or ever shall" (Schreiner, *Story* 44). With regards to story time, we have here a succinct moment in which the girls, in the present, dream about their future, while sitting under rock paintings that recall the past, the history of the environment they are surveying. Moreover, this moment takes place in an ur-littoral space, as the Karoo plains the children overlook were once oceanic beds. My application of bathymetry therefore reads for littoral moments such as this in which Schreiner moves between past, present, and future, and structurally lulls the narratological time of her novel.

In the following discussion, I argue that these lulls serve no purpose in forwarding the plot's trajectory for they contain no crucial dramatic action to advance the narrative. Rather, they momentarily situate the characters outside of the novel's discourse of colony, patriarchy, and imperial politics. These lulls conjure tidalectic histories because they generate alternative

forms of "knowing" through their subjective placing of knowing within the littoral environment, which challenges the histories that produced prescribed imperial categories of persons.

In response to Lyndall's recollection of Napoleonic history, Waldo is quick to challenge her. He, too, has read of Napoleon, but informs her that "the brown history [a history book he has read] tells only what he did, not what he thought" (48). Waldo's critique here is that "brown history" only relays a sequential plotting of events and thus hold no place for subjective experience, the "brown history" tells us only what Napoleon "*did*" and does not tell of his interiority and "what he thought". Lyndall retorts by arguing that "[i]t was in the brown history that [she] read of him [...she] *know[s]* what he thought", adding that "[b]ooks do not tell everything" (48). In "Value of Narrativity", Hayden White refers to "a problem of general human concern, namely, the problem of how to translate knowing into telling" (1). By this, White means the narrativity of knowing and its respective narratological obstacles. To the children, the narrative obstacles of the "brown history" lie in its failure to capture a subjective experience, a knowing, within an environment. To echo Waldo, "what you want to know they [books] never tell" (Schreiner, *Story* 48).

Consequently, Waldo's attention turns to the Karoo landscape. He expresses a wish that the geography, the very stones of the koppies, could speak to him and tell him of their history.

> If they could talk, if they could tell us now!' he said, moving his hand out over the surrounding objects – 'then we would know something. This "kopje", if it could tell us how it came here! The "Physical Geography" says,' he went on most rapidly and confusedly, 'that what are dry lands now were once lakes; and what I think is this – these low hills were once the shores of a lake; this "kopje" is some of the stones that were at the bottom, rolled together by the water. But there is this – how did the water come to make one heap here alone, in the centre of the plain?' [...] Sometimes I lie under that little hill with my sheep, and it seems that the stones are really speaking – speaking of the old things, of the time when the strange fishes and animals lived that are turned into stone now; and the time when the little Bushmen lived here, so small and so ugly, and used to sleep in the wild dog holes, and eat snakes and shot the bucks with their poisoned arrows [...] we will be gone soon, and only the stones will lie on here, looking at everything like they look now. I know it is I who am thinking [...] but it seems as though it were they who were talking. (49-50)

Here, Waldo displays an apprehension of the history of the Karoo as an ur-littoral space in which two different forms of 'knowing' are juxtaposed: that which another written text, the Physical Geography, details and that which the "stones" — the environment itself — tell of. His geography book is therefore only able to offer a topographical description of the "dry lands" and how they came to be. This history is limited because, while it is able to offer an explanation of the formation of the "dry lands", it is unable to offer circumstantial detail: how the water came to gather the stones in "one heap here alone, in the centre of the plain". Waldo's geography book does not tell of the animals and indigenous peoples who lived here centuries or millennia before. What Waldo yearns for, then, is a sense of a deeper past that predates the origin of Western discourses that have shaped the environmental history with which he is so dissatisfied.

In *Postmodern Geographies*, Edward Soja writes that "[w]hat one sees when one looks at geographies is stubbornly simultaneous, but language dictates a sequential succession, a linear flow of sentential statements bound by that most spatial of earthly constraints, the impossibility of two objects (or words) occupying the same precise place (as on a page)" (2). When writing about geographies and spaces, the challenge lies in the attempt to "deconstruct and recompose the rigidly historical narrative" (2). If we are to take a written history to be a linear discourse, that is, a sequential plotting of events according to a chronological temporal line, then Waldo's oral and environmental depiction of history disrupts these notions of linearity. David Carr writes that "narrative is our primary (though not our only) way of organizing our experience of time" (4). In other words, our understanding of time is epistemologically located in language and in the tenses of language, past, present, future, all of which are tied to a linear structure.

Hayden White (in *Metahistory*) argues that historiography in the conventional, Western sense of narrated time, has many literary elements and that historians select, shape, and curate representations of histories much like authors do in their writings. Put differently, it is the sequencing of events into structural order that lends narrativity to history. The point here is that the kind of history Waldo reaches for exists outside of written form. As Carr puts it, "narrative structure pervades our very experience of time and social existence" (9). As such, there is a "knowing" situated outside of a text which does not correlate with linear structuring.

What Waldo desires is therefore a different perspective on history. This perspective is one in which the subject is placed *within* the environment. Thus, the surface explanation of the formation of the Karoo plain in *Physical Geography* is not enough. In order to "know something" (49), as Waldo puts it, a perspective from within the environment must be observed; we need to listen to the stones. As Waldo lies "under that little hill with [his] sheep" (i.e., is placed within the littoral environment), "it seems that the stones are really speaking — speaking of the old things, of a time when the strange fishes and animals lived that are turned into stone now; and the time when the little Bushmen lived here" (49). Fishes and animals, of course, introduce terra and aqua and together comprise a littoral conjunction between land and sea. Because the current form of the fishes and animals are stones — fossils, in other words — then they can be thought of as littoral things. Their fossilized form speaks of a deep ocean history that flows into the present and beyond since "we will be gone soon, and only the stones will lie on" (49). In listening to these littoral things, Waldo conjures an alternative, tidalectic history that situates him outside of the present moment of empire and registers its passing.

But the history Waldo imagines the stones speaking of tells not simply the story of a geological past, but a human one as well. The stones speak to the indigenous past, of the peoples who inhabited it, and which has not been documented in written discourse, and, as such, remains outside the parameters of the colony. It is a past inscribed upon the stones of the landscape, on the walls of the cave behind him, in therefore in the environment itself. In this sense, Waldo speaks of a moment in time that falls outside of colonial history.

Yet this knowing of the environment is one that Waldo is unable to translate into a telling. Rather, this knowing is surfaced by the convergence, what Jeffrey Cohen in *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman* would call a "temporal knot" (78), of three concepts of time all suggested by the environment. Cohen writes that a "temporal knot [is] formed when distant history touches present story, since to narrate the past conjures possible futures" (78). Following Cohen's suggestion, it becomes clear that situated simultaneously in this littoral space are the present "stones" who in the past were "old things" and "strange fishes and animals", and that will "lie on here, looking at everything like they look now" (Schreiner, *Story* 50). Reflected in this scene is therefore a suspension in which the past and future converges in the present. It is the ancient littoral space that makes this possible. Time knots in Cohen's history of stone, but is brought to the plains by water, with its own processes of

ebbing and flowing. If the ur-littoral space is considered as space where water meets stone, we have a tidalectic movement.

Waldo's position in the environment also elicits reflection on the forms of subjectivity presented in littoral lulls. Freeman suggests that the corporeal experience of Schreiner's characters and the dis/connection between body and land is indicative of Schreiner's "fantasy" of a "boundless existence between her characters and their landscape" (19). Freeman argues that if hegemonic culture is mapped onto the body, then Schreiner dissolves the imperial categorisation of peoples through a desire to return to the landscape. While I find Freeman's notion of setting relevant to my discussion, I would add Zoë Wicomb's suggestion that setting is best understood in line with narratologist Mieke Bal's concept of proprioceptivity: the position and movement of the body in space. The usefulness of proprioceptivity, argues Wicomb, is that the concept dissolves rigid binaries such as self/Other. Wicomb writes:

> proprioceptivity is bound up with the body's sensation of occupying a point in space, and with the terms under which it does so [...] The consequences for narrative fiction seem unavoidable: the subjectivity of characters is bound up with their proprioceptivity which in turn is intimately, necessarily connected to the physical settings they occupy. (Wicomb, "Setting" 152)

For Waldo, it is the ever-moving, receding quality of the ocean that captures time, environment. and space as a human experience perfectly. In a letter he writes to Lyndall (both children leave the farm when they are older – Waldo for a year and a half, Lyndall never to return for she dies in childbirth), Waldo tells of his travels and of seeing the sea for the first time. He recalls the Karoo's littoral history and how when he "was a little boy, minding sheep behind the 'kopje', [he] used to see the waves stretching out as far as the eye could reach in the sunlight" (*The Story of an African Farm* 259). The beach, when he eventually reaches it, "was not like the sky and stars, that talk of what has no beginning and no end; but it is so human" (259).

He continues:

> Of all the things I have ever seen, only the sea is like a human being; the sky is not, nor the earth. But the sea is always moving, always something deep in itself is stirring

> it. It never rests; it is always wanting, wanting, wanting. It hurries on; and then it creeps back slowly without having reached, moaning. It is always asking a question and it never gets an answer. (259)

Jed Esty argues that the movement of time that so agonises Waldo, for "time haunts him from beginning to end" ("The Colonial Bildungsroman" 417), is due to "the tempo of growth" present in the bildung narrative of the novel. Waldo's development "is not subject to everyday realist temporality, but instead models his subjectivity on deep and inhuman forms of zoological, geological, and metaphysical time" (418). As Lyndall uses the littoral space of Napoleon's captivity to project her own subjectivity, Waldo too finds expression in the shore environment as he can "hear it in the day and in the night; the white foam breakers saying that which [he] think[s]" (259).

After Waldo learns of Lyndall's death, he dreams of her. The setting of his dream is a littoral zone. In the dream Lyndall transitions from being "a small child, with a blue pinafore, a grave, a grave, little face" (285) to "not a child now, but a woman" (286). Encapsulated in Waldo's dream is a movement from the past (his memories of her as a child) into the future (the grown Lyndall he never meets). In the dream, the children are quiet, but the environment around them speaks: as Waldo and Lyndall "walked on over the glittering sand and pink sea-shells; and they heard the leaves talking, and they heard the waters babbling on their way to the sea, and they heard the sea singing to itself, singing, singing" (286). Following Esty's suggestion, the beach becomes the model for Waldo's metaphysical moment, and subjective growth, because it occupies deep time. Moreover, Waldo sees the ocean as human, or rather as able to capture human experience, because of its movement across time: a movement that is decidedly non-linear.

These littoral moments capture subjectivity in their ability to embody a knowing that speaks to experiences of time that fall outside of conventional linear forms, be it writing or chronology. As such, they are indicative of Schreiner's "central premise – that there are multiple ways of knowing" (Freeman 23). These multiple ways of knowing I would like to extend to "being". Thus, I want to suggest that a bathymetrical reading of *The Story of an African Farm* illustrates the author's preoccupation with destabilising the convents of imperial sites of knowing and being. Schreiner's use of non-linear time to gesture to other forms of narrated time, and thereby history, a "knowing", shows that other modes of existence exist outside of the boundaries of the colony and its discourse. Thus, the littoral

space in *The Story of an African Farm* generates a tidalectic history that disrupts the foundations of colonial discourses. This history is surfaced by applying a bathymetrical lens to the littoral space that reads the environment for its deep ocean temporality. As such, a knowing of the environment emerges, which situates itself outside of colonial historiographies whose legitimacy is dependent on erasing the precursory histories to the empire's arrival in South Africa.

3.3 "Wrack Zone": Categories on the Margins

Like *The Story of an African Farm*, *Undine* also concerns the relation between setting and subjectivity. Schreiner's first novel tells the story of an orphaned girl, Undine, who moves from the Karoo to England, or rather, from colony to imperial centre. In England, she first lives with her grandfather but finds his staunch Methodist beliefs suffocating and consequently moves in with her paternal grandmother. She meets the Blair family and, being of matrimonial age, is courted by three of its members: the widower George, and his two sons Harry and Albert. Undine rejects Harry and secretly promises her hand to Albert, who has her heart. However, Albert runs away with a wealthy noblewoman, leaving Undine with no choice but to marry George after securing a prenuptial agreement of 50 000 pounds. Both George and her child die and Undine returns to South Africa after settling George's estate and splitting his inheritance between Harry and Albert. Destitute and alone, she finds work as an ironing lady in Kimberly's Diamond Fields, where, at the end of the novel, she dies alone in a tent.

Undine is a novel soaked in images of, and references to, the sea. Through intertextual references and select littoral moments, the text conjures a myriad oceanic connotations and watery mythologies. Situated on the fringes of empire, the littoral setting in the text comes to represent the wrack zone of empire. By attending to this space as located on the margins of colony, I read Undine's character as colonial subject out of place and at odds with colonial ideologies. As Tony Voss notes, Undine "moves from the periphery of empire to its centre and back again" (19). I take this comment to refer not only to the spatial sensibilities of the novel but extend it to refer conceptually to social and ideological constructs as well. As such, the physical and abstract movement between centre and periphery invites a reading of Lefebvre's spatiology and Soja's Thirdspace.

Edward Soja credits his concept of Thirdspace to the foundational work of Henri Lefebvre's writing about the relationship between his experience of moving between spaces at the centre and on the periphery. While Lefebvre lived in Paris long enough to be considered local, his roots lay in Occitania, in the Pyrenees where he was born. He expressed his sense of the spatial relation between his two homes as centre-peripheral. In his autobiographical text *Le Temps Des Me'Pris* (1975) he writes, "I am Occitanian, that is to say peripheral" and explains that though Paris was his "fascination" he was "not Parisian" (qtd in Soja, *Thirdspaces* 29-30). To Soja, this "simultaneous embrace of centrality and peripheralness" (30) meant that Lefebvre was in a unique position where he was in command of a "spatial consciousness and geographical imagination shaped in the regions of resistance beyond the established centers of power. Yet it was also, simultaneously, a consciousness and imagination peculiarly able to comprehend the innermost workings of the power center" (30). I am drawn to the simultaneity of centre-and-periphery that Soja identifies in Lefebvre's work and the movement and relation between them. I consider it to an entry point into an analysis of Undine's interloping position in Schreiner's novel, which opens a discussion of the littoral as wrack zone and Thirdspace.

"Undine" is derived from the Latin word "unda", meaning "water" or "wave". The novel's title refers to a water creature in European mythology that takes human form when she falls in love and finds a soulmate. Tony Voss argues that Schreiner looked to Baron Fouqué's Kunstmarchen (an art story) for inspiration. Jade Munslow Ong, on the other hand, suggests the legend of Melusine and Hans Christian Anderson's *The Little Mermaid* as explicit intertexts in *Undine*. As Munslow Ong points out, all of the undine tales share narrative commonalities, such as a female protagonist who falls in love with men, finds a soul in love, and moves from water to land. She considers Schreiner's novel "to allude to these movements" though Undine's connection to these narrative elements is "metaphoric rather than literal" (403). This leads Munslow Ong to conduct a reading of Undine as "a fish out of water" due to her feminist beliefs. I want to suggest, by contrast, that the metaphorical movements from water to land extend to Undine's movement between margins and colonial centres as well. Additionally, I argue that Munslow Ong's reading of Undine as "a fish out of water" becomes particularly pertinent if one extends this reading to consider the littoral moments in Schreiner's novel and how they come to occupy Thirdspace.

Undine's story starts on land, in the Karoo. The status of this "fish out of water" leads Undine to reject her governess's Methodist teachings and is indicative of both Schreiner and her

heroine's free thinking and rebuking of "monologic interpretations of religion" (Munslow Ong 404). Munslow Ong argues that Undine's "*true* element is revealed at various points during the novel when she identifies with water-dwelling creatures, wishing she were a duck, a fish, and a sea bird" (404). This leads her to conduct a reading of the opening chapters of the novel, where Undine is living in the Karoo, and is essentially out of her element. However, as Waldo has reminded us in *The Story of an African Farm*, the Karoo is a littoral space. And if England is the metropole, the centre, then South Africa, as a colony, is on the periphery. The littoral spaces in *Undine* therefore come to reflect peripheral spaces. They reflect the spatial margins of home and country as well as her dissatisfaction with life. They give expression, then, to her rebellious and resistant nature, which further places her on the margins of imperial society.

Undine is afforded an interloping quality as she moves from South Africa to England. She is always an outsider wherever she goes and regardless of the status she attains, and it is this outsider status which ruptures her colonial identity. I therefore read her character as embodying the fissure, or tension, between empire and its margins. It is here where I employ my idea of "wrack zone" as a working metaphor. With this in mind, the littoral settings in Schreiner's novel serve to expose the discomfort and displacement of Undine not just as child or woman or imperial subject, but as the intersecting product of all these categories. Indeed, as critics have argued, the ideological position of Schreiner's characters are usually indicative of an impossible state of being.

One morning, shortly after her arrival in England, Undine rushes to the beach and takes to the waves like the water-spirit she is named after. Slipping off her shoes and forsaking her book of sermons by George Macdonald – an echo of the Sunday school teachings she not only challenged as a child, but replaced with fairy tales of the ocean – Undine loses herself in the waves. Thus, her first encounter with the littoral space is afforded a reclusive quality. The beach setting is cast as a space in which there are "no ghosts to haunt one" (Schreiner, *Undine* 45). Through the indirect narrative discourse, Undine's subjectivity is projected onto descriptions of the shore as pathetic fallacy:

> the tiny waves danced laughing on the sides of the big ones, which in their turn chased and overtook one another, tossing their heads high into the sunny air and turning to white foam, or making a mad dash for the land and dying away in laughing ripples on the sand. (45)

This description of the shore is meant to communicate an untroubled state. Having cast aside the book of sermons, a marker of the Christian doctrine she is meant to follow and obey, her experience of the littoral is one in which she is able to "forget that there are such things as revival meetings, and good people who always say one thing and mean another, and jealous old maids and unfaithful wives, and dry hippopotamus-hide-like old men" (45). Undine is represented as a carefree child, unspoiled by the pressures of Victorian life, such as obedience, marriage, and faithfulness. The terraqueous space becomes a welcome refuge from her confining social position and limited prospects; much like Lyndall and Em, and indeed, other women of the time, she should marry if she wishes to secure a prosperous future.

This moment is brief, however, as her lecherous Cousin Jonathan finds her exploring the rock pools, catching small fish in her hand. Jonathan has picked up the book of sermons on the shore and returns it to her. The moment he re-enters the scene carrying the reminder of social strata with him, Undine feels "conscious-stricken, and looked down into the little pool, wishing she were one of the little fishes swimming there" (46). If Munslow Ong's argument is followed, then this is a moment in which Undine wishes to return to her element, an environment in which she feels at ease. This is an environment outside of colonial society and its politics. Rock pools are of course terraqueous and found in littoral spaces. In this littoral scene Undine is thus shown to be at odds with her situation in life, her current prospects, her future, and the positions she is expected to occupy. Voss argues likewise that "watery edges" in the novel are "symbolically marginal or transitional settings" that bring together memories of "her colonial home and the element that is both a barrier and a medium of transport to its metropole" (18-19). However, rather than reading the littoral as a space of transition, synthesis, or liminality, I want to draw attention to this setting in light of its centre-periphery relation. This relation situates this moment within Schreiner's anti-colonial and feminist politics, and thus exposes infringements on the protagonist, and the limits of empire.

Schreiner, like Undine, had travelled from South Africa, to England, and back again. She was born on 24 March 1855 in the Wittenbergen Reserve of the Cape Colony, in the Eastern Cape. For the first twenty-five years of her life, she lived in South Africa, working as a governess on various farms.[53] She left South Africa for England in 1881 in the hopes of training to be a nurse, but chronic respiratory issues prevented her from taking up the

[53] South African writer and critic Karel Schoeman is of the opinion that this is where much of her inspiration for her first published novel, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), originates.

profession and so she continued to write. From 1886 to 1889 she travelled the European continent and returned to South Africa in 1889, living in Cape Town and Johannesburg, briefly visiting England in 1893 and again in 1913 when she eventually decided to stay. She spent most of the remainder of her life in England, returning to the Cape in 1920 where she passed away at a boarding house in Wynberg. While the ocean may at once symbolize "a barrier and a medium of transport" between metropole and colony (Voss 19), Schreiner's personal reflection on the ocean, when in England, is one that "gave her a feeling of reconnecting with a landscape she had lost" (Cherry Clayton, "South African Writers" 398). In personal letters sent from Europe during various times of her life, she often endearingly and nostalgically presents the sea as a reconnection with the African soil. In a letter to Edward Carpenter from Italy dated 1888 Schreiner writes that the coast is

> so lovely. I like it best of all places in the world, except a farm where I lived in Africa. I don't know why this spot helps me so. I come here with all my troubles small & large, & they go away. I'm not going back to the town till late in the night & I've brought my papers to write. Oh was there ever anything so glorious as this blue Mediterranean! (Lines 16–21) [54]

The oceanic space is here placed contrapuntally to the farm landscape in Africa, the environment that so often informs the setting of her novels, and the focus of much scholarly writing on her settings and narrative discourse. In another letter to Carpenter, she mentions "There's a beautiful blue sea here [Italy] today, & I think the rain is at last over; but oh it isn't the African sea & sky" (Lines 22–23).[55] For Schreiner, and for her characters, the ocean thus serves as connective tissue between home and belonging on South Africa soil.

Unlike Schreiner, Undine eventually succumbs to the pressures of Victorian prescription. After a series of unsuccessful courtships, she marries and bears a child. By Victorian measures, Undine has accomplished everything a woman could wish for in life. She has secured a husband, a child, and financial well-being. Yet, in an existential moment, Undine reflects on the meaning of it all and she searches, much like Schreiner, for meaning in the Karoo via the ocean:

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[54] Olive Schreiner to Edward Carpenter, 8 January 1888, Sheffield Libraries, Archives & Information, Olive Schreiner Letters Project transcription. I have kept all spelling and punctuation as reflected on *The Olive Schreiner Letters*, a digital archive of her letters.
[55] Olive Schreiner to Edward Carpenter, 3 April 1897, Sheffield Libraries, Archives & Information, Olive Schreiner Letters Project transcription.

> It was the old question she had asked so often when she stood, a little child, looking at the dry Karoo bushes on the old farm; and it met, as then, the old oppressive silence for an answer – silence like the hush that comes when we sit by the seashore on a dark night and hold our breaths to hear the great restless water running up and down. (143)

However, the landscape that both Undine and Schreiner yearn for, the South African home of their childhoods, is ultimately shown to be as unforgiving as the English (mother)land. The landscape Undine returns to, Kimberley's Diamond Fields, is being ravaged and consumed for precious minerals by colonial administration. Ultimately dying alone in her tent, Undine's life becomes a fraught navigation between colony and its margins, a life which reveals that "there were places enough and people enough, but just no place for her" (195). As such, the littoral signifies an anomalous place that offers only temporary respite from the contradictions in imperial ideology and which cannot permanently be inhabited. It generates a critique that shows the impossible state of being under imperial rule.

While Schreiner uses the littoral to engage the impossibility of an English South African identity, Dorothea Fairbridge uses the littoral to construct it. Fairbridge produced thirteen books in her lifetime on topics ranging from literary pursuits to travelogues, architecture, landscape, and Cape culture (see Merrington, "Pageantry and Primitivism"). She was also a staunch supporter of Cecil John Rhodes's imperial politics. My reading of *Piet of Italy* considers the novel as displaying what I call Fairbridge's imperial project; that is to say that the novel advances a literary representation of the making of the "local subject" under colonial categories through the use of a littoral aesthetic, which establishes the cultural context of Piet's new environment and life. However, following Zoë Wicomb's argument that setting functions like intertext (see "Setting"), the littoral imports contradictory threads into the fabric of Fairbridge's text. Reading the littoral as wrack zone and a tidalectic concept allows me to mine the inclusion of alternative histories ironically produced in the text in efforts to erase them. As such, these histories disrupt Fairbridge's racialised discourse, one that is imperative to the success of her imperial project.

Fairbridge opens her novel with a scene in which her protagonist is washed up, literally, on the shores of Simonstown. After being pulled from the water, and with no recollection of who he is or how he came to be there, this unnamed boy is taken in by a Muslim couple, Magmoet and Fatima, who are convinced he is their lost son, Piet, delivered to them by Allah. When Fatima finds the name "Piet" barely visible on the back of his shirt collar, all suspicions are

confirmed, and the couple adopts Piet as their own. Several years later, Piet knocks his head and the blow restores the dormant memories of his childhood. Consequently, it is revealed that he is, in fact, Pietro Casanera, a descendent of Italian aristocracy. It is suspected that he wandered off when his family were on a visit to South Africa years earlier and somehow ended up in the ocean, only to be pulled out by a local Muslim boy named Abdol. As a bildungsroman, the novel focus on the making and unmaking of Piet as Muslim, and thereby as subject of empire.

Jed Esty argues that the bildungsroman illustrates youth as the most significant period in the moral shaping of a person's identity. He suggests, furthermore, that the moral shaping of a person's identity is central to the British imperial project's conscription of subjects (see *Unseasonable Youth, Modernism, Colonialism and the Fiction of Development*). In *Piet of Italy*, this project is explored through two major representational threads in the novel: first, the education of Piet as Muslim and colonial subject, and second, a consequent crisis of faith when his alternative (Catholic) biography is discovered. The novel's primary crisis, then, is a religious one bound up with race, with faith being the centrifugal point of the novel's depiction of colonial indoctrination. Most importantly, it is the use of the littoral space as setting in which Piet/ro's confluence of identities, or categories of person, meet. This confluence is displayed in the language of the novel in select littoral moments, the situatedness of these scenes in Kalk Bay and its location on the fringes of the colonial city of Cape Town. The Muslim community here, and Piet/ro's subsequent rearing in the Islamic faith, simultaneously confirm and challenge colonial and racial categorisation through their histories of the Kalk Bay space, which predates colonial intervention.

The dichotomy of self/other, West/Orient, or European/Cape Malay emerges most explicitly in the littoral imagery attached to the discovery of Piet's name/s. Fatima discovers a label at the back of Piet/ro's shirt with his name/s on. Piet, fresh from the ocean, has just been taken to Magmoet and Fatima's home and has been tucked into their four-poster bed so that he may rest. As Fatima folds up his wet clothes she holds up "the torn silk shirt. Half of the collar had given way in Abdol's vigorous grip and was floating out to Agulhas, but on the half in Fatima's hand the letters PIET were clearly to be seen at the edge of the rent" (Fairbridge 11). It is this moment that serves to confirm her belief that he is her son. Of course, once Piet becomes Pietro, the realisation dawns on the reader that the other half of the collar "floating out to Agulhas" carries the "RO" missing from the material in Fatima's hand. In these descriptions a littoral imagery is established that (in)forms a trope at the centre of the novel's

crisis and Piet/ro's existential concerns. From the location of Kalk Bay, a littoral setting on the fringes of Cape Town, which by the mid-nineteenth century had become "an identifiably British colonial city" (Worden et al 153) the reader is metaphorically introduced to the fracture in Piet/ro's identity. This metaphor is taken up with the signifier of Piet/ro's European category drifting in the Indian ocean towards Agulhas. The littoral, then, is the site in which Piet/ro's identities split, and eventually converge, and Piet's body becomes the site of contestation of imperial categories, metaphorically taken up in moments where the ocean persistently comes to gesture to the confluence of his European or Islam faiths and lineages.

The novel's careful detailing of Muslim culture extends to the one half of Piet/ro's dual identity which originates in, and is generated by, the littoral space. The littoral is introduced in the opening chapters of the novel and provides the expositionary stage for the Cape Malay cultural environment Piet is taken up in. [56] Kalk Bay beach is introduced in classic colonial paternalism, as "crowded with excited fisher-folk of white, brown or black" amongst whom "gleam the red fezzes that mark the children of the Prophet. Gentle, dignified folk, these Cape Malays, with the most polished manners, the kindest hearts, and the keenest eyes for a bargain of any of the throng" (7). As a space which marks the rendezvous of "gentle" fisherman in fezzes, the terraqueous setting is closely aligned with Cape Malay identity in the form of livelihood and religious markers indicative not only of faith, but character as well. Tied to the littoral space, then, are ideas concerning Cape Malay identity and culture and the need to make sense of racial difference in the colonial scene.

As such, the littoral setting comes to function along the lines of what Zoë Wicomb describes as "supplementing [more than] character description" ("Setting" 145–146). Wicomb elaborates by stating that "setting is the representation of physical surroundings that is crucially bound up with a culture and its dominant ideologies, providing ready-made,

[56] The term "Cape Malay" is a contested term for its ideologically informed categorization of Muslim people under colonial considerations of race. As the lingua franca for slaves brought from the Indonesian region was Malay, an Islamic region, "Cape Malay" was used interchangeable with "Muslim" under colonialism. It was later taken up in racialised discourse as sub-category for the classification "coloured" (cf. Baderoon, *Oblique*). Some scholars, such as Achmat Davis, contested the use of "Cape Malay" for the violent histories it recalls. Others, such as Pumla Gqola (in conversation, MA class at Wits 2009), have made an argument for the retention of the term as it surfaces and makes visible the Malaysia/Cape slave routes; a history which up to the 1990s in South Africa was relatively under-researched, a point I have written on elsewhere (see Geustyn, *Representations*). As Fairbridge's novel elicits imperial discourse, her use of the term "Cape Malay" speaks to the construction of categories I want to engage, and as such, to circumvent confusion, I have decided to adopt her language, here.

recognizable meanings" ("Setting" 146). It is precisely this kind of imaginary and homogenising representation of the Oriental Other produced by European narrative strategies that Edward Said has identified. Said explains that

> In a sense Orientalism was a library or archive of information commonly and, in some of its aspects, unanimously held. What bound the archive together was a family of ideas and a unifying set of values proven in various ways to be effective. These ideas explained the behavior of Orientals; they supplied Orientals with a mentality, a genealogy, an atmosphere; most important, they allowed Europeans to deal with and even to see Orientals as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics (40-41)

Fairbridge's depiction of the Cape Malay community and culture in her novel prescribes to the regularity in representation Said identifies above. With an almost anthropological curiosity, Fairbridge fills her novel's pages with a cataloguing of Islamic markers and practices, charting numerous characteristics of Muslim culture. As narrative strategy, Piet's amnesia becomes an integral part to Fairbridge's "education" of her protagonist. What better narrative mechanism than a character who has no memory and must be instructed in all aspects of religious and, by extension, socio-political life? As Piet is "educated" and "taught", Fairbridge is given the opportunity not only to inform her readership of the confluence of political categories, but also to construct them discursively and align them with imperial ideology. These stereotypes extend to detailed descriptions of characters' clothing, food, labour, religious practices, and their nature, which frequently described as "gentle" or "mild mannered". Such descriptions fall into the discursive fantasies and imaginaries Orientalism produced.

For example, Fatima is introduced to the reader as a "Malay woman, in ample yellow print skirts, with a violet silk handkerchief over her head" (Fairbridge 8). The description of Fatima's hijab as anthropological signifier of her "Malay" status is taken up in numerous other instances in the novel, in similar detail. For their "pilgrimage to the Kramat",[57] assumedly during Dhu al-Hijjah, the twelfth and final month of the Islamic calendar,[58] Fairbridge takes care to describe Fatima's "holiday dress of blue brocade":

[57] Also called a mazār, a holy shrine or mausoleum in honour of a holy person.

[58] This is an assumption on my part as Fairbridge mentions that some characters have joined "the annual Hadj to Mecca" (21).

> Her hair was drawn over a cushion, and covered by a heavily embroidered white-and-gold head-dress. The long dark eyes were made longer and darker with kohl, the fingers tinged with henna, and a crowning glory was shed by a necklace of large amber beads. (22-23)

Megida, Fatima's daughter, is described as wearing a "gay dook over her sleek brown hair – well anointed with cocoanut oil" (22), while the men are adorned in a "long white garment somewhat akin to a cassock in outline" (25). Fairbridge places focus, then, on the exterior of the characters and the religious iconography of their clothing. This is in line with the nineteenth- and twentieth-century discourse surrounding Muslim people and their "placid, law-abiding and industrious" portrayals "characterized by colourful clothing and rituals" (Baderoon, "Oblique" 45).

Additionally, food, as cultural signifier, is also carefully listed. We read of children "contentedly seated on the floor munching most-bolletjies"[59] (10) and that "snoek and rice" is a staple of the family. As sustenance for the ailed Piet, a neighbour recommends "Good curry, en brede wid plenty meat and onions" (17) rather than the bread and milk Fatima initially feeds him in small portions. [60] Fairbridge takes no interest in the diet of her European characters. Thus, these descriptions of Cape Malay dishes serve to confirm expectations of the exoticism of the Other.

Fairbridge also takes great care in constructing Piet's Cape Malay categories. He gradually learns to speak "the Taal and the sing-song English of the Cape Malay" (20), and attends a school "in the company of Abdol and other redfezzed or hatless boys of every shade of brown" (20). As cultural signposts, numerous details are left to illustrate Piet's tutelage in Islam. Fairbridge devotedly describes Piet awakening on the morning of Dhu al-Hijjah to the "muezzin's" morning call to prayer and includes an ayat from the dua, written in Arabic, "Allahu akbar [...] ashhadu anna la ilaha ill' allah" (22). In a later scene, we read of droning voices reciting "there is no God but God, and Mohammed is the Prophet of God" (25). Piet is

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[59] "Mostbolletjies" is spelled today as "mosbolletjies" and is a type of bread rolled into balls and flavoured by leftover grapes from the wine-making season and typically spiced with aniseed.

[60] "Brede" is a stew. Fairbridge's spelling of with as "wid" is an attempt at mimicking Cape Malay dialect.

also taken to an “Imaum” to be taught the Qu’ran, as “the instruction in the Koran[61] […] is necessary to the education of a good Moslem” (57).

Fairbridge’s representation of her Cape Malay characters are literary expressions of colonial discourse’s homogenising traits. On the history of Islam and its representation, Gabeba Baderoon notes two trends that I find significant to my reading of *Piet of Italy*. The first is Baderoon’s claim that Islam is traditionally seen as placid and picturesque in the Western Cape. The second concerns her argument that in “discussions about Muslims, religion is frequently attempted to supersede the influence of class, language, ethnicity and history, as though Muslims are exempted from the impact of such factors by the force of religion” (“Oblique” 10). Baderoon argues that such homogenising representation of Muslims erases “specificity and variation”, while markers of religion, the fez and burqa for example, become a synecdoche for identity (10).

My task, then, is to locate and critique the homogenising representation of Cape Malay as category and colonial subject in *Piet of Italy*. In traditional, nineteenth-century understandings of the bildungsroman, this practice of homogenisation accompanies the successful integration of the subject into society. In this case, this process takes the form of making Piet into colonial subordinate subject. Fairbridge’s lengthy descriptions of Islam and its cultural practices serve to establish an imagined other against which European identity is constructed.

Key to Fairbridge’s narrative strategy is her representation of Piet, which follows all the stereotypes to which Baderoon refers. Through these stereotypes, Fairbridge constructs Piet’s subaltern category, so that when it is revealed he is European and a Catholic, his reluctance to denounce the latter for the former is logically met with abject horror. Writing on the bildungsroman, Joseph Slaughter makes the point that it presents the process “by which historically marginal subjects are to become national citizens” (94). The discovery of Piet’s European lineage, then, is not only narratively posited as a reward for being a “good Moslem”, but presented as a natural desire towards which the colonial subject would gravitate since “the nation-state [is posited] as the highest form of expression of human sociality and the citizen as the highest form of expression of human personality” (Slaughter 94).

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[61] Fairbridge uses this spelling for the Qu’ran.

In her fixation on rendering Piet subaltern, Fairbridge ironically includes historical details of the origin of Islam, including a recognition of the distinction between Sunni and Shia communities. Accompanying Fairbridge's detailed sketching of Cape Malay culture are lengthy passages of the history of Islam in South Africa, in addition to the depiction of the Kalk Bay community, an historically accurate description of the culture. Kalk Bay is situated on the False Bay coastline, approximately 30 kilometres south of Cape Town, and separated from the city by Table Mountain and the Cape Peninsula chain. In contrast to the tempestuous conditions of Table Bay, False Bay, with its u-shaped coastline spanning between the promontories of Cape Point and Cape Hangklip, Kalk Bay offers milder weather conditions, especially during winter. Yet, it was largely avoided by anchoring vessels until the mid-eighteenth century. The remoteness of the coast was heightened further by a lack of easy communication between the bay and the city, which meant that the False Bay coast was mostly removed from Dutch and British administration until the nineteenth century, when the railway line provided easier access between the city and the bay.

Alan Kirkaldy traces the practice of fishing in Kalk Bay as predating fifteenth-century Portuguese voyages of discovery. He writes that "while no genealogical or genetic links can be established" (Kirkaldy 4) between prehistoric dwellers, who lived off littoral resources, to later the Khoi/San inhabitants, who fished in the shoreline to more established Muslim fishing communities, Kalk Bay has a "cultural and economic continuity which pre-dated the Portuguese voyages of discovery by thousands of years" (Kirkaldy 4). Because "Fishing continues to the present day", Kalk Bay remains rooted in a prehistoric and precolonial past, despite attempts made by the colonial administration to claim it as their own.

Inextricably linked in this history is the settlement of Muslim slaves at Kalk Bay, who eventually comprised the larger portion of the fishing community at the Cape. Kirkaldy writes that the secluded nature of Kalk Bay meant that fishing both for sustenance and livelihood, was predominantly practised, up to the mid-eighteenth century, by communities categorised as marginal by the colonial office. Slaves brought in to work on individual farms in the Simonstown district made up a large number of the fishermen in the region. Brought from Southeast Asian territories, the majority of these enslaved peoples were practising Muslims and subsequently bonded together to form what the colonial administration later referred to as "Cape Malay", a synonym for "Muslim".

These embondaged Muslims brought with them an ancestral tradition of inshore fishing practices, which they continued in the False Bay region. This history has meant that fishing remains closely intertwined with Muslim identities. On Sundays, slaves could fish for themselves and many slaves who eventually won their freedom continued the practice as vocation in favour of continuing as farm labourers. In this sense, fishing can be understood as lying on the periphery of colonial practice. Additionally, old Kalk Bay fishing communities were made up of freed or escaped slaves and deserters from seafaring nations docking at Cape Town or Simonstown (Kirkaldy 7-8). Consequently, one could argue that Kalk Bay, as a Muslim and "Coloured" fishing community, functioned as a wrack zone to colonial practice for much of the eighteenth century; it was produced by shored colonial discourses, but presented as disruptive history.

Retelling Islam's history as situated outside of the colony and colonial culture disrupts Fairbridge's use of the littoral in the depiction of colonial subjecthood and the subaltern category she tries to construct. Piet/ro's divergent lineages form a metaphorical wrack zone of identities brought onshore by the tidalectic histories of Europe and Asia. That is, the wrack zone, as site which makes visible what the ocean carries with it to the shore, comes to represent both of Piet/ro's lineages as the products of transoceanic genealogies, and thus registers the making of South Africa's colony on the foundation of a slave past. The novel's bildungsroman structure, along with Piet's Cape Malay categorisation, is disrupted by the contested histories the littoral surfaces: the discovery of Pietro's European descent and the Indian ocean slave histories that inform the presence of "Cape Malay" as category in South Africa. As such, the European history and lineage the novel seeks to emphasis is gently disrupted by the alternative slave history it intended to erase, and the product is a sitting together of two alternative histories that inform and contest each other.

3.4 Conclusion

Chapter Three has departed from a reading of the littoral as situating washed up ideologies of empire. It reads the littoral space within the ensuing context of Britain's colonial occupation of South Africa. In so doing, I have attempted to argue that texts published within this context offer littoral moments as having a destabilizing and disrupting effect on ideologies of empire. In my bathymetrical reading of *The Story of an African Farm* I have followed in the tradition of scholars who read the environment in the novel as situating colonial discourse, and its various ideological undercurrents. I have thus aimed to contribute to the body of work on

Schreiner by analysing the littoral spaces in her writings. Littoral spaces in *The Story of an African Farm* often interrupt and pause the plot's linear sequence of events by offering moments that are situated outside of the immediate dramatic action. My bathymetrical reading of the novel's littoral scenes therefore considers how they cast light on a tidalectic history that disrupts colonial discourse through its generating of deep time. The littoral therefore speaks of an alternative history that the colonial archive cannot reach because the history remains environmental. That is to say, if the environment comes to speak, then it questions the foundations of histories that casts it as *nullius.*[62] As such, littoral spaces convey the limits and shortcomings of empire and its states of being.

I also read littoral spaces as wrack zones to colony and empire. If wrack zones are taken to mean the deposits of organic material brought onshore by the tide, then they conceptually mark the discursive deposits of tidal histories of empire. My suggestion has been that *Undine* and *Piet of Italy* employ the littoral setting to disrupt, construct, and disrupt again the different categories of persons advanced by colonial ideology. Schreiner situates her titular character on the margins of empire, which I read conceptually as the littoral zone to distinguish between centre and periphery. In Undine's movements between centre and margin the empire and its conscriptions are revealed as impossible places for her to exist. I read the littoral setting in *Piet of Italy* in a similar vein, which engaged the geolocation of Kalk Bay and its history on the fringes of the colony. A tidalectic reading of Kalk Bay's history and Piet/ro's lineages surfaced the disruptive lineages Fairbridge tries to erase in her making of Piet/ro as imperial subject.

In Chapter Four I continue the argument that authors use the littoral to present the real political contexts of their texts. As this next chapter analyses early apartheid texts, their political context accompanies an increase in legislative spatial regulation. Often, as I show, the littoral as a not yet segregated space is used to simultaneously reflect on the political reality in the text and an imagining of an alternative past, present, or future. In these instances, the littoral settings engender reflections of resistant narratives that critique hegemonic spatial and racial politics.

[62] Those categories of knowledge (capitalism, colonialism, gender) that insist on the environment's deadness, its status as lifeless thing.

CROSS SHORE

CHAPTER FOUR

"The rising tide": towards apartheid

4.1 Introduction

With the turn of the twentieth century came the unionisation of South Africa, the increase in Afrikaner political power, and steadily rising spatial politics which would eventually culminate in strict, constitutional regulation during apartheid. By the time the National Party came into power in 1948, several Acts had already been instituted in the country in an effort to control people of colour access to the city using "state discourses that sought to capture black identity within the rural and tribal" (Jones, "Urbanism" 203). Of these Acts, the Natives Land Act (Act No. 27 of 1913), Natives (Urban Areas) Act (Act No. 21 of 1923), and the Native Administration Act (Act No. 38 of 1927) are the most significant. This legislation ensured that certain areas, such as beaches, were not yet included under segregationist politics and discourse. It was only after Nationalist Party victory, followed by an increase in segregating laws, that beaches were segregated under the Separate Amenities Act (Act No. 49 of 1953). Texts published during this turbulent time in South African history often employ the littoral as setting to expose and trouble the limitations placed on peoples' freedom of movement, often juxtaposed with the regulated city or urban space.

In this chapter I read across the shore for a discourse that constitutes and regulates the rise in formalised spatial regulation, focusing on the effects that segregation has on the categorisation of bodies and the contradictions that arise when the navigation of littoral spaces is compared to non-littoral spaces. A comparative reading of these two spaces stresses the interplay between the physical and the psychic that the beach affords. With regards to race, this interplay is evinced through a consideration of race as bodily marker and social construct. Critiques of apartheid's attempt at controlling not just bodies but minds and consciousness under a homogeneous rubric of race are well-known. My objective in this chapter is to show, through an analysis of specific literary texts, how the littoral as a space not yet segregated can be considered a Thirdspace, a real-and-imagined space, which situates its occupants inside and outside of apartheid realities.

The title of this next section, “Cross Shore”, is meant to evoke these segregating effects, specifically on littoral spaces once the Separate Amenities Act was introduced. When reading metaphorically “across the shore”, this chapter’s framing title engages the idea of spatial organisation: consider the image of a segregated beach with spaces demarcated for specific bodies, placed side by side. “Cross Shore” is also meant to be read in terms of its disruptive connotation. When a wind blows “cross shore”, it blows parallel or at an angle to the beach, disrupting swell lines and sand formation and destabilising the regularity and patterning of waves, albeit until the wind changes direction again. “Cross shore” therefore both evinces and pulls and pushes at boundaries; it both uncovers and covers up. I compare Peter Abrahams’s *Tell Freedom* (1954), Nadine Gordimer’s *The Lying Days* (1953) and Gordimer’s short story “The Catch” (1953), through a lens that frames the littoral in two ways: firstly, as spaces of leisure, and secondly, as places of departure. These three texts are pertinent to a discussion of the rising tide of spatial politics because they represent the littoral space as not-yet-segregated under law and therefore as offering respite from rising apartheid spatial politics. Yet, much like Undine’s experience at the shore, the littoral can only offer impermanent occupation for the characters in these texts.

Tell Freedom is a memoir by Peter Abrahams detailing his time growing up in South Africa until his departure for England in 1939. Abrahams was born in 1919, and his memoir covers a significant period of his life in South Africa when politics in the country were rising rapidly according to segregationist ideologies. The text is separated into the three chapters that follow Abrahams’s life from early childhood where he lives in Elsberg to teenager studying and working in Johannesburg to young adult, when he moves to Cape Town. The memoir concludes with a night in Durban where Abrahams goes swimming at the beach; he is meant to board a steamship in the early hours of the morning. This final littoral scene is the culmination of a series of spatial pressures impressed upon his body that renders the littoral space as site which uncovers the strictures imposed upon bodies in non-littoral spaces.

Nadine Gordimer’s protagonist, Helen Shaw, in her semi-autobiographical bildungsroman, *The Lying Days*, also departs for England at the end of the novel. Like *Tell Freedom*, *Lying Days* is also divided into three sections, “Mine, “Sea”, “City”, and similarly accompanies a movement between spaces that coincide with her protagonist’s bildung. Helen’s reasons for leaving are akin to those of Abrahams: she, like him, must depart due to the political tensions in the country. Yet this is where the comparisons end, for Helen is white and therefore has the

privilege of more freedom of movement than Abrahams, who was classified as "non-European".

Gordimer's short story, "The Catch", centres on a white couple who reside and work in Johannesburg and are on holiday at Durban's beach front. Here, they meet and form a precarious acquaintance with an "Indian fisherman". This precarity is placed under a microscope when the couple run into the fisherman one afternoon, this time in a non-littoral setting. Their interaction is completely different, undermined, and cut through with awkward racialised social prescriptions.

Race and politics are the dominant themes scholars tackle in Gordimer's writing. Regarding *The Lying Days* and "The Catch" specifically, scholars explore the political landscapes in the text, reading for Gordimer's representation of the limitations of racial prejudice and her sketching of white liberalism.[63] A consideration of the littoral setting is missing from scholarship on *The Lying Days* novel, especially given that the second section's heading is "Sea". The number of scholarly writings on "The Catch" is small, especially in terms of discussions concerning the beach setting of the short story. Karen Lazar makes an interesting point in a footnote, that "[i]n every anthology Gordimer has at some point used a holiday resort or hotel setting for moments of epiphany, discovery and conquest, perhaps because such places make for the convergence of unknowns" (793). This is an intriguing aside. In contrast to this act of peripheralisation, my reading of "The Catch" is firmly situated in the spatial politics that the beach as space of leisure offers. I also read the beach in *The Lying Days* as leisurely space where Helen's introspection explores questions of race and sexual awakening. This scene is situated within a reading of the bildungsroman structure in the novel, a frequent topic in scholarship on the novel, and I offer an analysis of the littoral as space for moments of self-realisation. Alan Lomberg has published a careful reading of Gordimer's aesthetics arising from the bildungs structure. Interestingly, Lomberg draws attention to the water imagery in her language, concluding that it "introduces a new element:

[63] Kolawole Ogungbesan considers *The Lying Days* as part of the resurgence of South African literature after the second World War and reads the novel as sketching the problems the National Party's victory posed for (white) liberals. Katherine Wagner writes of the landscape iconography in Gordimer's work as emanating from her experience as childhood and considers *The Lying Days* as reflective of this first step. To Robert Green, the novel presents Gordimer's attempt, "For the remainder of her career […] to 'enter' the world of black experience in South Africa while remaining, as she must, a member of the dominant white minority" (545). Susan M. Greenstein is of the opinion that *The Lying Days* is one of four novels that form "a chronicle of the quest of white liberals for connection with their black countrymen and for involvement in their struggle" (229).

a trinity of sea, sex and death is established; and, as the sea suggested a certain kind of life, and has become linked with sex and the flow of emotion, so also sex and death have become linked through the sea" (5). However, Lomberg's conclusion doesn't address the location from which an imagining of the sea is made possible: the littoral zone. My reading of *The Lying Days* analyses the littoral setting as the site of Helen's rite of passage. Within the bildungs structure, sea, sex and sand forms a preamble to her eventual self-realisation not just as a woman, but as a white woman within an increasingly contentious political climate.

Predictably, scholarship on *Tell Freedom* reads for the memoir's autobiographical nature or is placed in conversation with concepts of exile and home.[64] Kgomotso Masemola provides an intriguing discussion of the Black Atlantic figures of memory in the text, given that the Indian Ocean beach in Durban is where Abrahams boards his ship. Masemola casts an oceanic imaginary to the western side of South Africa, opening a possible reading of *Tell Freedom* as situated in the triangulation between the Atlantic, South Africa, and the Indian Ocean. However, Masemola is largely concerned with the diasporic imaginaries conjured by the works of W.E.B. du Bois in the text; thus, the physical beach setting in the memoir is not addressed. Meg Samuelson's "Re-telling Freedom in *Otelo Burning*: The Beach, Surf Noir, and Bildung at the Lamontville Pool" offers the only consideration of the littoral by briefly reading the Durban beach in the memoir as a space which allows transitions to freedom.

My discussions in this chapter are largely informed by reading across texts for their representation of spatial navigations in urban settings and terraqueous spaces. I therefore not only read across texts, but across spaces as well. The particularities of leisurely spatial politics stand in contradistinction to the spatial behaviours outside of the littoral space. I argue that due to the positionality of the littoral, authors present their characters outside of racialised spatial discourse, uncovering an alternative political position, before these moments are covered up again: the cross-shore nature of littoral discourse. This leads me to consider the littoral settings as pertinent to the relation between "conceived" and "lived" space that Edward Soja extrapolates to engage Thirdspace (*Thirdspaces* 30), which provides the theoretical framework for this chapter.

[64] See Stephan Gray's paper, "The Long Eye of History: Four Autobiographical Texts by Peter Abrahams"; Christiana Pugliese, "Two Self-Portraits by Two South African Writers: Peter Abrahams' *Tell Freedom* and J.M. Coetzee's *Boyhood*".

Following a discussion of this theoretical framework, I analyse Abrahams and Gordimer's texts as representing spaces of leisure and spaces of departure. The first discussion is sectioned under the title "Beach face", so named after the stretch of sand situated between the swash zone and the berm. The beach face is usually the space most populated with different forms of leisure seekers. I therefore read the littoral scenes in these texts as preambles to what is to become a more formalised construction of the beach as space of white leisure under apartheid.[65]

The second section of the chapter moves to a reading of the littoral as setting for the bildungs framework of the texts. Published as a memoir and semi-biographical novel respectively, *Tell Freedom* and *The Lying Days* tell of the childhoods and young adult lives of their protagonists as they mature and develop a growing political consciousness. The character development of both protagonists accompanies movement from various spaces, literally and figuratively; as they move from their childhood towns to the urban space of Johannesburg, for work and for study, their political awareness shifts accordingly. Present in both narratives are visits to the beach. Accompanying these spatial movements is a shift from the public to the personal. These are moments of introspection on which hinge the self-realisation and development of characters in a bildungsroman.

In his seminal text, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (1987), Franco Moretti argues that the bildungsroman is a narrative that traces the moral and emotional development of a character and a coming into consciousness, so to speak. It crucially considers the relationship between the subject and society, usually in harmony. The bildungs structure conventionally includes moments of self-realisation in which the reader is presented with dialectical moments between interiority and exteriority. I am therefore particularly interested in how the littoral as space of interplay between the physical and psychic speaks to these textual qualities of the bildungsroman.

Lastly, I turn to a reading of the littoral as a space of departure. Published a year apart, and a few years after the 1948 elections, both texts detail a political climate that was to be the preamble to the making of apartheid South Africa. When read comparatively, these texts present this rising political tension from opposite ends of the colour bar. Here, I read the political undercurrents in the texts' littoral moments, surfaced by their juxtaposition with

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[65] This is not to say that these texts mark the first inscriptions of the beach as space of leisure in South African literature. Olive Schreiner, for example, has characters who visit the beach for pleasure in *The Story of an African Farm* and *From Man to Man*.

urban spaces, as the rip tide of spatial politics. Lee and Helen's inability to remain in South Africa, like a rip tide flowing in the direction of least resistance, pulls them into exile and away from the South African shore.

4.2 Real-and-Imagined Space

Apartheid spatiology lends itself to thinking of spaces as "perceived", "conceived", and "lived", to use Lefebvre's terminology. The relationship between "abstract" and "concrete" notions of space is "marked out materially and metaphorically in spatial praxis, the transformation of (spatial) knowledge into (spatial) action in a field of unevenly developed (spatial) power" (Soja, *Thirdspaces* 31). I analyse the texts in this chapter in light of Lefebvre and Soja's spatial theories, paying specific attention to the representations of perceived and conceived spaces and how they produce lived spaces. Through apartheid legislation, spaces are conceived as segregated, reserving the privilege of access to the white minority group of the population. These spaces are materially practised (perceived) by the regulation and enforcement of laws by the government and the signage placed to remind the public that certain spaces are "reserved" for "Europeans only" and stand in opposition to "reserved for non-Europeans" spaces. The illusion of a binary is introduced here, though in practice a person classified as "European" could cross the divide into "non-European" spaces. This is the unevenly developed power Soja identifies in spatial praxis, which destabilises these binaries of space to include *lived* space as well. However, the oppositional dichotomy of power is still present in this practice. Thinking of the littoral as a Thirdspace, or "an-Other" as Soja describes it, challenges this dichotomy and extends the relation of "conceived" and "lived" to "real-and-imaginary".

4.3.1 "Beach Face": Spaces of Leisure

In "Book Three" of *Tell Freedom*, Abrahams describes a scene in which he sits on the beach with the politically prominent family, the Gools.[66] In this closing chapter of the memoir, Abrahams has made his way to Cape Town, before he eventually leaves for Durban in order to depart for England via the sea. As beaches were not yet segregated, the open stretch of the littoral is free from restricting spatial politics, leading Abrahams to significantly describe the

[66] In Cape Town Abrahams forms an acquaintance with Goolam Gool, the brother-in-law of Cissie Gool, and son-in-law of Abdul Abdurahman. Both Cissie Gool and Abdurahman, her father, were prominent politicians and served on the Cape Town City Council.

beach face as "paradise" (323). Here, the leisurely beach setting stands in contrast to the rural small town in "Book One" and Johannesburg in "Book Two", and provides Abrahams with a vantage point from which the troubling politics of his past and present are taken into perspective, and from which he contemplates the future.

Situated outside of the rigorously regulated urban spaces he has navigated most of life, the littoral space offers momentary respite from the pressures of urban spatial politics. Up to this point, Abrahams had carefully drawn the reader's attention to apartheid signage located everywhere in the streets of Johannesburg and their impingement on his movements. On a nightly excursion with his friends, he relates the following:

> Sometimes, on these nightly walks, I had the urge to piddle. But the notices on the public lavatories I passed drove me away.
>
> RESERVED FOR EUROPEANS ONLY
>
> Sometimes I grew tired, but the park benches I passed said:
>
> EUROPEANS ONLY. (192-3)

In this scene we encounter the workings of Firstspace and Secondspace, in which the conceived space's regulation is practiced by the signage placed to turn Abrahams away. Thirdspace is present in his lived experience of this spatiology: he is driven away. Conceived space is transformed to lived space for Abrahams when the signage comes to innately regulate his movement/s:

> Sometimes I had the price of a cup of tea as I walked past cheerful-looking little cafés. *No visible sign was up*. But I *knew* these, too, were:
>
> RESERVED FOR EUROPEANS ONLY
>
> Really, these streets and trees, almost the clean air I breathe here, were:
>
> RESERVED FOR EUROPEANS ONLY
>
> I was the intruder. And like the intruder, I walked carefully lest I be discovered. (192-193; my italics)

There is a progression in Abrahams's representation here, exposing the surreptitiousness of the country's policies. Firstly, despite the absence of explicit instructions ("no visible sign was up"), his body has been conscripted to the point where navigation has become intuitive, and he "knows" where he is allowed to move and which spaces he may access. The

conscription of Abrahams's body to heed these signs has therefore reached a point of internalisation. He self-regulates his movements, the experience of which stifles his entire environment, constantly reminding him that he is "the intruder", not welcome, the Other. This is lived space in the Lefebvrian sense.

Soja extrapolates Lefebvre's lived space as Thirdspace. The critical thinking underlying Thirdspace argues that "[t]here is always the Other, a third term that disrupts, disorders, and begins to reconstitute the conventional binary opposition into an-Other that comprehends but is more than just the sum of two parts" (Soja, *Thirdspaces* 31). Firstspace (perceived, real) and Secondspace (conceived, imaginary) collapse into Thirdspace as the sum of its parts. As such, it is both a real and imaginary space, and also a real-and-imagined space in which both are present simultaneously, constituting a more than. The Cape Town beach is described in these terms:

> I lay on my back and listened to the sound of the surf. The warm sun beat down on me. I kept my eyes closed […] all about me was beauty and the eternal voice of the unending sea. Without opening my eyes, I could see the dazzling blue sky, far away – so far away that it was nothing but an eternity of space […] Oh, the sun! And the sea! And the green! And the gold! Oh, paradise! This must have been the Garden of Eden that announced the beginning of time! (323)

In this moment, the beach is represented as real-and-imagined. The opening lines establish the materiality of the beach using a realist mode. It is a real space, with the "sound of the surf" and the "warm sun". Then, the language changes to an idyllic, romantic tone as Abrahams, with eyes closed, imagines the "beauty" of the environment and the "eternal voice of the unending sea". This trend continues with Abrahams eventually musing that the beach was a "paradise", the "Garden of Eden that announced the beginning of time". The materiality of the beach, along with its mythic representation as the Garden of Eden, casts the beach as real-and-imagined.

The descriptions of the beach as a paradise likened to the Garden of Eden recalls a chapter from *The Human Shore* (2012). Here, Gillis writes of the appeal of the Garden of Eden, in the Western sense, as a

> a world of limitless plenitude, promising an everlasting life without toil, disease, or death. Adam and Eve might have lived forever in peaceful coexistence with other creatures had they not disobeyed God's will. Their punishment for eating the

> forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge was not only the forfeiture of everlasting life but the transformation of the earth itself into a wilderness of “thorn and thistle”, where daily bread could be won only through painful toil. (10)

Beaches, in the Lefebvrian sense as spaces of leisure, resemble the paradise Gillis describes above. But Lefebvre argues that the paradise that leisure brings can only transpire in the form of paid time off from labour. As such, the beach, when accessed in a leisurely capacity, resembles this spectre of Eden in which toil, and by extension disease and death — all the trappings of mortal life — are momentarily suspended. In an apartheid context, in which the discourses of class and race intersect, the toil Abrahams is suspended from is more than just time off work. It is a toil that pressures his body physically as well as psychologically.

The Garden of Eden is prevalent in Christian mythology, which “considered humankind to originate from a single landlocked space” (Gillis 8) since the sea in Western tradition “has always been an alien environment” (7). Christopher Connery points out that disorder and chaos “was a primary maritime trope established in the Mesopotamian and Western Semitic texts” (499) and often features as a turbulent space, descriptions which arise from biblical accounts of the ocean that instilled fear of the sea (Westwick and Neushul 23). Key, then, is that Abrahams relocates the landlocked Garden of Eden to the shore and repositions the sea and beach environment as paradise. This minor re-imagining of the Christian myth is attributed to the location of the littoral because it is a non-segregated space. In the littoral as Thirdspace, which combines the real and imaginative, we thus find “not just the spatial representations of power but the imposing and operational power of spatial representations” (Soja, *Thirdspace* 68). Put simply, we are made aware not only of how space represents power but also the power behind representing space.

A tidalectic reading is also possible here. For, if one considers Elizabeth DeLoughrey’s comment that it is “Brathwaite’s vision of fluid time-space” (*Routes* 3) or that tidalectics affirms a “rearrangement of space and time” (DeLoughrey, *Imagined Islands* 8), then in order to notice and apprehend the passing of time at the shore, one would need to register the effects of tides on the coast, which would take eons. Geological time is “an extremely slow time” and barely noticeable. “[T]he coast”, as Llenín-Figueroa writes, “can [consequently] be approached as an ambit where, (1) it becomes peculiarly possible to perceive the effects of a vast, slow, temporality, and, (2) where a possibility of a time uncontrolled by the dominion of space arises” (126). Under these terms, the description of the beach in *Tell Freedom* comes to

evoke the longue durée of the coast, almost as if it is the place where time stops. The beach as paradise is re-imagined as announcing "the beginning of time" from where the "eternal", "unending", "eternity" of the sea can be viewed and experienced. If the coast is the space where the vast span of time is perceived, then a brief visit to the shore would barely register in the longue durée. As such, because one does not notice the passing of time, it is experienced as standing still. The appeal of time standing still for Abrahams is pertinent: when accessed in this leisurely capacity, the beach, as paradise, allows Abrahams momentary respite from apartheid politics.

In this littoral moment, Abrahams draws our attention to the bodily freedom he enjoys in the leisurely space of the beach. This is underscored by descriptions of his companions, also classified "Coloured", enjoying the beach: "Goolam Gool played with his wife" (322), "she was playing in the sun in her bathing costume", while "Gool's sister, Jane, and her boyfriend lay quietly talking" (323). "Non-white" bodies pleasurably engaging in acts of leisure is not a representation we often find in studies of the South African beach,[67] and this small moment in *Tell Freedom* presents a representation of space (impermanently) unencumbered by apartheid.

However, while the Cape Town beach does provide Abrahams with a moment of bliss, it is also a fraught one, for he is uncomfortable with the Gools' circle of (materially comfortable) intellectuals, with their politics and comforts. Therefore, while Abrahams is able to enjoy the leisurely space, the moment presents him with certain foreclosures. While the beach may be a space of respite, this respite can never be fully realised. That is to say, while Abrahams is allowed access to the beach because it is not yet a segregated space, he remains unable to experience it in precisely the same capacity as white people: as completely free from political pressure, a pressure he will return to once he leaves the shore. Significantly, then, while the littoral does provide a respite from segregated spaces of apartheid planning, the in-between setting of the beach comes at an in-between moment in Abrahams's life, one in which he recognises that he is not able to find comfort in any of the spaces that South Africa is able to offer. Even the paradise setting of the beach is transient, for eventually he must leave.

In comparison to Abrahams, Gordimer's protagonist, Helen Shaw, visits the beach frequently as a holiday destination. She also imagines it as an escape from the tediousness of daily life.

[67] Heather Hughes has written on this topic, see "Struggling for a Day in the Sun".

While on a walk through the impoverished section of the mining town in which she lives, her thoughts suddenly turn to the sea as an escape from the boredom of Atherton:

> I thought of water. Of the sea – oh, the surprise, the lift of remembering there was the sea, that it was there now, somewhere, belonging to last year's and next year's two weeks of holiday at Durban – […] the sea could not be believed in for long, here. Could be smelled for a moment, a terrible whiff of longing evaporated with the deeper snatch of breath that tried to seize it. (16)

Here, Helen's thoughts of the beach transport her from the mining town in which she lives to a space less constricting, less confining. It is dissimilar to the politics Abrahams encounters, but the beach similarly provides respite from her growing discomfort with the conservatism of her parents. Structurally, the littoral scenes in *The Lying* Days, in the second section of the novel titled "Sea", are presented as opposed to "Mine" and "City" — urban spaces. Perched between these two episodes in the novel, "Sea", does not only stand as a juncture between Helen's youth and adulthood. It also marks Helen's growing dissonance with her hometown and the privilege she is complicit in, as well as her developing liberal political consciousness and its limits. Initially, the non-segregated beach space stands in contradiction to the segregated conceived spaces outside of littoral areas.

As real-and-imagined leisurely space, the littoral offers both characters an opportunity for respite from the politics pressed upon their bodies, though the weight of these politics are not equal. And that is the point. While both characters access the beach in leisurely capacity, they do so under very different circumstances, and the lives they return to when they leave are vastly different too. The juxtaposition in *Tell Freedom* between the spatial strictures described in preceding non-littoral spaces and their ebbing in the littoral space reveal to Abrahams and the reader the pervasive extent of spatial politics in apartheid South Africa.

An excellent example of the troubling of the beach as space of leisure within a racialised context is Gordimer's representation of the setting in "The Catch", which centres on a white couple from Johannesburg who are on holiday in Durban. They spend their days lazily tanning on the beach in the mornings and reading magazines on the porch of their beachfront hotel in the afternoon. Most of the story's narrative action is concerned with the couple's interaction with an Indian fisherman who, like them, habitually visits the beach every day. The climactic moment of the narrative occurs at the end of the story, when the couple run into the Indian fisherman, away from the beach, close to Durban's city. Here, their interaction is

different from before. Occurring in a new space, outside of the parameters of the beach, their bodies are forced to fall back into the socially and politically prescribed behaviour their environment expects of them. The beach space is therefore an example of what Gordimer herself calls “half-worlds”, that is, fictive spaces where

> black and white do meet, to a certain extent, and more or less as equals, though you can never be equal in an unequal society, you can not (sic) make up by any kind of personal ethic for the set-up around you — but anyway I have dealt mostly with this kind of half-world where people do meet — black and white — and because of the general set-up around them, and other inequalities forced upon them, they tend just to go past, just to miss. (Gordimer qtd in Brazin and Seymour 19)

The beach in “The Catch” is one example of such a “borderland” or “half-world”. The juxtaposition of the behaviour of the characters in the littoral, and in a space situated outside of it, highlights the “almost impossibility of making a go of it in a society that is opposed to this sort of thing” (Bazin and Seymour 20). This impossibility is a consistent undercurrent in Gordimer’s representation of the littoral in “The Catch”, which shows the author’s mindfulness of her own privileged position when writing about these half-worlds, as the character’s engagement at the beach is not without prejudice. This sentiment, I want to suggest, is evinced by the ebb and flow of prejudice on the beach face.

The opening of “The Catch” establishes the spatial juxtaposition of city and littoral with a description of the white couple lying on the beach and the reason for their visit: respite from the city. It is on the beachface — that planar of the beach profile that is subject to the moving waters, the swash — where the reader first encounters them, “washed up thankfully out of the swirl and buffet of the city” (Gordimer 8). Here, the beach is meant as space of leisure in which “the tensionless shore keyed only to the tide gave them a sense of timelessness” (8). However, because their bodies are so “habit-impressed” by the pressures of the city and because “they were so accustomed to telling the time by their nerves’ response to the different tensions of the city” (8) they start to reach for a routine by which to order their sense of time and space. To do so, they strike up an acquaintance with an Indian fisherman who visits the beach as regularly as they do to fish for chad:

> So the sound of his feet, thudding nearer over the sand, passing their heads with the deep sound of a man breathing in the heat above the rolled-up faded trousers, passing away up the beach and shrinking into the figure of an Indian fisherman, began to be

> something to be waited for. His coming and going divided the morning into three; the short early time before he passed, the time when he was actually passing, and the largish chunk of warm midday that followed when he had gone. (8)

By this point in the text, the fisherman has been introduced to the reader only in bits and pieces. The first we read of him, the very opening line of the story, details only his “thin strong bony legs” (8). The next time he is mentioned (as evidenced in the above extract), “the sound of his feet” and his “breathing” are offered by way of description, until finally he is fleshed out into a “shrinking” figure (8). While these descriptions are presented from the vantage point of the couple lying on the beach, they also foreclose any possibility of a human encounter. Rather, these details dissect the figure of the fisherman into pieces that serve no other purpose than to regulate the couple’s sense of time.

The next cluster of descriptions follow this fragmentary trajectory:

> They found his face, a long head with a shining dark dome surrounded with curly hair given a stronger liveliness by the sharp coarse strokes of gray hairs, the beautiful curved nose handed out so impartially to Indians, dark eyes slightly bloodshot from the sun, a wide muscular mouth smiling on strong uneven teeth that projected slightly like the good useful teeth of an animal. (9)

The tone of these descriptions relies on a free indirect discourse in which the third-person narration absorbs the prejudice and perspectives of the characters. An almost anthropological curiosity is produced that generates a generalising stereotype of Indian people’s noses, and thus denies the fisherman humanity. Such is the privilege afforded to the couple that they are described as “envious of his fisherman’s life not because they could ever really have lived it themselves, but because it had about it the frame of their holiday freedom” (9). The conceit here is one offered only to those of economic privilege, in which more impoverished lives are romanticised as being free from the stress of routine and pressure. While the young man muses that it must be a “good life”, the thought of themselves living the kind of life they presume the fisherman to lead quickly becomes comical. The final remarks offered on the fisherman’s existence is that he has “a nice open face” and that he “wouldn’t have a face like that if he worked as a waiter at the hotel” (9). In these good-natured remarks that are nonetheless full of prejudice, Gordimer establishes a nuanced ebb and flow in the story in which the couple’s prejudice is consistently presented, affirmed, and then undone, only to be affirmed again.

Gradually, as time passes, the couple and the fisherman greet each other. Thus, they learn that he too is on holiday, and is not in fact making his living off the fish that he catches. This realisation sparks their first real interest in the fisherman. Significantly, this turn happens "along the surf" (9) at the precise point at which water meets land. That is to say, it occurs right in the littoral zone, and thus the destabilising quality of the setting begins in turn to destabilise their preconceptions.

Yet this moment is not as liberal as one might think, for their acquaintance is only able to form because both parties access the littoral in equal capacity, as a space of leisure. We are told that "[f]eeling the knowledge that he too was on holiday was a sudden intimacy between them" and "the fact that he was an Indian troubled them hardly at all" (10). This moment is therefore not a meeting of unequal social positions in which a human interaction occurs, but rather, it is because the Indian fisherman is suddenly elevated to an equal social position of leisure. Because he too is on holiday, the couple engage him, so much so that "they almost forgot he was an Indian" (10). When the Indian fisherman offers them a fish to buy for their lunch, this amicable equality slips and "[d]isappointment as much as a satisfied dig in the ribs from opportunist prejudice stiffened" (11) them. They are reminded that "[o]f course, he was not in quite the same position as themselves, after all" (11). Prejudice floods the moment, before it ebbs again when they learn that he mostly eats his catch himself and only sometimes sells his fish and the wife "felt the dismay of having mistaken a privilege for an imposition".

Steadily, Gordimer develops their interaction towards a point where the couple think of the fisherman with fondness. This fondness, however, is laced with feelings of superiority as

> he was "their Indian". When they went home they might remember the holiday as the one when you used to play with a spaniel on the beach every day. It would be, of course, a nameless spaniel, an ownerless spaniel, an entertaining creature existing nowhere in your life outside that holiday, yet bound with absolute intimacy within that holiday itself. And as an animal becomes more human every day, so every day the quality of their talk with the Indian had to change. (12)

Yet, despite their interaction no longer being merely perfunctory, but more intimate and human, the markers of social prejudice and inequality are never truly removed.

The precarious nature of this interaction, or "friendship", is exposed when, one day, the fisherman catches a salmon. The fish is so large that he immediately sends someone to call the couple from the hotel porch to see it. They oblige, sharing in his excitement. Upon their

return to the hotel, the couple learn that their friends from the city have come to surprise them. The intrusion upon their holiday time is presented as a welcome one: they were “swept off from something too quiet” (20) and the impending social engagement had them “twitching to the old familiar tune” (20). With the arrival of their friends comes the arrival of the city’s racialised regulation of social behaviour, which stands in stark juxtaposition to the interaction that was cultivated at the beach. This juxtaposition reaches its climax in the final moments of the story.

Later that evening, while on their way into the city, the now larger party drive by the Indian fisherman again. He is sitting next to the side of the road with the salmon, too tired to carry the heavy fish any further. Because the couple know him, they feel compelled to offer him a lift. In this moment, in a space removed from the littoral, their interaction takes a turn and becomes awkward and tense. In contrast to the good-natured, congenial contact at the beach, “nobody else talked to the Indian” (24) except for the wife, and “the listening at the back of the car was as rude and blatant as staring” (24). The fisherman’s responses to her polite conversation are described as “obedient”, and societal regulation is now reflected in the posture of his body as he takes on a “position he had carefully disciplined himself to – head hunched a bit, hands curled as, if he had had a cap, he might perhaps have held it before him” (24). Here, in the space of the car, which is explicitly removed from the littoral “half-world” (Gordimer), the interaction between the characters resorts back to practices and behaviours registered on the body, encrypted by a racist ideology that casts them as unequal. It is in this juxtaposition, then, that Gordimer’s critique of apartheid society lies. Put slightly differently, the littoral becomes the space of “what could be”, whereas the non-littoral is the space of “what is”. And yet, even this juxtaposition is tenuous; despite its location as outside of urban society, the interactions that take place on the beach face are not without a conceited prejudice produced through and by a developing racist apartheid ideology.

4.3.2. Beach Face: Bildung in the Littoral

When thinking of the beach as real-and-imagined, as well as leisurely space within a bildungs structure, the littoral becomes a significant setting in both *The Lying Days* and *Tell Freedom*. That is, it operates in both texts as a transitional space: it is both the stage for the protagonists’ moments of self-realisation, and for their departure. In Gordimer’s writings, the littoral is closely tied to romantic and political consciousness, while for Abrahams the littoral marks the realisation that there is no future that is free for him in South Africa.

As we have seen, the key littoral moment in *The Lying Days* takes place in the second section of the novel. The bildungsroman structure of the novel situates “Sea” as the chapter in which Helen transitions from childhood and its attendant political ignorance to a maturity that registers a critique of the country’s elections. Gordimer uses a romance plot to usher in Helen’s growth to adulthood, a romance which transpires at the beach. Having just finished school, Helen goes on holiday to Natal to visit Mrs Koch, a friend of her mother’s. She meets and falls in love with Mrs Koch’s son, Ludi, the first of her lovers and her initiation into romantic relationships. The space of the beach plays a prominent role in their courtship and it is here that Helen experiences her first kiss and falls in love for the first time.

The opening lines of “Sea” read as follows: “I had a new bathing suit” (*Lying Days* 47) and immediately the leisurely purpose of the beach space is cast. After her arrival at Mrs Koch’s house, Helen, Ludi, and Mrs Koch visit the beach often to engage in leisurely activity: “Mrs Koch liked to sit there, with a sunshade over her legs and her shoes off” (54). Sometimes, Mrs Koch “brought mending or a piece of knitting”, while Ludi takes “his fishing-rod and the stained canvas bag high with bait and was gone away up the beach” (54). Helen spends her time either at the edge of the water or lying on the beach face.

In these beach scenes, an embodied, particularising experience of the environment is presented:

> In silence I got up and wandered down towards the sea. The sand was coarser, yellower; then here, where the tide had smoothed and smoothed it, spreading one layer evenly and firmly down over another, it dazzled with its cleanness, and the hardness of it thudded through my heels to my ears like the beat of my own heart in the heat. A thin film of water spread out to my feet; the sea touched me.
>
> Sometimes I lay, the sharp bones of my hips meeting on the hardness of the sand, the sun puckering my skin. My eyes closed, I lost sense of which side the sea was, which side the land, and seemed to be alive only within my own body, beating with the heat. (55)

Helen’s placing in the beach environment comes with an acute awareness of a sensory and tactile experience. Minute details draw the reader’s attention to the sun, sea, and sand, and Helen’s body within the beach environment. As she loses “sense of which side the sea was, which the land”, she is placed firmly in the littoral and perception turns inward to an awareness of her body, pulsing with the heat (55). This kind of experience of the environment

is not present anywhere else in the novel, and it is arguably the leisurely space of the beach that provides the conditions for this kind of "slowing down", an experience that sits outside of sociality so that all that the body is aware of is the sun, sand, and sea.

To Helen, the littoral comes to resemble the opposite of the spatially segregated mining town where she is from, the affluent neighbourhood reserved for white mining officials and their families where she lives, and the tennis club she frequents with her parents — all of which construct and require a specific form of sociality. Her consciousness of the differing spatial prescriptions is closely aligned with her growing romantic and intimate relationship with Ludi, who she associates with coastal spaces. Initially, Helen is drawn to Ludi's peculiar kind of untethered naturalness, which is juxtaposed with the mechanised community of the mine town she is accustomed to. Condemning the mine town as the "narrowest, most mechanical, unrewarding existence you can think of in any nightmare" (56), Ludi prefers the "beaches and rivers and the sea, he saw with all the sensuous intensity with which one might regard a beloved face" (56).

Ludi's preference for beach spaces like the Pondoland Coast over life in a "dreary little town" with "petty little people" (57-8) is confusing to Helen, and consequently, she "could not fit him into the inherited categories of [her] child's experience" (56). After telling Ludi she has "always lived on the Mine" (56), Helen admits to herself that "no one [she] knew would dream of wanting to live buried away on the South Coast, not working" (56) and immediately questions the thought. Through this questioning, Gordimer presents the beach as an environment that produces Helen's growing romantic and sexual consciousness. Following the bildungsroman structure, these beach scenes become the setting for her romantic rite of passage and are mobilised towards forming the conjunction between childhood and adulthood. Moreover, "Sea" is structurally hugged by the opening chapter "Mine" and the concluding chapter "City" and therefore marks a retreat to the personal amidst a return to the political. While "Mine" and "City" are instructive in Helen's awakening to the meaning of the racialised subject under what will become apartheid ideology, the littoral moments in "Sea" are used to stage Helen's relationship with Ludi, who "admitted [her] to a plane of adulthood" (57).

The littoral henceforth becomes entangled with sun, sea, and sex. Lefebvre writes that "[t]ypically, the identification of sex and sexuality, of pleasure and physical gratification, with 'leisure' occurs in places specially designated for the purpose — in holiday resorts or

villages, on ski slopes or sun-drenched beaches" (310). Gordimer capitalises on the leisurely aspect of the beach to situate the change in Helen and Ludi's interaction with each other. After a night swim, for example, Helen is sitting on the beach, engulfed in darkness, waiting for Ludi to emerge out of the ocean:

> I did not know how long he was away. With nothing but the waves' faint break in the darkness to measure the passing of time, I could not tell if it was ten minutes or half an hour, but suddenly he stepped into the enclosing dark about me and he was there, towelling his hair. A few drops of cold water shook from it on to my cheek. I sat up, and a faint slither of sand ran like a breeze down the back of my dress. I could hardly see him, yet he was there vigorously, his sharp breathing, the smell of damp towel. (63)

Robbed of sight in the darkness, Helen's other sensory sensibilities are heightened, creating an almost erotic tension in the intimate proximity between her and Ludi's bodies. He is close enough for a drop of water from his hair to fall on her cheek, she can smell him, hear his breathing, and feel the sand slide down the back of her dress.

As Helen falls deeper in (adolescent) love with Ludi, the beach comes to resemble a "world unbounded by time, commonplace, and the hazards of human behaviour" (68) where her thoughts turn to the most sentimental of futures:

> I played in the water and thought of Ludi swimming back to me: it seemed to me, as I imagined a woman in the complacency of marriage, that it was wonderful to think of him removed from me, simply because he would come back. I lay on the sand with my head sheltered in the darkness of my arms and imagined a life with Ludi. (68)

While Helen's daydream is naïve and smacks of puppy love, it nonetheless marks a progression towards adulthood given its emphasis on marriage. Key here is that it is the beach space which provides the setting for this development. It is fitting, then, that their first and subsequent kisses should happen in the littoral, "while the tepid stagnant water of the pool touched with a terrible softness against the inner sides of [Helen's] thighs" (73). These charged descriptions of the environment communicate Helen's awakening sexual curiosity, and culminates in further sexual behaviour in a later scene.

4.4 “Rip tide”: Littoral Moments of Departure

In spite of her developing relationship with Ludi, Helen eventually leaves South Africa. Her departure transpires after she witnesses the May Day riots of 1950. The riots, a call for strike action by the Communist Party of South Africa in protest of the Suppression of Communism Act, resulted in gross police violence against the strikers and the deaths of 18 people (“History of May Day”). Caught up in these violent events, Helen witnesses the death of a protester, which changes her contentment with South African life forever. The final section of the novel in which these events are detailed is titled “City” and comes to represent the confluence of the politics the urban space both produces and represents. Gordimer writes that “Within days, hours almost, the happening of the riots was absorbed into the life of the city again; the dead were buried, the wounded healed, and the hearings of those cases in which employers had arrested natives for striking went on in the abstract atmosphere of the courts” (*Lying Days* 329). The urban space and the meticulous regulation of the rhythm of the city covers up the brief political disruption, the loss of life, and the consequences of those who dared to disrupt it. It is here where the undercurrents of political prejudice force Helen to critique her complicity as a privileged white South African, marking the limits of her liberalist ideology. This realisation comes to represent the rejection of the bildungsroman structure, for Helen resists an integration into apartheid morality and its social fabric.

The novel closes with a chapter set at the Durban beachfront, where Helen prepares to leave South Africa for England. The chapter sees Helen reflect that she is “not practising any sort of self-deception any longer” and that one can conceive of “disillusion as a beginning rather than an end” (367). Thus, while she is in the littoral space, Helen is shown to accept her compromised position in South African society, a complicity she cannot run away from.

While this scene has much in common with the closing pages of his memoir, Abrahams represents his concluding littoral moment quite differently to Gordimer’s. The scene shows Abrahams lying on a beach in Durban at night. While lying on the sand here, Abrahams decides that he will leave South Africa and sign up as stoker on a ship the next day. If, as Ogungbesan argues, each incident in the memoir has been “selected because it has contributed to the making of the artist” (91), then this final littoral moment marks the convergence of the spatial navigations of Abrahams’s life. Indeed, Abrahams describes himself in this scene as lying on his back on the beach, as he “took stock and searched for the meaning of life in terms of the life [he] had known in this land for nearly twenty-one years” (369). It is thus from the vantage point of the littoral that Abrahams is able to reflect on the

past current of events that brought him to this present moment. For Abrahams, the rising tide of disenfranchising politics in South Africa has become a rip tide, carrying his body unwillingly along in its stifling conscription of spatial politics that offer him no future:

> All my life had been dominated by a sign, often invisible but no less real for that, which said:
>
> RESERVED FOR EUROPEANS ONLY
>
> Because of that sign I had been born into the filth and squalor of the slums and had spent nearly all my childhood and youth there; because of it a whole generation, many generations, had been born, had grown up and died amid the filth and squalor of the slums. […] Free compulsory education was "Reserved for Europeans only." All that was finest and best in life was "Reserved for Europeans only." The world, today, belonged to the "Europeans". (370)

It is here, in the conclusion to the memoir, that the spatial politics of *Tell Freedom* become most clear. The littoral space, as a space outside of the spatial restrictions of the city, is still able to offer a momentary experience of freedom from these restrictions, and thus the impossibility of freedom is exposed. "[L]ife in South Africa had come to an end" (370), as Abrahams puts it. If Abrahams "casts the beach as a threshold onto the voyage to 'tell freedom'", as Samuelson ("Re-telling freedom" 311) argues, then this casting is due to the littoral's presence in the memoir, as it is juxtaposed with the persistent restrictions of movement imposed upon Abrahams.

4.5 Conclusion

As works whose contexts predate the passing of the Separate Amenities Act (Act No. 49 of 1953), the texts discussed in this chapter draw on the specific situatedness of the littoral, located outside of regulated urban spaces, in order to present alternative realities. My focus has been to cast the littoral in juxtaposition with the spatial politics of the urban. This has elicited a reading in which the littoral seems to hold the promise of an escape from growing segregationist politics of the country, but can't fully escape the racist social structure. And finally, it offers a vantage point from which to see beyond social structure and imagine the nation differently.

I have suggested that for Abrahams the beach is indicative of the in-between moments of his life, and marks a moment in which he is offered a perspective with which to reflect on his

oppressed past and the impossibility of a free future. This moment, produced by his encounter with the littoral, is what results in his departure from South African shores. From the other side of the colour bar, Gordimer employs the littoral as a space free from segregationist legislation; however, the "half-worlds" she imagines are drawn almost inevitably into the undercurrent of prejudice, as her protagonists reveal an ebb and flow of complex racialised discourse. My aim has therefore been to discuss the littoral in early apartheid texts as a site in which the spatial politics pressing upon racialised bodies are uncovered only to be recovered in urban spaces. In this sense, the littoral offers both a brief respite or momentary sense of perspective from regulating politics, and reveals their inevitable return. The comparison between littoral and non-littoral spaces therefore offers an opportunity to explore how spatial legislation and racialised politics intersect and encroach upon not only freedom of movement, but, as I discuss in the next chapter, social interaction.

CROSS SHORE

CHAPTER FIVE

"High tide": Sites of Segregation in Apartheid Literature

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed representations of the littoral in early apartheid writings as a space against which the rising tide towards apartheid can be traced. This juxtaposition is reflected in the contradiction between the spatial politics of the littoral zone, as opposed to those of urban areas. My reading of the littoral was based on the historic reality that beaches fell outside of segregating laws, which enabled them to serve as sites free from rising segregationist legislation. This was no longer possible, however, after the induction of the Separate Amenities Act in 1953, as the Act ensured that beaches in South Africa became demarcated according to race.[68] If the history of South Africa's littoral zone is founded on waves of discrimination and ideologies of segregation, then the high tide of this history is reflected in apartheid legislature. After the National Party's victory in 1948, the country became inundated with a high amplitude of laws and amendments to Acts, placing more constringent pressures on bodies of colour. These laws were all intended to curtail the freedom of movement, economic prosperity, and equal political rights of the people classified as "non-white" under the apartheid regime.[69]

In this chapter, I continue my reading of the juxtaposition between littoral and non-littoral spaces and aim to show that littoral moments in apartheid literature elucidate this high tide of the racial control of spatial politics. I discuss select moments in Zoë Wicomb's *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* (1987) and Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds* (1982) to show that in the littoral

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[68] This statement is, of course, an oversimplification of the making of the apartheid beach which only came to full realisation in the 1970's. See Jayne M. Rogerson's article, "'Kicking Sand in the Face of Apartheid': Segregated Beaches in South Africa" for a detailed history of this process.

[69] As discussed in the previous chapter, while 1948 brought a drastic change in more conservative political governing, constringent spatial legislation had long been put into place by preceding ruling parties, segregating cities and urban spaces in addition to other inland spaces. See Maylam for an overview and critique of urban historical studies and available historiography.

space the characters are momentarily able to break through the surface of spatial regulation, before they are drawn back in.

Both *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* and *Mating Birds* engage a popular topic in apartheid-era literature: the contrast between the corrupting and oppressive spaces of the city and the romantic, pastoral countryside. In these texts, the countryside is disrupted by legislature that removes locals and forces them to find habitation and work elsewhere, often in urban spaces where they are sojourners. My analysis extends an exploration of these settings to include the littoral zone, which remains under examined in apartheid writing. My argument is that it is in their littoral settings that authors of apartheid literatures are able to show the pernicious and usurping nature of racial ideologies and segregationist laws.

Taking a tidalectic approach, this chapter adopts a form of analysis that mimics two terraqueous movements: the overwash and the drawback. In oceanography, the overwash refers to an influx in water and sediment movement that surpasses the boundaries of the beach space generally demarcated by dunes. In other words, the overwash refers to the water and sand that spills over the dunes, beyond the beach, and moves landwards. Significantly, the overwash generally occurs in stormy, turbulent conditions when the swash is at its highest levels.

In Chapter Two, I used "swash" as a littoral metaphor for the European discourses accompanying the arrival of settlers and colonists on the southern African shore and their subsequent movement inland. The emergence of apartheid as intrinsically embedded in this history of settlement and colonisation, and its aftermath, has been thoroughly studied.[70] In this sense, apartheid can be considered the high tide of these discourses and practices. Since overwash deposits are quasi-periodic and self-organise into a rhythmic pattern (Lazarus and Armstrong 363–366), I use the term as a conceptual metaphor to reflect not only the overspilling of these discourses during the high tide of apartheid with its turbulent political conditions, but also the methodical quality of apartheid discourses. I am therefore interested in the overwash of behavioural politics established in the littoral and taken to beyond its parameters.

Swash actions, however, also have a second component to them: the backwash, the drawing back of water offshore to return to the ocean, sucked under by the waves' undertow. This

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[70] See, for example, Nigel Worden's *The Making of Modern South Africa*.

component to the action of swash I read to metaphorically reflect the drawback of apartheid ideologies: their perniciousness that entraps people in overdetermined discourses. This motion of entrapment is what surfaces the tidalectic nature of apartheid politics.

I open this chapter with a discussion of Zoë Wicomb's short story, "You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town". I focus on the push and pull the narrator, Frieda Shenton, experiences in her navigation of littoral and non-littoral spaces: the beach at Cape Point, and the city space of Cape Town. Set during a period when political ideology was obsessed with policing the movement of bodies in spaces, Wicomb's collection offers a "series of linked narratives" (Attwell 7) that span 30 years of Frieda's life. Placed chronologically in the collection, each story, or chapter, depicts an important episode in her experience as "Coloured"[71] woman living under apartheid: from her childhood in Namaqualand to her student years in Cape Town, and eventual emigration to England. The consistent of movement and navigation in public spaces inform a reading of the littoral in the text as both challenging and succumbing to the backwash of apartheid ideologies, ultimately exposing their pernicious mechanisms.

I then analyse Nkosi's *Mating Birds*, a novel which chronicles the conviction of a black man, Ndi Sibiya, for the rape of Veronica Slater, a white woman he encounters on one of Durban's segregated beaches. Central to Sibiya's defence is the intimacy of their interactions, which are enacted upon the beach. In Sibiya's recollection, it is this intimacy that not only legitimises his pursuit of Slater, but that also gives cause to her desire to have sex with him. While I do not wish to render a reading ignorant of the concerning issues of sexual-and race-based-violence that the novel explores, I wish to focus instead on Nkosi's use of the littoral zone as a setting that invokes intimacy and troubles segregation. I argue that it is the overwash of intimacy from the beach to spaces situated outside the littoral that renders Sibiya and Slater's interaction in a similar light as that of characters in Nadine Gordimer's "The Catch": what is possible in the littoral space becomes impossible outside of it. As such, when intimacy is made possible in the littoral, and the overwash of this intimacy invites similar behaviour outside of the space, the backwash of apartheid discourses entraps Sibiya because it exposes the limits and impossibilities of his behaviour under apartheid ideology and legislation.

[71] In a 1998 book chapter titled "Shame and Identity: The Case of the Coloured in South Africa", Zoë Wicomb writes of the regrettable resurgence of the term "Coloured", purposefully spelled with a capital C, which conjured apartheid classificatory discourse.

5.2 "You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town"

Zoë Wicomb is one of South Africa's most celebrated authors. As Andrew Van der Vlies puts it, Wicomb "has a claim to be one of the most significant authors of late-apartheid and postapartheid South Africa" (Van der Vlies, "Zoë Wicomb's South African Essays", 3). Scholarship on Wicomb's works, both fiction and academic, are diverse and plentiful. On *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* alone over a hundred and fifty critical works have been produced, which engage questions as diverse as identity, race, history, art, the practice of writing, the archive, cosmopolitanism, and the transnational.[72]

As Wicomb's choice of title suggests, space is a persistent motif throughout the collection. The bildungs aspect of the collection is located in Frieda's growing awareness of her positionality within each of the spaces she occupies: her childhood in Namaqualand, her student years in Cape Town, her eventual emigration to England, and return visits to South Africa. Wicomb reminds us to "hear the variety of discourses" when looking for a "literary/cultural theory to suit the South African situation" ("To Hear" 36) and critics have responded by writing of the collection's representation of space and its relation to discourses of gender, class, race, and (inter)national identity. The network of city spaces in Wicomb's text has prompted Dorothy Driver, for example, to read *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* for its representation of a particular kind of cosmopolitanism, which she dubs "Cape Cosmopolitan" ("Zoë Wicomb and the Cape Cosmopolitan"). Teasing out the irony evoked by Wicomb's title, Rob Gaylard ("Home and Exile") considers the foreignness of home and the homeliness of foreign spaces for certain racialised subjects under a system like apartheid.[73] In a more material reading of space, Cóilín Parsons traces the attention to "space, scale and cartography as central motifs for understanding the relationship between the home and the world". These motifs, argues Parsons, "scale up feeling from the local and familiar to the international and unknown" (108).

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[72] See, inter alia, works by Kai Easton, Andrew van der Vlies, Micki Flockemann, Dorothy Driver, Meg Samuelson, and Stéphane Robolin.

[73] Sue Marais reads the short story cycle in terms of its engagement with space, dislocation, and identity, but considers form and genre and the benefits this allows for critical discourse ("Getting Lost in Cape Town"). Andrew van der Vlies considers form in his article, "'I'm Only Grateful That It's Not a Cape Town Book', or: Zoë Wicomb, Textuality, Propriety, and the Proprietary".

These readings pay particular attention to the landed spaces in Wicomb's work and thus take for granted the watery spaces present in her writings. To date, Meg Samuelson is the only scholar to offer a reading of the "surge of the sea" in Wicomb's short story in her discussion of what she terms "protean politics", a trope which comes to "muddy" location and autochthony via its transoceanic intimations ("Oceanic Histories" 543). My line of inquiry is situated somewhere between Parsons's metaphors of "cartographic literacy" and Samuelson's discussion of the significance of the sea in Wicomb's works. I am equally interested in the spatial politics present in *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*, specifically the littoral's presence in the detailed depictions of directions and or co-ordinated movements in the stories.

The littoral moment in Wicomb's text is located in the titular chapter of the collection. The story details Frieda's decision to have an abortion and opens with her on a bus in Rondebosch that will take her to Cape Town's central business district, where she will meet her partner Michael — white, male, upper-middle class — at the Post Office in Plein Street. Most of the immediate dramatic action is concerned with Frieda's bus journey. As the bus travels through the southern suburbs of Cape Town, Wicomb intersperses this spatial journey with Frieda's thoughts and memories, one of which is of an outing to Cape Point. As a space that offers respite, the littoral is represented in the story as succumbing to the backwash of apartheid ideologies. It is this rise and fall, or backwards and forwards tidal movement, that both uncovers and covers apartheid ideologies' pernicious mechanisms, which scholarship has thus far only located in the non-littoral spaces of Wicomb's fiction.

As I have noted, the title of the collection evokes notions of navigation within the city space of Cape Town, a space which permits only certain carefully regulated publics, both in terms of its pass laws, the Immorality Act, and Separate Amenities Act. To Frieda, this bus journey is accompanied by a spate of anxiety that stem from the variety of discourses her body, as Coloured and gendered female, must navigate. Frieda's mixed-race pregnancy, along with her light skin, English accent, and curly hair, are reminders of the complexity apartheid discourse brings to categories of identity. The only reason she is allowed entry into the abortion clinic is because the woman, who only helps "decent women, educated women", not "coloured girls [who are] forward, terrible types" (86), is blinded by Frieda's accent, her "educated voice", and therefore mistakes Frieda as white. Frieda disrupts the boundaries of apartheid categories whose constructions depend on clear bodily markers of race. Her pregnancy compounds discourses of race with class and gender; the reader is often reminded of the socio-political chasm between the realities she (a coloured woman) and Michael (a white man) experience.

The result is represented as a feeling of disorientation, alienation, and unbelonging, all of which Wicomb transcribes onto Frieda's movement through Cape Town's spaces. These complexities in apartheid identities are eventually what disrupt the littoral scene in the collection.

As the bus moves along its route, Frieda thinks back to an outing she and Michael went on to Cape Point. Cape Point is located outside of the city; this renders it, at least supposedly, removed from the city's pressures. Michael, Frieda informs the reader, would always find somewhere for them to "be quite alone" (84) by leading them down "armpits of valleys" and "[d]angerous climbs led by the roar of the sea [that take them] to blue bays into which [they] drop from impossible cliffs" (84). They "do not fear the police with their torches" in these spaces. It is for this reason that they go to Cape Point: to be free from the surveillant eye of the Immorality Act, which prohibits their relationship. In Cape Town, the city's space is so imposing in its regulation of movement that Frieda and Michael need to plan the time of their rendezvous meticulously to coincide with rush hour traffic so that the crowds of people anxious to get home hide the fact that they are together.

In the littoral, by contrast, they can be alone. On a deserted beach, Frieda and Michael "laugh[ed] fondly at the thought of a child" (83) and huddled close together with his hand on her belly. For Michael, this moment is a romantic one; he even asks Frieda to marry him by solemnly writing "will you marry me" in the sand. But Wicomb is relentless in her careful interrogation of the variety of apartheid discourses that encode and usurp South African spaces, even terraqueous ones, and disrupts the respite the littoral should offer.

As Frieda looks out towards the shoreline, she describes Cape Point as the place "where the oceans meet and part. The Indian and the Atlantic fighting for their separate identities" (83). This description of Cape Point is entrenched in romantic tourism discourse[74] and recalls the history of the Cape as oceanic trade network. Samuelson writes of this moment as indicative of the "surge of the sea" in Wicomb's work, a motif that she argues adapts Derek Walcott's famous casting of the sea as history to a South African context ("Oceanic Histories" 543–544). Samuelson argues that "[c]onceptualising the sea as archive thus provides a historical perspective from which to counter, simultaneously, imperialist and nativist histories" ("Oceanic Histories" 544). To make this claim, Samuelson offers an analysis of the above

[74] A visit to Cape Point today reveals signage and marketing banners still proclaiming the same statement. The meeting point between these two oceans is more likely to happen at the southern-most tip of Africa, Cape Agulhas.

moment in the short story, which she reads as "record[ing] the multiple transoceanic migrations that comprise the national polity".[75] "As a fluid archive", writes Samuelson, "the sea casts up into official, land-centred narratives the flotsam of lost, scattered and repressed histories" (543). Implicit in Samuelson's argument, but never addressed directly, is a tidalectic historiography which never fully emerges because Samuelson does not address the shoring of the sea in the littoral environment. A littoral perspective would mediate sea and land and therefore address the surfacing of alternative histories, as well as its disruption when considered in an apartheid context. It is precisely such a reading that I argue for here.

Like Samuelson, I consider the Atlantic and Indian ocean histories that Wicomb conjures in her representation of the sea as surfacing "the journeys, connections and unspeakable traumas that land-based histories — whether of the European, masculinist perspective, or of the post-apartheid nation-state — have cast out" ("Oceanic Histories" 545). This is the forwards motion of tidalectics. I agree with Samuelson that Wicomb recedes these histories and resists in producing a counter-narrative ("Oceanic Histories" 546) — the backwards motion of tidalectics. Key here is that Frieda writes a poem about a different beach, named Logiesbaai, which she and Michael had also visited. In her poem are "lines about warriors charging out of the sea, assegais gleaming in the sun, the beat of tom-toms riding the waters, the throb in carious cavities of the rocks" (83). Charging out of the sea is thus a rendition of an autochthonous history, one that is evoked in the imagery of the assegais and tom-toms.

This moment is comparable to my reading of Schreiner's littoral setting in Chapter Three since it, too, marks an alternative history that is embedded the very environment it surfaces from reverberating in the littoral rocks. If the littoral is read as a space that produces a tidalectic history, then these alternative histories are not meant to be taken in their disruptive or challenging sense, but rather as folding back upon themselves. That is, if apartheid is taken to be the production of the Atlantic and Indian ocean slave routes that accompanied a long history of colonial territorialisation and subsequent segregation, the folding back of these histories upon themselves questions the foundation of the history they produced. Indeed, if the foundation of these histories is questioned, then Frieda's own construction as "Coloured subject" within them is shown to be similarly tenuous.

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[75] Drawing on Kelly Ward's "Tavern of the Seas", Samuelson reads Cape Point as speaking to the oceanic network of slave trade and colonising routes, and the histories which inform the settlement and construction of the people who were to be termed "coloured".

Yet, as much as tides disrupt, they also smooth over. And as such a tidalectic reading, especially during apartheid, becomes washed over by its own tidal nature. Frieda concedes that "it was not a good poem. It was puzzling and I wonder why I had shown [Michael] these words that did not even make sense to me. I tore the paper into bits" (85), obliterating the counter-narrative her poem could produce. The puzzling words that do not make sense to Frieda are rendered senseless in an apartheid discourse that refuses to release her from its ideologies and inscriptions.

It is in this littoral scene that Wicomb inserts careful reminders of the story's political context. The scene is filled with an ironic ambivalence, as Frieda's experience and memory come to contradict Michael's. There are details of the day, for example, which escape his attention, such as the scarf Frieda has tied around her head to hide the racial marker of her hair. Moreover, Michael is unable to understand the full extent of the title of the poem, "Love at Logiesbaai (Whites Only)", she later writes, and admits that "much of the subtlety [of the poem] escapes him" (83). Yet, even the most elementary reader will recognise that the title recalls both the Separate Amenities Act and the Immorality Act. The ambiguity of the qualification in parentheses casts Logiesbaai as space for white people only, in the same way that love is reserved for same-race couples only. Thus, for Frieda, love is not a liberty or privilege she can enjoy, at least not across the colour bar. That Michael does not register the subtext of the title is indicative of the privileged ignorance he occupies as "white".

This apartheid reality usurps the language of the littoral in other instances as well. The sentimental notion of the oceans' meeting and parting are undercut by Wicomb's description of them "fighting for their separate identities" (83). As she looks across the ocean, Frieda remembers the saying, "if you shut one eye and focus the other carefully, the line separating the two oceans may rear drunkenly but remains ever clear and hair-fine" (83). From this line the reader can extrapolate the loss of identity Frieda experiences and her desire for independence.[76]

When Michael proposes to her, Frieda is unable to voice an answer. Instead, she silently draws a heart around the words in the sand. This action signals Frieda's awareness that their

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[76] Frieda's desire for independence manifests later in the story in a different memory of the moment they found out she was pregnant. By this time "Michael had long since stopped loving me" (82) and she suggests that his offer to marry her then, as opposed to this moment at Cape Point, was out of a sense of duty. To her, the idea of marriage to Michael realises in a vision of a wedding dress: "the slow shower of ashes over yards of diaphanous tulle, the moth wings tucked back with delight as their tongues whisked the froth of white lace" (82).

union is only as momentary as the oceans meeting and parting; it, like Michael's proposal written in the sand, will eventually be washed over and swept away. In this sense, the littoral here comes to register the simultaneous washing over of histories that would disrupt apartheid's foundational claim to racial purity and the overwash of regulating spatial politics.

Thus, while the littoral zone in *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* provides a respite from the regulating spatial politics of the apartheid city, it cannot fully protect Frieda from its racial terrors. While the littoral offers momentary solitude from the apartheid world, these moments remain fleeting, and ultimately succumb to a backwash of apartheid ideologies.

The littoral setting, therefore, exposes the extreme measures the apartheid government went to as a means of regulating the access and mobility of "non-whites" to certain spaces. Despite the seclusion offered by Cape Point's beaches and moving shores, Frieda's behaviour remains regulated: her behaviour in the space, and her belonging to it, is different to Michael's, for example when she has to cover her hair. The littoral thus exposes a perniciousness when it comes to apartheid ideologies of space and race. It is a perniciousness that complicates the union of people across racial, class, and gender divisions. Frieda cannot marry Michael and even though the thought of having his child is a fond one, this moment is shown to be sentimental and, eventually, unrealistic. Their relationship is overdetermined by the complex intersection of race, class, and gender discourses in which Frieda's identity is represented as set adrift in turbulent political conditions. The surety with which Michael is able to navigate the littoral environment is contradicted with the disorientation her body experiences.

5.3 Mating Birds

Of all the settings that feature in *Mating Birds,* the most prominent is the beach, for it is here that Sibiya and Slater meet and mutedly interact. The nature of Sibiya and Slater's exchange, and the legitimacy of its narration, has been a point of contestation for many critics writing about Nkosi's novel. Lucy Graham argues, for example, that there is a tendency amongst South African critics to "judge the novel by the standards of literary realism" (Graham, "Bathing Area" 152). As such, most critics overlook the setting of this encounter. On this point, Andre Brink's "An Ornithology of Sexual Politics: Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds*" errs in its concern with the salacious rhetoric of the novel in the "persistent fascination with the

subject" (1) of interracial desire.[77] Josephine Dodd is scathing in her critique of *Mating Birds* in which she argues that "the reader has to sit through someone's male sexual fantasies, or male conception of women's sexual fantasies" (117). Dodd is critical of reviews of the novel as expecting the reader to "identify an evil social environment as the ultimate cause of the protagonist's aberrant behaviour" (Gates in Dodd 123), as well as for its normalising of gender relations when reading "the rape of a white woman as the expression of black anger" (123). However, the latter point is the most problematic for Dodd, for to believe Sibiya's account of the events, and to believe that their sexual interaction was consensual, would mean that "the reader also has to accept his sexual politics: you have to believe that she wanted it, that she asked for it, and so on and so on" (125).[78]

Lucy Graham, on the other hand, locates her analysis in the fictional properties of Sibiya's memoir and the narrative quality of memory, and focuses on the silencing effects apartheid ideology has on the legitimisation of truth. Graham reads Sibiya's "urgency of desire" as bonded to the "yearning for liberation" (163). She therefore argues that "the novel turns a mirror on the diseased mind of apartheid itself, and points to the difficulty of accessing 'truth' in a context where institutionalized racism has invaded the most intimate of spaces" (Graham, "Bathing Area" 151).[79] The bulk of the scholarship on *Mating Birds* is concerned, then, with ambivalence, be it the ambivalence in the novel's language, its central plot device, or the narration of the protagonist. At present, Meg Samuelson ("Literary Inscriptions") remains the only scholar to argue that littoral setting functions as the central space that elicits this ambivalence.

While Lucy Graham describes the "pivotal encounter on the beach in which [Sibiya and Slater] exchange a glance that acknowledges, rather than denies, each other's subjectivity" (220), she does not use the opportunity to comment on the beach setting itself. The recognition of mutual subjectivity is the crux of Graham's argument, but she does not

[77] Which Brink attributes this to the fact that it is "well-known several of the main actors of the Drum generation were notorious among their contemporaries for their pursuit of white women" ("An Ornithology" 2).

[78] Lynne Hanley is also critical of Nkosi's representation of the Sibiya/Slater relationship. To Hanley, "Though Nkosi's text challenges certain apartheid representations of the black man's desire, it indulges others, and it mounts its challenge to apartheid at the expense of women" (194).

[79] María Ximena Maceri ("Language and Silence") and Muchativugwa Liberty Hove ("The Sentence(d) Story-Teller") are two critics who analyse the language of the novel and its ambivalent nature: respectively, the contradiction between language and silence, and the slippage between the grammatical and legalistic sentence.

consider that it is the space of the segregated beach that stages such a mutuality. Lindy Stiebel ("Lewis Nkosi's Durban: An Indian Ocean city in flux") and Stephan Meyer ("Lewis Nkosi on black Atlanticism and (southern) African writing") offer oceanic-themed engagement with Nkosi's work. Stiebel locates her reading, however, within Indian-Ocean discourses, while Meyer notes the black Atlantic rhetoric (*pace* Gilroy) in Nkosi's oeuvre. Samuelson is equally of the opinion that ambivalence is at the centre of Nkosi's narrative strategy. She argues that this ambivalence arises from the "shifting sands" of the novel's beach setting. This setting affords the vacillations "between the positions of black man and white woman" which "seem part of the point of the novel as it throws these very categories into crisis" ("Literary Inscriptions" 116). Samuelson's reading is provocative and her analysis of the beach setting can be teased out to engage a more complex discussion of the significance of the littoral space in the novel.

My reading of *Mating Birds* takes inspiration from Samuelson's argument for the ambivalence a beach setting affords, but also it draws on Nkosi's own words in his preface:

> I wanted to write the story of an obsession in which the sea, the sun and bodies on the beach combine to form an image…in which even the weather plays its part...I wanted to write about the gaze, about the pleasures and the risks of looking and being looked at and the complicity between the subject and object of that gaze. ("Preface" 5-6)

Here, Nkosi frames his novel within a discourse of "obsession" and "the complicity between the subject and the object". From this, it is easy to understand why critics find it hard to move beyond the rape which takes place in the text. However, in the above extract, Nkosi clearly makes an argument for the significance of the beach as setting to his novel. This setting, I argue, is intrinsic to the analysis of the novel's discourse on race and gender and draws attention to the images which function as some of the novel's central tropes: sea, sun, and bodies on a beach.

I argue that the beach is a space of intimacy, especially since beaches suggest intimacy in the form of barely clothed bodies interacting and frequently lying in close proximity to each other. Following Nkosi, I consider "the gaze", specifically as performed in a beach space. As such, I explore Nkosi's littoral space in three ways. First, I focus on the intimacy of the gaze that the beach as setting invites, which I argue leads to apartheid's inability to regulate through its spatial legislation. This limitation renders the gaze ambiguous and creates an overwash of ambiguity, troubling the reader's surety with which Sibiya is cast as criminal.

Scholars have written of the beach as a specific kind of social and cultural space that challenges conventional practices of bodily consciousness, looking, and intimacy through the rubric of the nudist beach. Though the beach setting of *Mating Birds* is not a nudist beach,[80] I want to tease out some of the critical threads that scholars mention, as these will inform my own reading of the text.

Martina Löw writes, for example, that "[s]ociety's discovery of sunbathing brought with it a step-by-step process of baring the body" and that beaches put bodies on display and invite "looking" (123). On the question of bodies in social spaces, specifically nude beaches, Ruth Barcan poses some useful questions. Barcan opens her article by stating that it is impossible for the female body to achieve a state of bodily unself-consciousness. This idea follows Laura Mulvey's famous article on bodies and looking, in which she writes that "[i]n their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed [...] so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" (19).[81] Barcan's interest lies in nude beaches as spaces that elicit the presence of embodiment as un-conscious bodies. In other words, nude beaches allow for bodies to co-exist in a space in which they are not conscious of conventional physical markers. Barcan considers the space of the nude beach as affording women an escape from body awareness and from being the object of the male gaze. She then questions if "we are well used to thinking of the act of looking as almost inherently invasive or powerful" (305), whether it is possible to achieve a state of bodily unself-consciousness that escapes being the object of a stranger's gaze (304). "Must the feeling of liberation", she continues, "still always be understood as involving an escape from the body?" (305).

Barcan's questions are enticing when taking Nkosi's preface into consideration. Nkosi posits the concerns of his novel within a discourse outside of racialisation. He wants to write about bodies, not racialised bodies. More specifically, he wants to write about bodies looking and being looked at and the pleasures and risks involved in these acts. Of course, these concerns become particularly troubled (and troubling) when placed, as they are in the novel, in the apartheid context. The novel thereby presents the following questions: Are bodies able to escape their overdetermined racialised discourses? Is there a space which allows for the escape of this discourse? If so, what are its particularities? The following analysis is framed

[80] Slater does remove her top and, according to Sibiya, offer glimpses of her body. Be that as it may, the moment speaks to both a kind of erotics in the interaction, and a power move of sorts.
[81] Mulvey's statement has been critiqued, by Mulvey herself amongst others, for an oversimplification of the binary of male/female bodies.

by these questions and considers whether Nkosi's representation of the littoral setting offers potential responses. I argue that it is the beach setting which allows for intimacy through looking without touching, especially in a segregated apartheid environment. That is to say, Sibiya and Slater cannot touch, they can only look, and the beach setting is perfect for this because beaches invite looking through their legitimisation of bodies on display.

Nkosi's narrative strategy, then, is to establish a form of intimacy, of closeness, which apartheid law cannot control despite the segregated space in which this occurs. The beach is necessarily introduced as a space of stark separateness and inequality; as the ideal stage for this strategy. To this end, Nkosi opens his novel with a description of the beach as a playground for tourists. It is cast as a space of white leisure, which can be accessed by the economically privileged. We learn, for example, that sea bathers frequently leave behind the "occasional wristwatch, an expensive ring, or a finely embroidered handkerchief" (*Mating Birds* 12), a potential form of income for the "African youths who combed the beach every day for lost or discarded articles" (12). "Not infrequently", Nkosi adds, "the tourists leave behind them an even worthier trophy — a young body lying spent and motionless on the warm white sands to be gazed at by us, the silent forbidden crowds of non-white boys" (12).

This opening description immediately establishes the segregated beach, spatially, racially, and economically: the "non-white" boys access the beach for the purpose of finding articles to sell that were left behind by beach goers who can afford to go on holiday. The "forbidden crowds" of the boys are juxtaposed with the carefree ease the tourists come and go. Read in light of Nkosi's preface, this scene plays a key role in positioning the gaze within the segregated beach setting. The body remains a body, but the boys' marginality is exposed because their race and their economic status mean they can only operate on the periphery of the beach.

Nkosi's description of the beach sets up Sibiya's visit and meeting with Slater as a point of comparison. Of his first encounter with Slater, Sibiya tells us that

> That day on the beach, when I came across the English girl, I saw only what White Authority had forbidden me to see. Another human being. A woman with a body that was soft and round and desirable. (14)

Initially, this description resonates with Barcan's idea of the unself-conscious body, a description of the body unmade in terms of its racial marker or gender. It is merely a body cast upon the sand, "Another human being". The qualification that follows, however, changes

the description of the body to evoke desire. The assertion of the body as being another human establishes the humanity of the one who looks, a black man whose desire towards a white woman has been proscribed by apartheid laws. The description is an assertion of his status as human being and therefore his right to desire.

Intrinsic to the workings of Nkosi's narrative is the gaze and the intimacy it invites. According to Sibiya, he and Slater would regularly, almost intentionally, allow their beach excursions to coincide. They would lie together on the same stretch of coast, but on different beaches that are separated by a small stream and the beach apartheid signs. We learn that it is the littoral setting that invites the possibility of gazing, as Sibiya declares that "on the beach you placed yourself in such a manner as to obtain the maximum view of her sunbathing. In the end you endeavoured to get as near her body as decency [...] would permit" (61). Sibiya meticulously details the position and description of Slater's body. At first, these descriptions show an awareness of the proximity and general nakedness of her form:

> Separated only by a small stream from the non-white section of the beach, the girl was lying flat on her stomach, her brown head sheltered in the crook of her arms…her skimpy bikini covered very little of her generous curves…once or twice when she shifted her body on the towel I was able to glimpse a pale wink of flesh from under her compressed bosom. (14)

Nkosi gradually develops the descriptions of Slater's body as Sibiya's gaze becomes almost microscopic. We initially read that Slater "lay there, heavy, slack, motionless, roasting in the sun, the damp hair clinging to the nape of her neck" (15) before Sibiya's gaze zooms in to note the "fine pores of her skin" and "the red roots of her brown hair" (15). In a moment reminiscent of Gordimer's description of the Indian fisherman discussed in Chapter Four, Nkosi applies a similar dissecting lens to the view of Slater walking by:

> She would walk so close to where I lay on the sand I could see the fine pores of her skin on her shaved, gliding legs, smooth like polished wood. I could even sniff the gusts of her perfume emanating from her body as she sauntered past me. (99)

The strategy here is to move beyond discourses of skin colour. Like Gordimer's piecemeal description of the fisherman, the gaze here falls on a body in bits and pieces; it does not present Slater as a whole, a human, a woman, and denies her personhood. Although, one could point out that the tone here is vastly different to Gordimer's scene because of the positionality of the one who is narrating. In "The Catch", Gordimer utilises this focalisation

to underscore the gaze of her white protagonists and to exhibit their conceited privilege. Nkosi's politics are inverted. What happens when the Other gazes in this fashion? Here, when the Ndiya is gazing, it elicits the rhetoric of "Black Peril".[82]

These descriptions are framed by the beach and the bodies that lie in and upon it. "[H]emmed in and protected by all the laws that keep the races apart in our country" (111) Sibiya is conscious that he could not approach Slater, nor speak to her, lest his conduct appear salacious. This is especially true in light of apartheid legislation: "so far as the law was concerned, it was enough for people of the two races to 'conspire' to break the Immorality Act for the courts to convict, even if the couple had not actually committed the sexual act itself" (99). "Gazing", then, becomes the one form of interaction that is able to transcend these legislative restrictions: "[they] *could* feast [their] eyes upon each other's bodies but [they] could say nothing to each other to express what [they] felt" (99; my emphasis).

The overwash of their beach encounters spill into other moments in the novel where the characters interact outside of the littoral space. The intimacy generated by the littoral washes over into non-littoral spaces, rendering their encounters in this space ambiguous. In Chapter Four I similarly conducted a contrapuntal reading of encounter in littoral and non-littoral spaces, arguing that littoral spaces produce a distinct set of behaviours that are troubled when conducted in a similar fashion outside of the littoral zone. The crux of the distinction lies in the non-segregated beach. In Nkosi's novel beaches are segregated and, as such, if an intimacy is established in the beach space it should logically wash over into a segregated, albeit non-littoral space. The reader is inclined to read Sibiya and Slater's interaction in a similar light as their interaction on the beach due to the overwash of intimacy.

In one such moment Sibiya and Slater, "when leaving the beach by separate routes, collided at the entrance of the small tobacco shop at the end of the Esplanade" (89). Their eyes meet once more and Sibiya speculates whether the game is up:

> in the girl's blushes, in her shifting guilty eyes veiled by long fluttering eyelashes, in her wide distorted mouth from whose trembling lips a sound like a wordless murmur seemed to struggle for utterance, they would have seen a surprised embarrassed

[82] The term "Black Peril" as Gareth Cornwell explains, "served as the signifier for a range of emotions, ranging from sexual jealousy over the seduction of white women by black men to a general apprehension of native rebellion, 'Black Peril' was most commonly understood to refer to the threat of black rape" (441).

> meeting of lovers who were visibly vexed by the necessity to conceal their knowledge of each other from the world. (90)

Evident here is the same microscopic gaze that deepens to intimacy or, indeed, perversity, the focus on minute detail and the language of the gaze that Nkosi creates in the littoral space. This overwash of intimacy leads Sibiya to follow Slater to her bungalow one day where they make physical contact for the first time. Sibiya recalls how

> I followed her up the dunes into the secluded beach-side cottage and watched her while she unwrapped herself like a gift and lay naked, fully stretched out on the bed with the door wide open. I trace the sequence of events from the very first day that I clapped my eyes on the girl lying spent and motionless on a lonely stretch of Durban beach. (27)

Key here is that Sibiya almost directly equates Slater's position on the bed to when she was lying on the beach: motionless, waiting. This overwash of interaction causes him to enter her bungalow and intercourse follows. Sibiya's account of the event is that it happened consensually, but Slater's testimony at his trial offers a conflicting version; she argues that he raped her, which he denies. The court finds Sibiya guilty and sentences him to "death by hanging" (134). For Sibiya, the surety with which he is sentenced is owed to a

> nagging suspicion that the real point of this trial was not the rape of a girl but the colour of the alleged rapist as much as that of the victim…everyone except [his] lawyer talks around what is the main issue, which, though unspoken, remains at the very centre of the trial, a festering sore contaminating the air with its odour of racial conspiracy. (29)

The issue with *Mating Birds* is Nkosi's use of Sibiya as first-person narrator, for the reader is never offered an account of Slater's subjectivity. It is always mediated and interpreted by Sibiya, which renders the conflicting accounts of their sexual interaction one-sided and therefore uncertain. The result is a complex navigation between the intersecting politics in the novel and the reader can only be left with feelings of uncertainty and ambivalence. While ambiguity seems to be the whole point of the novel, the ambivalence it generates is owed to the beach-setting as comprising the bulk of Sibiya and Slater's interaction. It is not just a conceptual reading of the beach as an ambivalent space that troubles the reading experience, but also the ambivalent social regulations the beach as space affords. In my reading I have argued that this ambivalence stems from the intimacy of the gaze, an intimacy that Nkosi is

able to cultivate in the littoral space. This intimacy transcends both the external and internal segregating aims of apartheid legislature, and thereby effectively destabilises and challenges apartheid's laws and limits. In turn, the overwash of this destabilisation troubles the surety in which the court, and apartheid ideology, is able to cast Sibiya as agent of "black peril". The novel therefore critiques an apartheid state that immediately and with certainty casts the black man as a violent threat to the white woman.

This certainty is pre-empted in Nkosi's representation of the apartheid government's own ambivalence in regulating its segregating laws. Sibiya tells the reader that he has to

> explain that the beach is not beyond the reach of the flying squad, but the presence of so many white citizens, white people who may have been perfectly happy to vote for laws of harassment against blacks but who, having voted, have no stomach for witnessing the manner in which these laws are carried out, has an inhibiting effect upon the police. Beatings, torture are all right, necessary, even inevitable, but everyone understand that such cruelty must be inflicted on the victim out of sight of the public gaze, especially out of the sight of the hordes of foreign tourists, who, chancing to witness such arrests and beatings, may carry away with them a less than cheerful picture of our sunny South Africa. (98)

Here, the littoral space of the beach exposes the internal hypocrisies that obtain in the application of apartheid laws. These ambiguities, present in the arbitrary nature in which the laws are executed, trouble the certainty of the execution of others. And yet, despite these hypocrisies and ambiguities, the "net of segregation and apartheid" (Samuelson, "Literary Inscriptions" 130) has been manufactured to prosecute certain racialised bodies while releasing other white ones.

In a moment reminiscent of the concluding scene in Peter Abrahams's *Tell Freedom*,[83] Sibiya relates his desire to leave South Africa via the many ships plying the Durban shoreline:

> After my expulsion from the university for rebellious conduct, for insubordination and "gross discipline", I had taken to loitering on this beach, watching the big ocean liners streaming out of the bay for distant shores of Europe, America, and the Far East. In

[83] Perhaps not by accident: Nkosi's widow, in her acceptance speech of his posthumously awarded honorary doctorate at Durban University of Technology, relates that Peter Abrahams's memoir was the first book Nkosi ever bought and that it had a significant impact on him.

> my mood of profound despondency I was thinking, planning and dreaming of escape from South Africa, from the life of oppression and wretched exploitation. The girl, too, who appeared so unexpectedly on this strand of beach was perhaps part of this dream of escape. Life plays us so many jokes. (36)

Like Abrahams, Sibiya similarly sits on the Durban beach and dreams of a life outside of South Africa in which "life had a meaning that transcended race and colour" (*Tell Freedom* 370). To Abrahams, the view of the ships from the beach meant that "The long night was over. This was the moment of departure" (370). While Abrahams is able to walk "briskly down to the docks" and have "all [his] dreams walk with [him]" (370), Sibiya is trapped by the longshore drift of apartheid legislation, from which he, unlike Abrahams, cannot escape. The beach setting in *Mating Birds* is replete with many ambiguities that destabilise the rigidity of apartheid legislature and at times transcend its segregating aims. Yet, even as the novel troubles the surety with which the political climate of the time was able to brand its protagonist's actions, the high tide of apartheid prevails.

5.4 Conclusion

The texts discussed in this chapter show that authors writing in an apartheid context construct littoral settings as spaces outside of regulated life. The respite they offer, however, is fleeting, as the tidal quality of the littoral erases as much as it disrupts. The littoral makes visible the pernicious and insidious quality of apartheid legislature in its inability to fully evade its panopticon gaze. The littoral zone's lawful spatial segregation under the Separate Amenities Act is therefore imbued with an ironic tension: the setting, due to its fluidity and non-fixity, should resist rigid segregating practices, and yet its fluidity also erases the potentially disruptive practices against the apartheid ideology that transpire within it.

I considered the littoral moment in "You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town" to invite an analysis of a tidalectic history that recedes back onto itself. This folding of histories back onto themselves suggests that counter-narratives are rendered senseless in a context of overdetermined racialised discourse. My analysis traced the representation of the Indian and Atlantic Ocean in Wicomb's story in order to surface the histories of their respective slave trading routes. These slaving histories, I argued, contributed to the formation of colonial practices and ideologies that ultimately resulted in the high tide of racist apartheid politics. As a product of this persisting narrative, Frieda's rendering of her visit to Cape Point in a

poem that showcases autochthonous counter-narratives in its imagery is smoothed over by her inability to write the poem effectively. Instead, she rips it up. This act serves as metaphor for the littoral as space that both generates and smooths over the counter-discourses it tidalectically produces. Thus, the littoral renders visible simultaneously the washing over of disruptive histories that destabilise apartheid's foundational claim to racist politics and the overwash of these politics from the beach to the city.

I considered the beach setting in *Mating Birds* as similarly producing a washing over of apartheid politics and the washover of these politics into other spaces — a reading I approached through the intimacy that transpires in the littoral despite its segregation under apartheid law. Despite apartheid legislation's attempts at regulating spatial mobility in littoral spaces, and thereby prohibiting interracial contact, these attempts are rendered impotent because forms of intimacy, in the form of the act of gazing, are nonetheless achieved. However, this transcendence is ultimately caught in the backwash of apartheid laws as the behaviour of Nkosi's characters is determined as criminal the moment they step outside of the littoral space. Here, outside of the beach, the intimacy established in the littoral space is recast as criminal within an overdetermined racist discourse.

CROSS SHORE

Chapter Six

"Slack Water": The Human as Category

6.1 Introduction

Chapters Four and Five read littoral spaces in South African literature through a comparative lens. The aim of both these chapters was to read for the littoral's role in challenging apartheid ideologies' makings of categories of persons. In this chapter, I shift my focus on racialised discourses to consider how littoral literature engages the human as a category of the environment.

The tide of South African politics turned in 1994, the year the country's first democratic elections were held. Post-apartheid constructions of national identities were often concerned with attempts at unifying diversity: acknowledging the very many differences in social identities occupied by the peoples of the country, while collecting them under one blanket term of "South African". I have titled this chapter "slack water" after the term used to denote the state of oceanic tides before they turn. "Slack water" is therefore meant to suggest not only the turning tide in national politics after the dawn of democracy but also a turn in littoral literatures to a growing preoccupation with ecological concerns and engagement with categories of persons.[84]

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[84] I am aware that personhood is not necessarily limited to humans, but for the purposes of this chapter I limit my scope to people. See Elisa Aaltola's article, "Personhood and Animals", for a considered mapping of the different arguments regarding animal personhood. Gary Francione's *Animals, Property, and the Law* critiques jurisprudence that limits "personhood" to juridical subjects. On this point, there is currently an on-going case for granting Happy, an elephant in Bronx Zoo, New York, personhood so that may move to a sanctuary that can treat her depression (Fobar, "A Person or a Thing?"). Indigenous people's relationship to water has had a significant impact on respective countries' conception of environmental personhood. For example, the Whanganui River in New Zealand has been granted rights of personhood ("New Zealand River"). In 2017 the high court in Uttarakhand granted legal personhood rights to the Rivers Ganges and Yamuna, India. The decision was subsequently appealed by the state government (Westerman, "Should Rivers"). Another petition to grant the rivers the "status of 'legal person or entity'" has been filed at the Indian Supreme Court (Kumar, "Rivers Ganga and Yamuna").

In this chapter I analyse David Livingstone's poetry collection, *A Littoral Zone* (1993) and Zakes Mda's novel, *The Whale Caller* (2005). I attend to their engagement with environmental concerns through the formal qualities of their writings and the employment of a littoral setting through which these concerns are projected. The chapter opens with a reflection on how eco-criticism as a literary-critical method offers a particular understanding of narrative structure. I then consider which literary modes might be suitable for offering imaginative engagements with environmental concerns. On this point, I turn to scholars' arguments on eco-poetry and allegory as useful genres for ecological consideration. In the next section I discuss Douglas Livingstone's *A Littoral Zone* (1993), a text written during the high tide of apartheid and a year before the democratic election. The ecological nature of Livingstone's work is evident in the poet's consistent conceptualisation of the human as organism within the earthly biosphere, that is, the human as category within a larger biosystem.

I also analyse Zakes Mda's *The Whale Caller* (2005) from a littoral position. I read Mda's novel through an ecocritical lens to analyse the environmental awareness of the text by focusing on its depiction of the effects of human activity on natural surroundings. Of particular interest to me is the novel's setting: the beaches of Hermanus where the Whale Caller courts a whale. Following Elizabeth DeLoughrey's argument for "allegories of the Anthropocene", I read this romantic relationship as an allegory that considers whether the novel's most potent critique might be for the environment to be left alone.

6.2 Tidalectics and the Anthropocene

In her most recent book, *Allegories of the Anthropocene* (2019), Elizabeth DeLoughrey employs tidalectics as "a multiscalar method of telescoping between space (planet) and place (island)" (2). DeLoughrey explains that scholarship on the Anthropocene tends to come from the geophysical and social sciences, and thus overlooks the insights offered on ecocritical issues from the arts and humanities. In cases where scholarship *does* look towards the Anthropocene from a cultural perspective, contributions from the global south are ignored or missed, and focus is placed "almost exclusively on the viewpoints from the global north", which favours "literary forms such as the novel and white (settler) cultural production" as genres for representation (2). This leads DeLoughrey to argue that

> [t]he lack of engagement with postcolonial and Indigenous perspectives has shaped Anthropocene discourse to claim the *novelty* of crisis rather than being attentive to the historical *continuity* of dispossession and disaster caused by empire. (2)

To understand the Anthropocene as an epoch requires taking a longue durée approach to the history of the planet and humans' interaction with it and their effects on it. This is undeniably intertwined with (neo)colonial capitalism. DeLoughrey therefore argues that studies of the Anthropocene would benefit from contributions by the global south's cultural imaginary, where indigenous voices take recognition of the complex intersection of place and space on a local to global scale. This is owed to global south countries' colonial histories and *continued* post-colonial struggles. As DeLoughrey puts it, "[d]ue to their enormous scales and their discursive histories, the figures of nonhuman nature, the human, Earth, and now the Anthropocene share a universalizing geologic" (*Allegories* 2).

As postcolonial method, tidalectics is a way of grounding what Paul Gilroy refers to as "high altitude theory". [85] Tidalectics offers DeLoughrey a way of bringing "past and present into multiscalar relation" (*Allegories* 134). The question of representation then becomes pertinent since the Anthropocene is both material and representational (3). In response, DeLoughrey offers allegory as a generative cultural form for representing Anthropocenic narratives.

Inspired by DeLoughrey's work, I employ this kind of zooming tidalectic lens from the shore in my analysis of Livingstone and Mda's texts. I use this method because it allows for me to move from locally specific place to a global scale. It is also useful on a metaphorical level, as tidalectics allows me to move from the public to the personal. This idea is best illustrated with an example from Livingstone's writings. On the final page of *A Littoral Zone*, Livingstone concludes his collection of poetry with the following note:

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[85] "[H]igh-altitude theorizing" is a term Paul Gilroy recently used in a lecture in which he challenges popular theorising of the Anthropocene to accommodate in its concept of humanism as an engagement with the "most dynamic of racializing systems" (8). To Gilroy,

> Critical interest in the sovereign racial orders, hierarchies and ontologies that have assembled the work in raciological and colonial patterns, connect directly with the central issue of the human — the conceptual integrity of that vexed category and the problems that link orders of domination among human beings to their various exploitative and extractive relationships with nature. That perennially unfashionable and vulgar connection is intrinsic to the possibility of any new humanism. (8)

> The littoral zone — that mysterious border that shifts restlessly between land and sea — has, to me, always reflected that blurred and uneasy divide between humanity's physical and psychic elements. (62)

Livingstone's description here of the littoral as a metaphor for humanity's divide between our physical experience of the world and our spiritual affinity for it is therefore a critique of a disconnect. His writings showcase an understanding that our physical home carries a moral responsibility — that if we are not motivated by scientific arguments for environmental preservation, then spiritual, moral, and ethical ones may be more effective.

Livingstone's description of the littoral zone as a border that shifts is, however, unfortunate. It assumes that the littoral should be considered as a liminal zone, which is the line of argument that Duncan Brown takes when writing that Livingstone considers "the shoreline as liminal zone to explore the relationship between the physical and the spiritual" (97). Etienne Terblanche is critical of this kind of reading, asking if "a liminoid response of pondering the world from an indefinite betwixt and between position is responsive enough" (184). Terblanche's conclusion is that "it is the ability to see the liminal as a means to a more rooted and open end" (185) that is most beneficial.

My analysis takes both Livingstone's description and Terblanche's point in consideration. The littoral *does* offer a vantage point from which terra and aqua can be seen, their meeting points and their points of departure,[86] and there *is* an eventual moment of transition where one crosses from terra to terraqueous to aqueous space. However, a tidalectic lens allows me to argue for a reading that places emphasis on the littoral's simultaneity and contradiction. Thinking of the littoral as a space of transition also troubles the eco-criticism in Livingstone's poetry since transition to environmental awareness is precisely the issue at stake.

If one takes "physical" to mean materiality and "psychic" to mean imagination, then a tidalectic lens captures in its reading not only the littoral interplay between the environments of land and sea, but also the experiences of environments as both physical and psychic. It is therefore a moving lens, zooming inwards and outwards. Such a reading enables reflection

[86] This ambivalent perspective and bi-focal vision (the interior – as in hinterland – versus exterior – as in ocean and foreland) are central to Meg Samuelson's idea of "coastal form" as a heuristic device, which she uses to analyse West Indian Ocean littoral spaces in Abdulrazak Gurnah and Mia Couto's works. See "Coastal Form: Amphibian Positions".

on a person's physical presence in the space, and encourages us to extend this presence imaginatively to span territories and time.

6.3 Shoreline Change: An Ecocritical Engagement with Genre

Livingstone's poetry is filled with images of dying creatures and discarded debris destroying the ecosystem. Careless consumption is a common critique. Ultimately, as critics have noted, *A Littoral Zone* can be understood as a cultural form of surveyance and documentation of a human species at odds with their *oikos* – their home – and thus calls for "symbiosis, or humankind's ecological atonement with nature" (Everitt 53).[87] Julia Martin considers Livingstone's poetry a call for the recognition of interconnectedness on a microbial level between all living organisms. She argues that his poetry reflects a criticism of "a heedless civilization out of touch with its environmental basis, bent on sullying its own nest" (149). The urgency for Livingstone's criticism comes from a "seemingly wilful ignorance of interconnectedness and deep time", which Martin suggests "is a key aspect of our modern delusion and the forms of violence it sanctions" (153). Martin's point that "the representation of spatial interconnections in *A Littoral Zone* [which] inevitably evokes the idea of connectedness across time" (151) is of particular value to my tidalectic reading of littoral spaces in Livingstone's poetry collection which discusses how Livingstone uses the littoral's environmental history to circle back and anticipate what is to come.

I am wary that an argument for the longue durée approach to climate change and the Anthropocene can produce a homogenising of difference. This homogenisation is a product of the totalising logic that obtains under the blanket term of "the human", a common line of critical inquiry in Anthropocene studies famously inaugurated by Dipesh Chakrabarty.[88] This kind of Anthropocenic thinking allows critics such as Everitt to claim that the "turbulent political situation of South Africa's apartheid years is insignificant when viewed against – on the one hand – the vast sweep of pre-historic evolutionary time and – on the other – the likely future extinction of the human race" (53).

Social sciences scholars argue, however, that lumping all humans together as a singular unit is a conceptual move "far more difficult [as] far-reaching historical, social, and cultural

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[87] *Oikos* is a Greek word either meaning family, property or house, depending on context. As such, it is a term favourable used in ecocriticism to display the interconnected relationship humans have with each other and the natural environment, or planet, the inhabit.
[88] See Dipesh Chakrabarty's "The Climate of History: Four Theses".

differences between human communities tend to stand out much more sharply" (Heise, "Comparative Ecocriticism" 21). My reading of Livingstone's poetry insists that understandings of the Anthropocene take account of the disharmony with nature and the damaging effects of capitalist-colonial enterprises on the environment, in addition to the production of socio-political difference. This is a point that scholarship on the ecological discourse in Livingstone's work tends to overlook.

Since Livingstone lived and wrote during the entire span of apartheid, his poetry has been subjected to much criticism for not engaging politics more explicitly because "[g]iven his pre-eminent position, it was expected of him to denounce the prevailing status quo by using his literary talent, according to the sentiment of the time, as a weapon of resistance" (Klopper, "A Libidinal Zone" 43). In an interview with Monia Fairall in 1993, Livingstone admits that his resistance to writing protest poetry is that it

> gets dated swiftly. Its only virtue is to advertise the political rectitude, political correctness of the poet. I find most of them very boring [...] It would be better, as I say, to change one from the inside out, instead of the present style of trying to change from the outside in. I don't think you can change people from the outside in. That sums up my reservations about political poetry. ("Monica Fairall Interviews" 143-4)

While Livingstone may have consciously eschewed explicit protest poetry as his primary writing medium, Klopper suggests that his political views were expressed nonetheless "through indirect and complex means" (44). When pressed by Fairall on "where, let's call them, the protest poets of the last twenty years are going to turn now for their subject matter, for their inspiration" (144), Livingstone replies: "[t]o women, and the sea, and the moon, and Africa, and the animals, and their friends, and living. To me it's just obvious" (144). The crucial point expressed in these lines is that the environment and our position in it is profoundly political. Indeed, as Duncan Brown argues,

> notions of environment and belonging are explored in [*A Littoral* Zone] in ways far more challenging and profound than that implied by "green" awareness, and that the "science" of the volume becomes a way of securing other claims, including that of an "African" belonging, without necessarily privileging the "scientific" over the poetic or symbolic. (95)

As such, Brown reads *A Littoral Zone* as a mapping of identity onto "the landscapes in which [Livingstone] lived, worked and moved" (95).

Yet, even as these ecocritical emphasise the politics embedded in Livingstone's poetry, they overlook the inequality produced by histories of slavery, empire, and apartheid. As such, these ecocritical analyses produce a form of reading that harkens back to a pre-colonial time that calls for a symbiotic relationship with nature. These approaches fail to consider the specificity of the poems' setting, and their narratological form. In other words, they fail to ask the question: why the South African littoral and why poetry?

What might a tidalectic lens offer to a reading of Livingstone's collection? A compelling and useful point lies in the "deliberate situatedness" (Martin 148) of Livingstone's poems. As Martin notes, Livingstone's poetry evokes "the ecologist's recognition that one is always seeing or writing from somewhere, that place matters critically" (148). Such an awareness is evidenced by Livingstone's inclusion of a map of his sampled coastline along with the note I cited earlier. It is this description of the littoral zone that scholars often use to inform their conceptual lens when reading Livingstone's poetry. Brown writes, for example, that since "Many of the poems use the shoreline as liminal zone to explore the relationship between the physical and the spiritual […] the map on the title page, which gives equal space to land and sea […] registers the ambiguities of this physical and psychic space" (97). The inclusion of this map, along with his notes on the sampling stations and the poems themselves, conveys Livingstone's "remarkable attempt to explore a sense of identity and belonging, which can combine microbial analysis with spiritual affinity" (Brown, 97).

However, rather than consider the littoral as liminal space (as critics tend to do), I am interested in the dual perspective the position from within the littoral allows. While liminal spaces, conventionally considered to mean transitional spaces, allow for the interplay of concepts between different environmental factors – sea, land, air, plant life, animal life – Livingstone's poetry comes from a perspective that is taken from within this space of interplay, and it is here where the person as environmental organism is present. Therefore, the view from the littoral is unique in that it offers not only vistas of land and sea, but also a perspective that turns inwards, as well. This only becomes clear when the human presence in this littoral is considered and taken seriously. In the littoral, land and sea are presented as opposites and yet they are not: they seep into each other, registering both difference and synthesis. A tidalectic lens allows for such a reading because it is a multidimensional, multi-spatial lens which views the human subject as thoroughly situated within the environment.

This brings my discussion to questions of form or genre. In their introduction to a recent special issue of *PMLA* on ecocriticism, Erin James and Eric Morel write that "traditionally ecocritics have privileged the content of narratives over their form" (355). And for the most part, critics' engagement with Livingstone's poetry *does* favour the environmental content over explicit engagement with the poetry genre itself. My reading will take up the concepts of tidalectics and "blue ecology", Alexandra's Campbell's model for reading poetry by encouraging thinking how "saltwater affects and shapes our relationships with place" (3). While I do so in the interests of analysing Livingstone's poetry for its ecocriticism, I want to focus specifically on the ways in which the littoral functions in his poetry as the setting from which a scientific poetic language emerges.

In contrast to Livingstone's focus on the shores of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Zakes Mda takes us to the beaches of the sea-side town of Hermanus. Here, Mda casts an equal emphasis on the intermingling of human and the environment. Mda's novel tells the tale of the Whale Caller who forms a romantic bond with a Southern Right whale he names Sharisha. Despite his growing love interest with the town drunk, Saluni, the Whale Caller waits patiently for Sharisha every season, pining for her. Of interest to me is the novel's setting: Hermanus, a coastal town that is known as a tourist attraction and famed for the seasonal whale-watching it offers. It is on the beaches and peninsular rocks of the town, the land on the fringes of ocean, that the interaction between the Whale Caller and Sharisha occurs.

Situated at times in the littoral zone, *The Whale Caller* presents a confluence of ocean and economy, nature and humans, history and the present. Scholarship on *The Whale Caller* typically identifies a dualism in the novel, frequently based on the human/non-human dichotomy, and argues for Mda's representation of transcending the "boundaries that separate" (Sewlall 136). Scholars like Ralph Goodman suggest that the novel attempts to reconfigure "the space that humans share with non-humans" (136) by arguing for liminality, a third space which "avoids the limitations of binary positions" (106).

Yet, such emphases on liminality do not go far enough. I would argue that Mda's use of the littoral space, or rather the novel's form as littoral literature, introduces a much more complex entangling of social, economic, and environmental politics. Scholars also overlook the particular situatedness of the Whale Caller's relationship with Sharisha. This relationship occurs only because of the littoral space because the littoral allows for an interaction between land-dwelling and sea-living creatures. Though Meg Samuelson presents a discussion of

"sea-creatures that populate post-apartheid fiction and demand a reading of the ocean as living presence" (Samuelson, "Sea Changes" 10), her reading crosses the beach and extends land to sea and briefly pauses in the intertidal zone (See "Inscriptions"). Following Samuelson's work, I shift focus to the littoral. My analysis claims that it is the romance trope and its littoral setting that launches the novel's environmental critique of the novel. This critique, I conclude, is made most prominent when we understand the narrative as an allegory of the Anthropocene.

DeLoughrey's argument is a much more attuned approach to reading the environmental criticism in *The Whale Caller* than critics' attempt at straddling or mediating the non-human/human animal binary. As DeLoughrey suggests, the narrativisation of the Anthropocene and its representation in cultural imaginaries is one of the most valuable contributions the Humanities can make to the field. This is because the most challenging concern with representations of climate change is that the "primary rupture in knowledge constitutive to the Anthropocene is that our experience of local weather is not commensurate with understandings of global climate" (3). Therefore "climate, experience, knowledge, and the Anthropocene are all placed in disjunctive relation [and] these ruptures and disjunctions in narrative and in knowledge do not collapse neatly into one another" (4). Allegory allows, then, for "this perceived disjunction between humans and the planet" precisely because of its metonymic and synecdochical components.

If, as Jonathan Steinwand posits, postcolonial literature turns to non-human animals for "guidance in how human animals participate in postcolonial ecology" (182), what might *The Whale Caller* offer in the image of the whale, not as environmentalist iconography but rather as allegory? A reading of human-whale relationship as allegory of the Anthropocene allows me to engage the narratological structure of the novel. My reading for allegory is produced by an understanding that the novel's plot is dependent on its setting, a setting that in turn produces the longue durée of history and its shoreline change(d).

6.4 *A Littoral Zone*

Douglas Livingstone worked for over thirty years as a marine bacteriologist. His work entailed sampling and testing the water along Durban's coast. The research he conducted was eventually compiled and submitted as a Master's dissertation, titled *A Microbial Study of Water Quality in the Marine Environment off Durban: 1964 – 1988*. Such was its high quality

that it was upgraded to and passed as a PhD (Brown 98). *A Littoral Zone* is a collection of poems that Livingstone wrote at each of the water sampling stations where he conducted his research. This makes the collection a companion piece of sorts to his dissertation. At the back of the collection, Livingstone includes a map of the coastline with each of the water stations marked, starting with number 1 as the most northern point and going all the way down the coast. *A Littoral Zone* is therefore structured chronologically and geographically as each poem is not just placed according to his physical journey, but they also diarise quotidian aspects, like starting out on the first day.

Livingstone himself suggests that *A Littoral Zone* should be read as "one long poem, the record of one daylong mythical sampling run" (62). The poems are thus meant to be read associatively. Doing so allows the reader to understand that the structure of the collection, the order in which the poems appear, serves as a literary cartographic plot of his movement down the coastline. The collection opens with the poem "Darwinian Preface" (7), which functions as both an imaginative and literal preface to Livingstone's sampling run. Thus, the longue durée nature of *A Littoral Zone* is established, both in the evolutionary connotations to this first poem, as well as the structural placing of the poem as preface. The reader is therefore meant to consider the collection as spanning temporalities and not necessarily in a linear way.

Alexandra Campbell mobilises tidalectic thought to engage a critical mode called "blue ecology", which she argues is apposite for reading coastal poetries.[89] Following Kimberley Peters and Peter Steinberg's work on "wet ontologies",[90] Campbell positions blue ecology as "a mode that not only engages the oceans and seas of the world, but is specifically concerned with the ways in which saltwater affects and shapes our relationships with place" (3). Blue ecologies places emphasis on the importance of including waterscapes in our thinking of the human's relationship with the natural environment (2). Campbell also argues that when tidalectic thought, which "gives voice to a myriad of submerged cultures, histories, and ecologies" (1), is applied to blue ecologies, it provides a method for "exploring this 'shifting entanglement' between poet and place" (1). In light of this, the following question presents

[89] Campbell's argument specifically reads the Scottish poets Robin Robinson and Kathleen Jamie's works in this vein.

[90] Drawing on the dynamic nature of the ocean, Steinberg and Peters consider "wet ontologies" to engage and epistemology that considers the multi-faceted, multi-dimension aspects of the ocean. In earlier work, Steinberg defines "wet ontologies" as "an epistemology that views the ocean as continually being reconstituted by a variety of elements: the non-human and the human, the biological and the geophysical, the historic and the contemporary" ("Of Other Seas" 161).

itself: How does Livingstone use the littoral to think of the specificity of place and the extent of the global?

If blue ecology lends itself to considering the "interplay of temporalities", one could consider the temporal structure of *A Littoral Zone* to take a tidalectic, longue durée approach. This is an approach in which temporalities intersect, ripple out, and circle back from the littoral site, and this process is reflected in the collection's content and structure. "A Darwinian Preface" (7) sets the tone for Livingstone's poetic language and concerns. Scientific, often marine biological, vocabulary is used to describe the quotidian landed environment, blending science into the everyday and the ocean onto the land. If the littoral is the "divide between humanity's physical and psychic selves" (Livingstone 62) then the speaker of the poem becomes the mediator as he places himself on the edge of the interplay of not only the aqua and terra environments he encounters, but between science and the imagination as well.

The poem's speaker sees a crab, an amphibious creature whose habitat is the littoral. He is reminded of the evolutionary links between water and land as he ponders that "Perhaps the sea did suckle you/through all its prisms, its diurnal range" (7). This line establishes notions of deep ocean and deep time; of the primordial ocean is described as "suckling" life.[91] Livingstone's lines remind us of Rachel Carson's seminal work, *The Sea Around Us* (1951), in which Carson, also a marine biologist, writes of the ocean as being the origin of all life on the planet. Humans, argues Carson, evolved from their watery home to become landed dwellers. As such, the shore becomes at once the site *from* which and *in* which this terraqueous transition is narrated, and this establishes the evolutionary connotations between habitat and organism.

Much like "A Darwinian Preface", "An Evolutionary Nod to God: Station 4" (18) presents the idea of man's organic link to the environment. In this poem, the speaker, confronted with the scenery at Station 4, ponders that "Perhaps creationists are nearly right: an enigmatic principle formed cells" and continues to describe the evolutionary process in these cells that "transform their DNA/to struggle up from primed primeval soup" (18). From the vantage point of the littoral, which marks the speaker standing in the shore as land dweller that evolved from saltwater, the final lines of the poem reflect on the immensity of the evolutionary process. Key here is that he concludes that "vestiges in me/recall a time I once

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[91] Rachel Carson in her seminal study *The Sea around Us* traces this history of the ocean as the beginning of all life, and humanity and other species' movement away from and eventual returning back to the ocean, albeit metaphorically.

breathed in its sea" (18). The longue durée sense of time evoked here presents the microbial interconnectedness between human and environment.

A sense of the ocean surfacing primordial time is also presented in "Address to a Patrician at Station 8" (24). Here the speaker addresses an ancient species of extant fish, the West Indian Ocean coelacanth, that "old pea-brained survivor", and admires the fish's resilience against time. The evolutionary "interconnectedness" of the environment is referenced once more as the speaker reflects in the final stanza that, "What awes me" is "your father's squirting on eggs/ to sire everyone I know" (24). The littoral is shown to be the site, then, for an embedded and embodied experience of the environment. The interconnectedness between humans and the environment on an evolutionary scale assists in grasping the imagination of the reader, encouraging us to note how we are implicated in the speaker's positionality: like the speaker's, our lineages, too, were sired by the West Indian Ocean coelacanth sired. As such, as much as these poems are about the relation between speaker and environment, the reader as human is complicit in this relation, too, and could easily imaginatively stand alongside them. The *affective* qualities of the poems invite the reader in so that it dawns on them that they are part of the evolutionary scale Livingstone presents and are therefore complicit in his environmental critique.[92]

If we are meant to acknowledge the kinship on microbial level that we share with all living organisms,[93] then Livingstone's "explicitly anti-anthropocentric" (Brown 98) strategy to "refigure the place of humans in the broader context of biology" emerges when compared to the violence, destruction, and wastefulness in the other poems. These poems, contrapuntally to the 'evolutionary' poems I discussed above, throw the speaker's relationship with the environment into crisis as he is confronted with humanity's imposition on nature and the damage humans have done to the environment. Poems such as "The Christmas Chefs at Station 1A" (12), "Reflections at Sunkist" (13), "Bad Run at King's Rest" (37), "Low Tide at Station 20" (48) and "Carnivores at Station 22" (55) place a strain on the speaker's understanding of humanity's organic connection with the environment. Livingstone's critique

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[92] I use "affective" here to evoke Alexa Weik von Mossner's *Affective Ecologies: Empathy, Emotion, and Environmental Narrative* and her argument for embodied cognition of the environment. Weik von Mossner argues that ecocriticism operates as sensory responses to landscapes, real or imagined.

[93] In *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Donna Haraway makes the argument for the Cthulucene, her term for this current epoch in which all species share a kinship, working together for similar stakes.

is therefore of an ignorant and reckless exploitation and destruction of the planet and is part of a white liberal view that sees “us”, humanity, and not colonial-capitalism as the problem.

Perhaps one of the most emotive and upsetting poems in the collection is “Bad Run at King’s Rest”. This poem chronicles the speaker’s encounter with a loggerhead turtle lying in the surf, “swimming among human footprints, beached:/shell split by an errant propeller-blade” (37). In these lines, the littoral functions as the setting which exposes the human violence on oceanic creatures such as loggerhead turtles, who only come to shore to nest and lay their eggs. The juxtaposition between the “human footprints” and the turtle “swimming” among them underscores the critique that it is due to human action — the man-made propeller-blade — an alien entity in an ocean, that the creature has been expelled from its habitat in a violent bloody way.

With the turtle left vulnerable and exposed, this violence continues as “Its flippers [are] bloody where some lout’s/hacking had ripped nails for medicines/or trophies. Both eyes stabbed or pecked out” (37). The “spread-eagled mound” of the turtle which raises “its beak to scream or pant/the exhalations making no sound” (37) invokes a deep sense of pathos in both reader and speaker. To end humanity’s cruelty for which he asks “pardon”, the speaker cuts the turtle’s throat and calls “dumbly on gulls, on incoming tides” (37). These final lines are at once a desire for the bloodshed to be washed clean and for the corpse to be taken up back into the eco-cycle as sustenance for the gulls.

In “The Christmas Chefs at Station 1A” (12) the speaker looks on the “incredible” mess December holiday makers left behind on the beach: “scraps, vomit and cartons abound” and “crushed beercans and ashes”. Each of these objects are evidence of consumption; while vomit and ashes might be organic matter, it is material used up, purposeless. When juxtaposed with more obvious trash such as cartons, scraps, and crushed beer cans, these objects become abject things representative of the wastefulness of human consumption. The gluttonous nature of the vacationers’ consumption is presented in the “bent fish” that “looks once-edible” but that was overlooked, for “judged from the fat spilled around,/meat was grilled on the embers”. Presented as out of place in the littoral space, these images turn a critical eye on the wasting in nature and of nature, as the beachgoers discard the fish as easily as they throw away their trash. Nature, the poem suggests, has become disposable.

In “Beach Terminal” (36) the speaker comes across the site of an old whaling station. While “the sea [might] be clean now”, the site haunts him with the knowledge of what used to

transpire here. Describing the whaling industry as "profit-motive" butchers, he imagines the dead whales, reduced merely to "new flesh" arriving each night. These carcasses become work for the "bearded hackers" who "slashed, tore with hand-held power saws,/long knives and tongs" at the bodies. The brutal detail in the slaughtering of the whales emphasises the tragedy in hunting these creatures for profit. The next line ends with a fragmented thought — "a thick skinned breed, thick neck". While this is meant to describe the whalers, it can just as easily describe the whales. The association here is brief, but it evokes an ontological question nonetheless. What drives a violence to something that shares a likeness with yourself? Craig Smith writes of the "cetacean turn" in environmental studies and of the value in ascribing "personhood to whales" (244). Smith describes seeing whales as sharing a personhood with humans as "the choice to see in the face of a radical other someone like yourself" (254). This choice becomes an empowering act of dissolving self/other binaries especially when it is carried into other "human-centric politics", such as anti-apartheid, postcolonial politics. Livingstone's poem takes care to stress the perceived boundary between self/other, human/whale, and it is in the littoral space that the speaker bears witness to what happens when this binary is pushed to the extreme. Here, the poem ends with the following two stanzas:

> Stumbling, weighted with the long sampling stick,
> bottles, thermometer and notebook
> checking the surf slimy with reject,
> with whale-washings, hearabouts unclean;
>
> Intestines, hoses sliding about;
> vats bubbling; the crain-chains clattering
> - all that has stilled: the factory closed,
> but always, I think, a bad prospect.

"Stumbling" under the weight of scientific knowledge, the speaker examines the data the surf produces. "Whale-washings" are rejected by what was ironically the animals' natural habitat, the ocean. Historically, whalers were typically agents of empire. Whale hunting is therefore a process interwoven intimately with imperial conquest, racism and ecological destruction. As the practice is represented as expelling organisms from their natural space, the poem's setting exposes the disjuncture between human and whale. In the final stanza whales are

commodified, "intestines" are likened to "hoses", and completely scaled down to usable parts.

What the reader is presented with here, similarly to "Beach Terminal" and "Station 1A" is the commodification of the natural environment: nature turned profit. These poems, in comparison to the 'evolutionary' poems I discuss above, place a strain on the speaker's understanding of humanity's organic connection with the environment. This tension moves critics such as Brown, Martin, and Everitt to read the poems as Livingstone's call for a symbiosis with nature. However, I want to add that it also presents conceptual challenges of thinking the Anthropocene and the human as not only as part of nature, but as a force of nature. Different avenues of thinking therefore present themselves; that is to say, we are confronted with the human in its "anthropological difference", as destroyer of nature, and as vulnerable to the forces of nature that (some) humans have unleashed.

While Livingstone's poetry does not offer explicit causes for the ecological destruction he is witness to, the environmental politics of his poetry hovers constantly on the fringes of its content. To this end, the littoral setting of the poems provides the speaker with the vantage point of ocean and land, environment and human. We often see in his poems evidence of oceanic-life spilled onto the shore and exploited by or capitalised on by humans. However, rather than read the poems as a unilateral critique of humanity's culpability in the dereliction of the environment, I want to consider the poems' environmental content within Livingstone's specific cultural imagining. As discussed in the first section of this chapter, Livingstone is often critiqued for not taking a more direct line to political activism, especially given the time during which he was writing.

As I see it, the questions raised in "Beach Terminal" regarding personhood and the treatment of the whale can be read as extending to other moments of personhood in his poetry. If a constructivist approach to eco-criticism "involves questions about how our perception of the environment is culturally shaped and how that perception is mediated through language and literature" (Heise, "Hitchhiker's" 511), then the faint references to South Africa's racialised history in Livingstone's poetry is situated within an environmental critique where racism and the environment are imagined to both be products of colonial modernity. In certain poems, Livingstone leads us to a precolonial history by way of exposing the damage inflicted on the environment by colonial modernity.

For example, “Eland About Station 17” (44) and “The Waste Land at Station 14” (38) are both poems that feature the conjuring of a history that reaches far back, beyond the poet’s context of both apartheid and environmental dereliction. In “Station 17”, the poet finds a cave with what he conceives to be San rock paintings on the wall. This causes the speaker to claim that “There is much I cannot forgive my race. / Parched cryptic ones, you have been hunted and herded / to the westward wastes – all that’s left of you: / now learning metallic intricacies of automatic weaponry” (lines 41 – 45). The racial overtones in the speaker’s claim are quite evident, as is the guilt he feels for the forced removal and ‘modernisation’ of the local people, a people who the speaker feels lived in harmony with nature.

The rock paintings as the only testimony of the autochthonous people’s history recalls Olive Schreiner’s littoral history, discussed in Chapter Two. In Schreiner’s littoral moment, the children “sat under a shelving rock, on the surface of which were still visible some old Bushman-paintings, their red and black pigments having been preserved through long years from wind and rain by the overhanging ledge; grotesque oxen, elephants, rhinoceroses, and a one-horned beast, such as no man has ever seen or ever shall” (*The Story of an African Farm* 44). As backdrop to Waldo’s ensuing expression for a desire for a harmonious existence with the environment, the rock paintings are temporal markers that silently bear witness to a history that has been rendered obsolete by imperialism. Writing eighty years after Schreiner, Livingstone not only looks back at the same longue durée of colonial violence, but he also bears witness to the continued wave of racialised politics into the country through the implementation of the apartheid system.

“Station 14” (38), set in a segregated beach bearing “The baleful sign: ‘THIS BEACH / IS RESERVED…’” again conjures up a time predating the segregating legislation of the speaker’s apartheid present. The speaker addresses a “brother poet”, Shozi Bhengu, apologizing for the segregating politics that keeps them from sharing both a creative space and natural environment. Time in the poem moves from the racial present in the first stanza, marked by the overbearing segregating sign with its capitalised command, to a past overlooked by “Africa’s moon”. In this ancient time skin is reduced to a mere biological element expelling the sweat from Africa’s sun:

> Under Africa’s moon there dreams a strand
> older than old the ancient poets keep.
> We both walk it under Africa’s sun.

> There, a glad profusion of brow and hand
> — struck from one Mind — strikes deeper than the one
> hundred or so microns which spell skin-deep (39)

However, the speaker is forced to return to the present moment of the poem and offer his "apologies for that sign". The segregated beach setting of the poem therefore both challenges and succumbs to the socio-political context in which it is set. Even though the speaker is knowledgeable that "we are new disposables" and that "The earth you and I know now is a Karoo of the mind" (38-39) he cannot deny that the more pressing concern for people such as Bhengu is the segregating sign's signification. What to make, then, of an environmental critique that is aware of the results that environmental degradation will deliver, but which is also is forced to recognise a disjuncture between humans' socio-political identities? While environmentalism is a key feature of *A Littoral Zone*, a line of inquiry that takes the racialising history of South Africa into consideration is urgently needed. This critique would need to take into account the effects economic segregation has had on the environment, and, as such, would offer Livingstone's poetry as a significant contribution to the fraught negotiations in South African literary studies between questions of social, political, and ecological justice.

6.5 *The Whale Caller*

It is in the littoral space of *The Whale Caller* that Mda represents the complex intersection of ocean and economy, nature and man, history and the present. In Mda's text, the fraught negotiation of socio-economic, political and, environmental justice intersects and tangles in the past, only to wash onshore in the present. Evinced by a dual temporality, which cycles back to the past and decants these histories back onshore, the littoral site exposes these still present tanglings of South Africa's political past, economic hierarchies, and anthropocentric environmental exploitation. However, it is in the relationship between the titular character, the Whale Caller, and Sharisha, read as an allegory for the Anthropocene, that I find the novel's most powerful critique.

To read environmental criticism in *The Whale Caller* entails reading the relationship at the heart of the novel in two different ways. On a basic level it is a story about love; it is Romeo and Juliet pushed to the extreme, in which two characters from completely different (ontological?) backgrounds form a romantic and sexual relationship, although it should be acknowledged that framing the relationship in this way is not without critique. This is

because all interaction is presented through the Whale Caller's focalisations and we never have access to Sharisha's desires. This, in itself, presents a thread of environmental criticism concerning animal agency. The novel opens at the start of the whale watching season. The Whale Caller pines for Sharisha, yearning to be reunited with her, anxious that she has stood him up (Mda 4). Jealously, he thinks that "there are plenty of fish in these seas", calling her a "Leviathan with a whore's heart" (4). These opening descriptions establish their connection in terms the reader would understand; the Whale Caller's emotions are, after all, profoundly human.

Accordingly, the connection between him and Sharisha is represented as intuitive and intimate, to the extent that they move according to each other's rhythms. The Whale Caller doesn't need binoculars to know which of the whales in the bay is Sharisha; he knows her body as intimately as a lover's body:

> As its head rises from the water again the Whale Caller's heart beats like a mad drum in his chest, for he sees the well-shaped bonnet that *he knows so well*, sitting gracefully on the whale's snout […] He breathes even faster when he sees the wart-like callosities on the head […] the whale opens its mouth wide displaying the white baleen that hangs from the roof of its mouth […] It is a smile that the Whale Caller *knows so well.* (51; my emphasis)

Their interaction is even described with sexual undertones where, responding to the Whale Caller's phallic horn, Sharisha "performs the tail-slapping dance that is part of the mating ritual" (51–52). In response, the Whale Caller breathes "more and more heavily", climaxing "drenched in sweat as his horn ejaculates sounds that rise from deep staccatos to high-pitched wails" (52). A "full-filled" man, the Whale Caller is jubilant that "Sharisha is back", having braved "man-created dangers […] To be with yours truly" (53). Their relationship is even troubled by the presence of a jealous mistress, the Whale Caller's human partner Saluni, who accuses him of leaving her "for these stupid whales" (235) and that he "would take her [Sharisha's] side" (237).

The obstacles in their way, that one is land-dwelling and the other ocean-living, are mediated by the presence of the setting to their interactions: the littoral zone. As such, the coastline and beaches of Hermanus are the only stage on which the lovers' tale can be set. However, their love is met with a tragic end when the Whale Caller is inadvertently responsible for Sharisha's death, caused by his selfish desire to see her. After a natural disaster floods the

coastlines of Hermanus, the Whale Caller "goes straight to the peninsula, yearning for Sharisha" (279). He calls her on his horn, and she comes. However, "She is too mesmerised to realise that she has recklessly crossed the line that separates the blue depths from the green shallows" (280) and beaches herself. Despite numerous attempts and suggestions by whale watchers, scientists, politicians, and "experts from Cape Town" to return Sharisha to the ocean, the only resort is to blow her up with dynamite while the Whale Caller looks on, sitting "silent and still as blubber rains on him" (291).

The novel closes with the Whale Caller's self-imposed exile from the shore, as he leaves Hermanus, to "walk from town to town flogging himself with shame and wearing a cardboard sign that announces to everyone: *I am the Hermanus Penitent*" (298). As readers, we form a sentimental bond with the lovers so that Sharisha's tragic death is emotionally affecting.[94] The critique arising from this human-whale romance plot is twofold. First, it is the environment *sans* human that suffers the most through no causal link in the eco-cycle, and second, it is the selfish actions of the human that are responsible for the death of the whale. I therefore wonder whether the most pertinent critique that is rendered might not be one that argues for an environment that is removed from human interaction?

Reading the text as allegory brings me to a similar conclusion but with more nuanced implications. DeLoughrey argues that allegory as a mode of representation allows us to make sense of rupture and disjuncture on two accounts. Firstly, the Anthropocene is characterised by a rupture in our cultural relationship with the environment, which is caused by colonialism. Secondly, a challenge for environmental consciousness is having to think in terms of vast stretches of ecological time and slow environmental change as well as immediate experience simultaneously. That creates another rupture, this time between knowledge and experience. Allegory therefore serves as a useful mode for grappling with rupture and disjuncture because it works synecdochally, allowing the part to stand for the

[94] Whether or not the representation of their relationship stirs the reader's heartstrings is a point that needs to be taken, but the whale's death is certainly shocking. Ralph Goodman, however, makes a valuable point:

We are drawn into the tale more by the Whale Caller's addictive delight in Sharisha than the necessarily understated feelings that Sharisha might have, and we are more easily led to accept Mda's depiction of her by the inability of both to be fulfilled in this relationship. It is perhaps the silent mutual sadness of unfulfillment of both (in the case of Sharisha limited but clearly implied) that makes us suspend our disbelief sufficiently to accept what we are being told: that for a man and a whale to be in love is not risible. (110)

whole. As DeLoughrey puts it, "culture, climate, experience, knowledge, and the Anthropocene are all placed in disjunctive relation" (*Allegories* 4).

The human-whale relationship in *The Whale Caller* as allegory for humans' sentimentalized relationship with nature presents additional nuances in the novel's eco-criticism. If the point is taken that the littoral is the *only* setting that would allow for the romance between the Whale Caller and Sharisha to transpire, the following question presents itself: what are the benefits of analysing the points of connection between the littoral, human, and whale in the novel? Firstly, the littoral provides access and connection to the ocean, an environment which humans can explore but not inhabit and that, as deep ocean studies have shown, is still largely strange and unknown to us (see Lavery). Secondly, as Livingstone's poetry illustrates, littoral zones are often the sites that register environmental change in that they not only bring two distinct environments together, but also make visible the impact humans have on them. Lastly, oceans are also pathways that set up one kind of global network through the international waters of the ocean and the local seashore, and trading route, and thereby extend the local to the global.

In one sense, the simple, central allegory in the novel is that the representation of the relationship between human and whale as "organic" stands in contrast to the consuming,[95] commodity hungry tourists of Hermanus in a context intent on shaping the natural environment for commercial gain. In the lonely figure of the Whale Caller, who "felt like an intruder both in the lives of the whale watchers and of the local citizens" (10), we read his relationship with the whale as an authentic, symbiotic relationship with the natural environment. Situated in the littoral this is a representation of the differing capacities of accessibility. On the one hand, the littoral is a tourist attraction. As a popular summer holiday destination, Hermanus is "a sanctified playground of the rich" (Mda 110). The highlight of the Hermanus tourist season is the annual Kalfiefees — a festival organised around the time whales come into the bay to calf — when the potential to spot a whale is highest. Because "[a]llmost all whale watching is done from the land" in Hermanus, it is only from the meeting point of ocean and land, the littoral, that a suitable vantage point is achieved.

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[95] This is in itself a problematic term and presents the issue of adequate signification or representation for human/nature relations.

Moreover, the commodification of the whale's natural birthing cycle is able to occur specifically because of the nature of the littoral zone, which given its unique geographical nature, allows the tourist industry to flourish. In contrast, the Whale Caller stands "on the tip of the peninsula" (41), "his peninsula", waiting to interact with Sharisha. As allegory of the Anthropocene, this contrast between the Whale Caller/whale and tourist industry is problematised. Regardless of the supposed symbioses between Sharisha and the Whale Caller, he remains human and is also the cause of her death, and this renders their relation anthropocentric. The critique here, then, is that human interaction, regardless of how good natured or well-intentioned, irrevocably damages the environment and its agents.

A longue durée approach situates the environmental critique in a far broader temporality than the immediate actions of the Whale Caller. It allows for the interpolation of human histories that have been forged on the oceans to come into play. These histories must be understood as having mobilised a capitalist modernity based on the exploitation of natural resources and racialised human bodies, since Hermanus is a kind of white utopia entirely dependent on the labour of Black bodies and on the money brought in through whale watching. Viewed as such, we can come to understand the commercialised shape of the seaside town. Standing on the peninsula, the Whale Caller "can see the weather-beaten fisherman shrouded in the mists of time, taking to sea in their fleet of small boats. Some are rowing back with their catch, while others are gutting the fish or drying it on rocks" (2). As antithesis to this present moment, the reader is taken back to a time

> deeper in the mists, before there were boats, and fisherman, and whalers, the Khoikhoi of old dancing around a beached whale. Dancing their thanks to Tsiqua, He who Tells His Stories in Heaven, for the bountiful food he occasionally provides for his children by allowing whales to strand themselves. (2)

These people use the blubber for oil to cook meat and light lamps, build huts using the whale's rib bones, carry water in its ear bones, and use the rest of the skeleton for furniture. And when "they cannot finish it [...] they weep for the waste" (3).

Here, Mda presents the historic local people as occupying a more ethically and sustainable relationship with the environment and its natural resources because they do not overconsume. This is placed in contradistinction to the commercial frenzy the present-day tourists bring. The locals are "out in throngs" (14), ready to "flog their wares" in the parking lot by the harbour, while "Fat Americans" and "Puny Japanese, excitable and fascinated by the most

mundane of things" all click "away at the slightest provocation. Following everything that moves on land and sea with camcorders" (14). This is not to say that tourists are the only culprits. The fisherman, mentioned alongside the whalers, equally harvest the ocean for more than personal sustenance.

When Sharisha's return is delayed, the Whale Caller fears that "whalers have harpooned her, and as we speak she is being cut into pieces for Japanese palates" (4). When she does return, the reader is told "She has braved man-created dangers to be with [the Whale Caller]. She has risked ships' propellers that slice curious whales [...] She has defied fishing gear entanglements and explosives from oil exploration activity" (37). The "man-created dangers" that threaten the animal and her natural habitat is obvious here, as is Mda's environmental concern. The novel's opening lines, "The sea is bleeding from the wounds of Sharisha" (1), capture the ominous foretelling of the text's conclusion: the resultant violence of human activity on non-human animals and the environment.

The difference between these two moments is that in the present, the fisherman, the boats, and the whalers are represented as distanced from the ecological cycle. They are agents intruding upon the environment for trade and commercial gain. The Khoi, however, live in tune with the ecological environment by harvesting the carcass washed up by natural circumstances, using every bit of the beached whale, wasting nothing.[96]

Mda's littoral setting therefore occupies a dual-temporality. "[B]y recalling the meeting of Atlantic and Indian trade routes at the Cape", writes Meg Samuelson, "Mda focuses on deep ocean crossings to challenge human exploitation of the sea's resources and of its surface as a medium for travel" (Samuelson, "Sea Changes" 18). It is ironic, then, that although he bears witness to all this, the Whale Caller is the agent for Sharisha's death. Mda never offers any explicit resolution to questions concerning the environmental critique of the novel, and the tragedy of Sharisha's death and the Whale Caller's penitence registers rhetorically. The reader is therefore required to make sense of a story which is interspliced with explicit environmental critique, especially in the presence of the longue durée of human-centred

[96] A potential critique if Mda's representation, here, is to guard against overly romanticized and sentimental considerations of pre-colonial periods as being more sustainable. James W Scott, for example, distinguishes between a "thin Anthropocene" and a "thick Anthropocene", with the latter referring to nuclear age as marking the moment humans had considerable impact upon the environment. The "thin Anthropocene", however, argues that the discovery of fire brings the first environmental footprint and is actually where the Anthropocene truly starts to emerge. See James C. Scott's *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States*.

activity. And yet, the character who is presented as (supposedly) harmoniously in balance with nature, who literally *loves* his non-human other, is the one who causes its demise. A reading of *The Whale Caller* as allegory reveals that perhaps the real environmental critique in the novel is one which removes the "anthropo" from "Anthropocene". When compared to the global scale of resource mining and humans' exploitation of the environment, the Whale Caller's actions seem negligible, especially when placed within the longue durée of the Anthropocene.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored how littoral literatures engage the human as a category of the environment. My focus has been on the formal qualities of these texts and how a focus on narratological concerns intersects with environmental criticism. As setting, the littoral affords a dynamic interplay between the land and water environments, as well as the sensory experience that being in this environment brings. I explored the littoral to extend to the embodied experience of the human in the space, as well as the imaginative experience this leads to. I argued that Livingstone's eco-poetry presents a symbiosis of his scientific and creative sensibilities, and mobilises the terraqueous interplay the littoral affords to engage the psychic and physical experience of the environment. His poetry envisions the littoral as a space which renders the human impact on the environment most visible when perspective is placed in the intertidal zone.

I read Zakes Mda's *The Whale Caller* as an allegory of the Anthropocene and considered how setting and plot work together to produce the novel's eco-critique. I argued that it is specifically the littoral space that can accommodate this entangling of issues the novel addresses. In the site of the littoral, then, Mda represents a complex intermixing, or entangling, of anthropocentric exploitation of the environment for commercial gain. It also tackles environmental issues alongside a history washed up on the political beaches of the present. At the heart of the novel lies the allegorical romance between human and whale. While the novel presents the longue durée of anthropocentric environmental activity, ironically, it is the human lover that causes the whale's death, the character who most identifies the need for humans' harmony with the environment. As allegory, I therefore wonder if Mda's environmental critique might not take the form of an argument for a nature truly removed from human interference.

The littoral's vantage point is therefore of significance as it allows authors to reflect on the on the mediation of land and sea. In this chapter I argued that this perspective gives rise to an environmental critique that recognizes the interplay between the human subject and their environment. In the next chapter, I argue that authors use the littoral's spatial positioning to imagine revisionist histories that look from the shore to the sea, returning the perspective taken in Chapter Two.

OFFSHORE

CHAPTER SEVEN

“Backwash”: Reading the Past

7.1 Introduction

In this final chapter I consider texts that offer the littoral as a unique vantage point from which history or historical moments can be viewed. These texts provide a perspective that challenges dominant discursive representations. In these revisionist moments, the situatedness and dynamic qualities of the littoral are drawn upon in a language, which I term littoral discourse, that imagines alternative histories that disrupt the discursive nature of colonialist history and historiography. To illustrate my claims, I analyse Yvette Christiansë’s *Unconfessed* (2006), a novel set in the slavocratic, nineteenth-century Cape, and K. Sello Duiker’s post-apartheid bildungsroman *Thirteen Cents* (2000). Both texts imagine alternatives to rehearsed representations of South Africa’s history by making use of counter-histories that emerge from the littoral space.

Littoral settings afford a perspective of shifting viewpoints. To this end, I suggest that thinking *from* the littoral generates discussion on the counter-histories authors are able to imagine when writing from the shore — because the littoral is where tidalectics operate. I therefore title this chapter “backwash”, to bring into focus the offshore flow of water that draws back into the ocean after a wave breaks on the beach. The backwash is the second phase to the swash action, the breaking wave’s uprush of water. Swash is the concept metaphor I employed in Chapter Two to reflect the expansionist and imperial discourses washed onshore during the emerging stages of what would eventually be a colonised South Africa. The backwash describes a returning of water and sediment to the ocean in a counter motion, but in an altered state. The backwash, in other words, evokes a returning of these discourses to the ocean, not as counter-discourse, but as alternative histories set adrift when thinking from the littoral.

Unconfessed tells the story of the historical slave woman, Sila van den Kaap, who was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death for the infanticide of her son, Baro. Her execution did not take place, however. According to archival records, Sila gave birth to another child

sometime after her incarceration; thus, she could not be executed under British law, which prohibited the execution of a pregnant woman. Consequently, Sila was moved to Robben Island to serve out the remainder of her sentence. The novel both traces the circumstances that led up to the Sila's act of infanticide, and considers her life after Baro's death. It is while Sila is on the island that Baro's spirit returns to haunt Sila as a "spectral presence" from which she cannot escape (Samuelson, "Oceanic Genealogies" 28). Any analysis with *Unconfessed* necessitates an engagement with the archive and the silences found there. I have written extensively on the topic of "silence" as inspiration for the novel, its conceptual framework, and as a narrative device that challenges and subverts colonial discursive practices.[97] In this chapter, I extend and develop Christiansë's narrative strategy of subversive discourse by engaging the littoral in her novel.

To conclude the chapter, I turn to the final moments in K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*, a novel which centres on Azure, a thirteen-year-old orphan who lives on the streets of Cape Town. Azure sells his body to (married, closeted) men on the Sea Point promenade. He frequently has to evade the assaults of drug dealers and thugs; Azure's Cape Town is a world where adults cannot be trusted and children are exploited. The novel employs a first-person narrative perspective, detailing Azure's movements through his everyday experience and his navigation of the city. His movement across Cape Town enables the reader to map the city along with Azure. My reading of *Thirteen Cents* analyses the littoral discourse in the novel as informing the closing of the text, in which Azure imagines a massive tidal wave destroying Cape Town. I argue that it is the littoral that produces the impossibility of a life for Azure in the post-apartheid city. I then show how this reading informs the final scene of the novel, which both functions as the deus ex machina for his life and criticises the historical process that produced the city and its violence.

7.2 Discursive Silences

On *Unconfessed*, Christiansë has commented that, "[a]ny attempt to speak of the woman who killed her son on December 24, 1822, any attempt to speak of the circumstances that brought her to this point of violence, and any attempt to speak of what befell her as a result, has to negotiate the Cape Archive" ("Heartsore" n.p.). The Cape Archive is all but completely void of authentic inclusions of slave voices, first person accounts of their experiences, their

[97] See Geustyn, Representations of Slave Subjectivity in Post-Apartheid Fiction: The 'Sideways Glance'.

subjectivities, and their interiorities. Even in cases where spaces were made for slave voices to register, such as court proceedings, such spaces continuously operated in what Jacques Derrida calls the "violent hierarchies" present in archival inscription.[98] In other words, the only spaces for slaves to speak were spaces in which they were already criminalised. In the case of Sila van den Kaap, her voice had to contend with the "triple discursive" nature of the archive: "black female slave" (Christiansë, "Heartsore" n.p.).

Christiansë's comprehensive narrative strategy in *Unconfessed* can be summarised as presenting a space in which Sila's voice emerges by resisting, undercutting, and subverting conventional narrative practices. The title, the achronological plot structure that cycles between points in time, the shifting narrative perspective from third person narrator to first, the split in interior voices and focalisation when Sila *is* narrating, the typography on the page and the refusal to detail the violence Sila endured and committed, are all techniques that resist inscription within subordinate ideology and the conventional narrative discourse that accompanies it. As such, the novel stands in opposition to the "structures ordering the archive. Categorized, classified, and made accessible through alphabetical and numerical coding, as well as chronological sequencing" (Christiansë, "Heartsore", n.p.). The novel imitates Christiansë's own archival research for the text and the scant, circling traces of Sila van den Kaap she encountered there: a name here, the registration of a child there, the transfer of ownership, and then her testimony in court. The historical slave woman's refusal to embellish her testimony undercuts the discursive practice of historiography because Sila's testimony about her reasons for killing Baro are never divulged beyond stating that she was "hartzeer", transliterated as "heartsore" (Christiansë, "Heartsore", n.p.). Meg Samuelson has argued that Sila's unconfession, "her refusal to account for her deed [marks] her subversive resistance to her inscription in the colonial archive" (Samuelson, "Castaways" 1-2). The author's challenge, then, is "to hear and interpret any echo of the unsaid as something that could be nothing more than a trace" (Christiansë, "Heartsore" n.p.).

If the discursive practices of the archive do not allow for the emergence of authentic slave voices and their histories, then Christiansë navigates this muting by *using* silence as narrative device. It is on this point that I would like to expand this strategy to include the oceanic trope within the novel and the shoring of this trope in the littoral space. My analysis of *Unconfessed* will show that the novel performs a tidalectic historiography and draws on

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[98] See Derrida, *Of Grammatology*.

littoral discourse, and in doing so, invites us to think differently about the historical past and the present, and about the forms of their representation.

7.3. Littoral Discourse

7.3.1 A Tidalectic Historiography

Littoral discourse refers to a mode of expression that navigates the (in)authenticity and power of language and representation, and therefore also gives expression to its misuse and violence. Christiansë uses an auto-intradiegetic narrator in her novel, which, in Genette's terms, means a narrator who is a character in the world of the text, and who narrates both the world and themselves.[99] This narrative device allows Sila to be in control of her own narrative, especially when she comes under pressure from colonial figures of authority. As she puts it, "[t]hey wanted to come inside my heart. It was not an entry I could permit" (*Unconfessed* 240). The suggestion that her heart contains the truth is interesting in that it echoes the only utterance recorded in the archive by the historical Sila as explanation for her crime: "hartzeer", a Dutch phrase which translates into English as "heartsore". This word is repeated over and over, first at her arrest and again at her trial,

> [t]he word seeps out across the official documents. It will not be contained. It echoes within the archive—excessive, dangerous, and struggling to rationalize a theft of the law's prerogative over life and death and the monopoly over the definition of crime and gift, crime and accusation. (Christiansë, "Heartsore" n.p.)

While the word speaks to authenticity and is jarring amidst the legal jargon of the court's proceedings, Christiansë cautions against reading for agency because Sila's "emotional" language is misconstrued in subsequent trial proceedings and presented as feminised speech and sentimentality. "[T]he word", Christiansë writes, "appears to register among what was considered the language of a female slave—emotional irrational, and on the edge of unpredictability" ("Heartsore" n.p.), and thus entraps her in colonial ideology. Sila could only speak, in other words, in the manner in which a slave woman is expected to speak, which does not mean she is heard. At stake, then, is *how* she might speak, or *in which way*. Put

[99] See Genette 212-263.

differently, what is the mode of discourse a slave woman can use not only speak, but be to be heard? These are some of the central questions which animate the text.

In her influential essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak" (1993), Gayatri Spivak explains that subaltern entities cannot be heard as agents of power if they are made to speak within a discourse that does not recognise them as not speaking from the margins. In Sila's case, her subaltern expression must come from within a discourse that is not recognised in colonial ideological terms and is therefore imbued with hierarchies of power. Any attempt at speaking within such a discourse is immediately foreclosed. The point I will make here is that littoral discourse becomes a mode of expression that situates itself outside of the conventional discourse of Western, colonial, archival modes of expression. By using the metonymic and sensory experiences of the terraqueous environment, *Unconfessed*'s littoral discourse allows for a mode of expression and representation that navigates power and trauma.

From the littoral world of Robben Island, Sila relates the novel's content to Baro, who has come to find his "mother all this way out on the water" (Christiansë, *Unconfessed* 42). And while Sila keeps silent on certain matters, her narrative is, by definition, an attempt at speaking. Towards the end of the novel, Sila tells Baro that

> sometimes I understand things, but ask me to talk about what I see and the words behave like fish swimming in rock pools after the tide has been in. Catch them in your hands or a big bowl you took from the warden's kitchen to see what they are like, and…You know what happens. There is panic and those little wings that move at their sides stop. What is left is the shape of the thing you liked, but there is no life. (268)

Without expressly detailing the violence she has experienced as an enslaved woman, Sila here tries to express her position and experience by likening her words to fish decanted into rock pools by the tide. The image suggests a difficulty — a flailing around for the right words — and the threat of lifelessness. Sila's life as slave is marked by the moment when she was thrown by the surf onto shore. Her language therefore draws on the immediate experience of the terraqueous environment using simile as the linguistic mode. Once fish are taken outside of their natural habitat, like an enslaved person who is uprooted from their home, they die. All that is left is the lifeless shape of an idea, a haunting, a silent trace.

This moment gives expression to my use of littoral discourse. Having come from the ocean via the Indian Ocean trade route, Sila, too, is placed onshore in an environment that "kills" her, for the Sila she becomes is not the Sila as she was born. The littoral imagery of the tide,

rock pools, and of oceanic creatures taken onto the land, provides Sila with a medium in which to express her trauma by using simile, metonymy, and extended metaphor. Littoral discourse therefore circumvents the need for explicit detail in a language that would register her speaking as "black", "female" and "slave". As narrative strategy, this is another silence on Christiansë's part as she never sketches Sila's abuse in detail and it is expected of the reader to understand this imagery as signifier of violence and trauma.

For example, Sila constantly speaks of the ocean in her ear, a euphemism for an injury she incurred when Van der Wat, one of her owners, hit her and presumably burst her ear drum. For Sila, the ocean becomes synonymous with the daily life of the slave woman and Van Der Wat's sexual assault. The "endless washing, scrubbing, polishing, worrying about her children, and listening to the ocean in the chambers of her ears while Van der Wat *did what he had to do*" (my italics; 35) is an oblique way of representing her experience of being raped repeatedly by Van der Wat, without detailing the trauma. To do so, would reinscribe the slave woman's body with the abuse of power, and discursively re-inflict the violence of the act.

The oceanic metaphor is also consistently shored in the littoral of Robben Island: "Waves breaking can make [Sila] sick to the stomach when [she] hear[s] them. A gull crying makes [her] think of babies" (328). Here, the ocean becomes a haunting memory of the children she has lost to the legacy of slavery, be it to slave auctions, malnutrition or by her own hand. In the littoral environment,

> the world is full of shifting and other kinds of movement. [...] I have come to know how things move here and I have put this together with my memories of sounds, but also together with things that I see. [...] For that, there are ways that the world moves. (328)

The language used here is purposefully vague and suggestive, as Christiansë once more avoids indulging in the explicit re-telling of violence. As such, the reader is required to interpolate and connect "how things move here" with "memories of sounds" and "things I see". This is done in an effort to *not* speak on behalf of subaltern peoples who were silenced by historical discourse, and to indicate that there are silences in history that will never be filled because "narration itself is an impossible task, an unrealizable ideal, because historical narratives cannot replicate the events they tell" (Christiansë, "Passing Away" 391).

On the subject of silence and trauma, Nthabiseng Motsemme asks, "what happens when those who have been denied the occasion to tell their stories, and whose bodies and cultures have

been systematically violated and dehumanized, discover that there are things that remain unspeakable?" ("The Mute" 915). The evocation of the littoral environment as "full of shifting…movement", recalls the "tilting" world of the slave ship. To know how things "move here" together with memories "of sounds", of the gulls crying and the waves crashing and the never-ending rumbling of the ocean in Sila's ear becomes a littoral discourse to express this trauma, both in the past and present.

When considered within a tidalectic paradigm, littoral discourse extends from the oceanic imagery in the novel, which scholars often read as trope for counter histories and archives. As Sila cycles from one memory to the other, the ocean features constantly, both as literal presence on the edge of the island and as a that connects severed genealogies with their histories. Gabeba Baderoon, Maria Olaussen, and Meg Samuelson have done valuable work on the genealogies and resistant archives the ocean comes to represent in the novel. Baderoon reads the sea in *Unconfessed* as emblematic of Sila's own "middle passage" and thus as embodying "the cruelty of slavery, through which Sila's freedom is stolen successive times" ("The African Oceans" 95). In other moments, while it is the "Atlantic that imprisons Sila on Robben Island [it] also promises to release her from slavery by carrying her memories back to Mozambique, her place of origin in another ocean, the Indian Ocean" (Baderoon, "The African Oceans" 95). Samuelson reads the ocean as "a space of death, [which] marks forever [Sila's] sense of separation from home, while, on Robben Island, surviving the death penalty to which she was initially condemned, it continues to isolate her from the mainland" ("Lose Your Mother" 41). Both Samuelson and Olaussen have read the ocean for its connection to Indian Ocean worlds,[100] and the alternative South African histories a recognition of the slave passage across this ocean would bring. Reading the ocean in *Unconfessed* as a wet historiography would therefore "call into question the reliability of the colonial authorities' documents" (Olaussen 126). I argue that tidalectics and a littoral discourse work together to produce an alternative historiography and history when the ocean as historical paradigm is given focus, engaging Sila's position on the island as it forces us to think of "spatial and historical complexity" (DeLoughrey, *Routes* 3).

Of the day she arrived on the island, and the fashion in which she came to shore, Sila narrates the following:

[100] See Samuelson, "'Castaways' and 'Generations': Yvette Christiansë's Oceanic Geneologies and the Colonial Archive"; Olaussen, "Africa's Indian Ocean in Yvette Christiansë's *Unconfessed*".

> Perhaps, one day, I could make up stories that would tell of a Sila who did not get rolled by the surf […] angry even with herself for not having the legs to stomp against a wave's power. Here, when you step out of the boat, they start you off scrambling and stumbling […] scrambling is what the water does do you. The water, even crossing that water, softens you so that you come out of it and onto this place with less strength than a baby. (46)

Throughout the novel, Sila comes to associate ships and boats, crossing oceans, and being decanted on the shore with new (usually violent) beginnings, so much so that she "came out of the water a woman who had lost too many things" (47). This loss refers to her ties to Mozambique — her home, her culture, but also the children she had born in the Cape. Her description of the water scrambling and softening her metaphorically refers to the "death" of her true identity and her "rebirth" as Sila, an enslaved woman. Her wish to harness the surf and to have the strength to resist the power of the waves is a wish for retaining her personhood and agency. And if the ocean comes to represent the violent history of the slave trade at the Cape, then her wish to resist the crashing of this history onshore becomes evident in the language.

This is because the littoral reminds Sila of the previous occasion where she was taken from one shore and to another. She recalls her memories of being home in Mozambique as a little girl, a fond memory which turns violent when she is "*taken out at night in long boats and* […] *pulled up in a big net and that net puts* [her] *in a night darker than the demon's heart*" (83).[101] She is thrown into the "the demon's belly" (15) of the ship, "[t]hat dark and stinking rolling place had spat her out in this country" (26). Sila "had been a child stolen from her own mother and pushed into a hole with others, only to be pushed out into this world" (13).

Recognisable in Sila's words is Édouard Glissant's description of the slave ship as a "barque/matrice", literally "ship/womb". Glissant writes that

> the belly of this boat dissolves you, precipitates you into a nonworld from which you cry out. This boat is a womb, a womb abyss. It generates the clamor of your protests; it also produces all the coming unanimity. Although you are not alone in this suffering, you share in the unknown with others whom you have yet to know. This

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[101] As mentioned, Sila's focalisations are divided into an interiority which speaks to Baro and a deeper interiority, which is represented in italics. I have chosen to keep the italics as they are presented in the text.

> boat is your womb, a matrix, and yet it expels you. This boat: pregnant with as many dead as living under sentence of death. (6)

The ship's hold is both death trap and womb space, therefore both a site of death and life. The ship serves as a womb because it is the place where humans are remade — turned from fleshly humans to fleshly commodities. The death is a social one (Patterson 5) although it is also sometimes a literal one.[102] Therefore, life and death cannot be separated at all in the ship (tomb/womb) because the life of the slave (its literal living) is one of inevitable death. It is thus while in the "tomb" of the ship that Sila dies a social death before she is rebirthed via the "womb" of the ship's hold, "pushed out in *this* world" (Christiansë, *Unconfessed* 13; my emphasis), and expelled onto South African soil where she is to begin a new life marked as "slave".

The oceanic journey as a passage into bondage transforms the ship into a space of what Orlando Patterson calls "natal alienation" (5), which he uses to refer to the rupture and severing of autochthonous genealogies, or in Sila's case, histories. This is evidenced by the scant information available on the historical Sila's life. Sila's date of birth was never recorded, though documents indicate that when she committed the infanticide, she was between thirty and thirty-five years old (Christiansë, "Heartsore" n.p.). The precise date when she was taken from her home and brought to the Cape is consequently also unknown. As for her name, the inscriptions here are unstable in that variants of her slave name are recorded in all the official documents; Sila, Siela, Silla, Silia, Drucella, Drusilla, and Drusiela. Her real name was never written down.[103] These are but minor examples of her natal alienation and the complete erasure of her authentic identity and personhood. As Christiansë asks, "[h]ow, then, does one approach a story whose referent is constantly circling back and around itself in the archive" ("Heartsore" n.p.). Tidalectics and littoral discourse presents one possible response.

To Sila, shores resemble "turns", a word she often uses to describe the violent deviance from whatever future she imagines and which narratologically disrupts the linear progression of

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[102] See Christina Sharpe's *In The Wake* for an excellent discussion of Black histories and the wake of the slave ship in all its metaphoric capacities.

[103] Christiansë lists three possible reasons for the variations, namely that spelling may not have been standardized at the time, translation slippages from Dutch to English, or slave owners changing slaves' names for duplicitous reasons. In Sila's case, whatever the reason may be for it, the variations in her name testify to her elusive presence in the archive.

her imagined life.[104] First, she is taken from the shore of her home and brought to the Cape where she is given a new name and identity on the auction block: Sila van Mozbiek, slave. Then, she is renamed Sila van den Kaap (as part of a trick to deny her freedom). After a long hard life and three years in gaol, she boards a boat for a second time, and thus "[h]er life was taking yet another turn" (*Unconfessed* 26). Turns, of course, also conjure up a tidalectic metaphor; when considered that the word's referent is the shore, it becomes a littoral word. Sila arrives on Robben Island stumbling and scrambling as the is carried across the water by a boat – this is the middle passage trope Baderoon describes ("African Oceans"). Her rebirthing takes place as she is spat out in the littoral zone with "less strength than a baby" (*Unconfessed* 46). Her identity is once more revised as she is again taken to a new place.

As the site of erasure of identities and inscriptions of new ones, the littoral brings a constant revisiting of the past in the present. Often, this revisiting of the past becomes an oceanic trope as Sila's memories of trauma are replaced with descriptions of the ocean. This places the personal violence she has endured within a wider context of the violence of the Indian and Atlantic slave trade and the ocean as conduit for this practice. The oceanic trope therefore undulates between different temporal moments, from the present moment of remembering to the past, as well as to the novel's contextual historical past.

Sila significantly describes the littoral zone on Robben Island as "the edge". It is the edge in two senses: first, it marks the edge for those who view the ocean as meaning death, and second, it marks the edge for the dead who come to haunt the living, constantly beckoning them to return to the past. The passage across the Atlantic has taught Sila to fear the ocean for "*The water snatches a breath away to make place for itself*" (48) and "When the sea grips like that, it says give me something, give me, give-give" (48). In the ocean Sila sees the beckoning hand of death, as much as historical slaves saw in the waves and backwash an opportunity to drown willingly (through suicide) or die forcefully when thrown overboard or when forced off the boat onto the land. Sila describes the response of one mother to the slave journey as follows:

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[104] Before she boards the boat to Robben Island, for example, she reflects that "Her life was taking yet another turn. How many more could she endure? How many had she already endured? One turn. The Neethlings. Another turn. Neethling to Oumies […] Another turn" (26-27).

> A woman named Hester threw her children, then herself, into the water at Table Bay. Dragged out, she found herself, and one child saved. And then they tied a leather strap around her neck. One man took one end, another the other end and they pulled and pulled. That was how she was punished. And then they threw her into the sea. (40)

To access the ocean as slave is thus to access death, be it a social or a literal death. This death is one whose terms are decided by the colonisers. "The ultimate expression of sovereignty", writes Achille Mbembe, "resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die" ("Necropolitics" 10). Slaves, then, are stripped of agency over their own lives insofar as they cannot choose their own deaths. In this light, Sila and Hester's infanticides are actions which expose the limits of sovereignty. "To exercise sovereignty", as Mbembe argues, "is to exercise control of mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power" ("Necropolitics" 12). "Hence", continues Mbembe, "to kill or to allow to live, constitute[s] the limits of sovereignty" (11). Sila's decision to send Baro "into the sleep that saved him", therefore not only pre-empts a life under the legacy of slavery, but renders impotent the assumed sovereign might of the slave-owning colony.

7.3.2 An Environment That Speaks

Towards the end of the novel, Sila's narration slips into moments of lyrical fantasies in which she takes control of the island's environment around her and enacts a wrath upon the world. Having to endure forced hard labour cutting stones to be used as cobbles for the Cape's streets, Sila narrates, "I am hungry enough to bite this island. Yes. I bite it. I bite a chunk out of the quarry. There. And tomorrow I'll shit the stones they want so much" (90). In a particular apocalyptic moment, vis-a-vis the Cape from her position on Robben Island, Sila tells the spectral Baro "they call this sea the Atlantic, but we call it the gate" (282) and proceeds to indulge in a cursing of the Cape for almost four pages. Sila asks for a language "that will make hammers shatter, and all the stones in those streets shiver, those houses creak and come apart", a language which will "give them blisters on their ears" (282). Her sensory perception grows larger as her imagination extends to fantasy: she tells us that she would stride "over the earth to where those great ships lie at anchor and I would dance all over them" (283).

Alexandra Negri reads these narrations as oscillating "between moments of lucidity and delusion" in which "the narrative integrity of Sila's fractured speech is disrupted by the

intrusion of her apocalyptic revenge phantasies" (96). Negri compares the revenge phantasies to paraphrased and adapted citations from the Old Testament, which, in her opinion, is a misstep on Christiansë's part. This she suggests by claiming that "Sila's revenge phantasies are described in terms befitting the prophets of the Old Testament although Christiansë writes her as a woman who does *not* yield to the lure of religion" (96). The "way in which Christiansë trades on revenge's potential sublimity", continues Negri, "may have been driven by a narrative longing to imbue Sila with a semi-divine wrath — not *Ira Dei* but *Ira Silae* — and in so doing, symbolically avenge her" (98). However, if the point is to be taken that Christian doctrine had long been used to mobilise and justify colonial usurpation in Africa, the placement of Old Testament prophecies in the mouth of a woman enslaved under the ideology of this doctrine becomes an act of speaking back to the very discourse that subordinates her.

Frantz Fanon famously argues that violence was a defining component in the practice of colonialism. Therefore, a process of de-colonisation can only be achieved through a turn to radical violence. Fanon writes that "colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence" (61). Fanon continues by stating, the idea that in "every society, in every collectivity, exists – must exist – a channel, an outlet through which the forces accumulated in the forms of aggression can be released" (61). This process of "release" can be described as "collective catharsis", whereby violence becomes "a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect" (94). Reading Sila's hyper-violent imaginings through Fanon's theory opens a space for the slave character not only to challenge her subordination, but to act as an agent of collective resistance to colonial slavery.

When these "revenge phantasies" are compared to similar moments in other South African texts, a counter discourse starts to emerge in which autochthonous peoples reimagine the backwash of history. Sila's position on Robben Island, looking towards the mainland, is a perspective shared by expansionist and colonising sailors as they approached the peninsula. In a moment reminiscent of Adamastor's curse upon the Portuguese in *The Lusiads*, Sila curses the land. She conjures up histories of enslavement and violence brought across the oceans to the port-city, "the only inter-ocean portal located at the gateway to a continental landmass" (Samuelson, "Rendering" 523). These histories Sila imagines as splashing onto

"that Cape of Tears, Cape of Death, Cape of Struggles" and washing inland in a "contagion [that] will spread up, into land and far from the sea" (74). Her only mechanism for setting herself free, then, is imaginatively to take control of the environment that imprisons her and to destroy it. This destructive act becomes more compelling than her murder of Baro for she sees only a future in which her children "and their generations [are] chained to each other in a line that went right up into that land, over mountains, through rivers. I felt my body as if it was giving birth to generations already dead" (312).

K. Sello Duiker closes his novel, *Thirteen Cents*, with a similarly apocalyptic and hyper-violent moment. The novel, set in post-apartheid South Africa, tells the story of a homeless 12-year-old orphan named Azure. Azure must navigate a life of daily violence. He distrusts adults because they either pull him into their world of gangsterism and sexual exploitation. The representation of Azure's struggle is a critique of post-apartheid democracy and the "promise" of South Africa's Rainbow Nation politics. The novel concludes with a scene in which Azure is sitting on a rock on Table Mountain, watching as huge tsunami-like waves start to roll in from the sea. These waves destroy the beaches and flood the streets of the Cape Town until "the tallest wave the sea has ever made" (162) completely submerges the city so that the water reaches the edge of the mountain. This is a decidedly littoral moment in which the ocean engulfs and usurps a coastline that has increasingly been filled out by city planning projects, such as the entire foreshore or the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront. The scene therefore presents an image of the Cape in which Azure experiences "nature in terms that point back to ways of living prior to the appearance of colonial modernity on the African continent" (Vital 221) as "Table Mountain is returned to its prior state as Sea-Mountain" (Samuelson, "Rendering" 552).

This final apocalyptic moment is anticipated when focus is placed on the novel's littoral spaces, which are located on the fringes of the city. Shifting focus to the littoral discourse in the text opens up scholarship on *Thirteen Cents*, which tends to fall into three broad categories: queer readings of the novel, the post-transition dystopian future usually by way of the "coming-of-age" narrative, and "the city".[105] It is only recently, perhaps with the growing

[105] Edgar Nabutanyi's article on the same-sex violence in *Thirteen Cents*, for example, explores rape as metaphor for perversion of violence and argues that in moments of national crisis, boys, as well as women, are equally susceptible to the corruption of patriarchal power. Duiker's novel, then, becomes a commentary on "post-apartheid social-familial dystopia". For Meg Samuelson, *Thirteen Cents* is a novel that engages the metaphor of "national home" that would allow us to "move beyond the liminal threshold moment of transition" ("Walking

popularity in studies on the environmental humanities, that attention is being paid to the ocean spaces present in Duiker's novel.[106] Reading the littoral spaces in *Thirteen Cents* as terraqueous spaces on the fringes of Cape Town exposes the ideological trappings of the city and simultaneously reveals Azure's inability to escape from it. The beaches of Sea Point are where Azure claims a kind of home as they offer a momentary escape from the city spaces that confine him and enact a certain kind of socio-political violence upon his body. Since Cape Town echoes the "violence of the pasts that has produced this city" (Vital 221), Azure's only recourse, like Sila's, is to imagine it destroyed.

In the opening pages of the novel, Azure tells the reader, "The streets of Sea Point are my home" (1). He sleeps "in Sea Point near the swimming pool because it's the safest place to be at night. In town there are too many gangsters" (3). "The streets", he continues, "they are not safe. They are roads to hell, made of tar" (66) and if he "had a choice [he] would dream of swimming. Nothing else — just swimming in the sun all day" (66). Anthony Vital reads the urban space of Duiker's novel as representative of a "predatory civilization […] shot through with inherited racial animosities" (219). He argues that it is in the juxtaposed presence of the ocean, as natural world, that a "kind of saving significance" can thus be found (219). I argue that the ocean space serves a different purpose: it exposes the inequalities in Azure's post-1994 South Africa.

The novel's narrative perspective takes on an almost cartographic nature, in that Azure's navigation of the city streets and larger Cape Town spaces reflects a constant awareness of navigational points aimed specifically at their utilitarian value. At Cape Town city's station, for example, fruit can be found where the "coloured fruit-sellers work", while fruit that is thrown away cannot be trusted for "they put funny things in the dustbins" (1). Joyce, a woman who works at a restaurant in Main Road, leaves leftovers for him near a bush, but in return, Azure has to run small errands for her, because "there's nothing for *mahala* with grown-ups. You always have to do something in return" (6).

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through the Door" 130). Samuelson questions whether those at the socio-economic margins, such as the protagonist, Azure, find this metaphor useful. The space of the city is sonsistently present in these readings of *Thirteen Cents* as a post-transition novel that dissolves the utopian vision of a post-1994 South Africa. Generally approached through Walter Benjamin's concept of the "flâneur", scholars engage Azure's act of walking the city as destabilizing the boundaries of his built and ideological environments.

[106] See Anthony Vital's book chapter, "Ecocriticism, Globalized Cities, and African Narrative" and Meg Samuelson's article "Rendering the Cape-as-Port".

During the day, Azure helps to park cars. Despite his marginal socio-economic status, there is a business-like order in which he goes about accessing the different spaces in Cape Town. That is to say, there is a pragmatism in his rendition of the different sites he accesses: he has a site where he conducts his work, a site where he procures food, and a site to which he returns at the end of the day to rest. Despite Azure's socio-economic marginality, his routine resembles that of almost every city-dweller: work, eat, sleep, with a space allocated for each of these acts. The nature of his routine, the dire circumstances of his life, gets lost amidst the pragmatism of living in the city as it is taken up in the bustling flow of inner-city life.

By contrast, Azure considers the littoral promenade his home. This space is meant to offer a respite from the city. It is only when Azure's movements return to the littoral, when, if no money is made, or the threat from gangsters and pimps is too imminent, that he goes to the "moffie part of the beach" (8) in Sea Point, where men pay him for sex. Here, the shocking reality of his struggle for survival becomes prominent again. In this sense, the littoral exposes the socio-economic reality of Azure's life. It is cast as Azure's familial, homely environment, one in which he is free from the predatory, violent behaviour of the adults in the city streets. In contrast to the long winding roads of the city, where Azure is "always lost", the Sea Point promenade is where he turns to, to "hide out", it is the "Point" where he can "See" (8). However, this safe space also becomes the last resort to securing a means for survival when he is forced to sell his body to opportunistic adults. Thus, the horrible conditions of Azure's life are exposed as a reality he cannot truly escape.

Towards the end of the novel, Azure visits Muizenberg beach with a friend, Sealy. Here, Azure watches people swim:

> I like watching people swim. There's a certain order about it. Out at sea there'll be one or two white faces, mostly surfers. They don't fear the sea. As always they go at it like they own the sea. And then still out at sea but closer to the beach you'll find the coloureds, laughing and frolicking in the water [...] And then at the water's edge you find black people. (151)

Reflected in the varying depths of the bodies in the ocean, he sees the racialized strata of South Africa. Here again, the natural space of the ocean, removed from the city, carries the segregationist reality of post-1994, and it is in the littoral space that this reality is exposed. Sealy tells Azure that

> A long time ago before there was land there was only water. And that everything, even people, lived under the sea. He said black people were the first to leave the sea and live on land and then the others followed. And because we left the sea a long time ago, far longer than the others, we forgot how to swim and started to fear the water. (152)

Sealy's tale invokes Azure's visions in an earlier scene, where he finds his way to a cave in the mountains of Cape Town. He plans to stay there for a few days and escape the ever-present threat of violence from Gerald, one of the novel's central villains. Azure hallucinates while on the mountain and imagines an encounter with "the spirits of the Cape's earlier inhabitants" (Vital 221), most notably the figure of Sarah Baartman. During this hallucination, Baartman tells Azure that she has come very far, "maybe over the ocean" (Duiker 120) and that she "was once a fish", to which Azure replies, "I was once a seal. I used to love water but then I got lost and now I'm here" (120). Vital sees this moment as indicative of a "spiritualized nature" which "affords [Azure] a sense of connection with both old African ways of knowing and nature's power" (220). That is, it "points back to ways of living prior to the appearance of a colonial modernity on the African continent" (Vital 220). However, as the Muizenberg scene details, the conceptualisation of a "nature 'outside' the city [...] that connects him with a pre-colonial culture, a culture that supplies a relation to the natural world very different from that fostered by the daily reproductive imperatives of global capitalism" (223), is ultimately a non-reality, as the natural environment of the ocean reflects the socio-economic division still present in the post-apartheid, post-transitional context.

In spite of the respite they are able to offer Azure at times, the littoral moments in *Thirteen Cents* ultimately become indicative of the short-comings of post-1994 South Africa. While the natural ocean spaces in the novel stand in contrast to the imposing urban space of Cape Town, the littoral, the meeting place on the fringes of these two spaces, becomes entangled in these two discourses, fluctuating between them. While Azure, Sea Point, Camps Bay, and Muizenberg are reclusive spaces to which Azure turns when the city's streets become too violent, they remain unstable, for their fluctuating politics expose him to violence as well, and thus render the reality of non-marginalisation unrealistic.

7.4 Conclusion

The texts discussed in this chapter represent the littoral zone as a space from which authors revise rehearsed histories and imagine their alternatives. *Unconfessed*, a novel which

decidedly engages the discursive nature of the colonial archive, surfaces the muting and silencing of a historiographical practice intent on denying the voices of subaltern peoples. Following Brathwaite's paradigm of a 'tidalectics' of history, I considered Christiansë's representation of the littoral setting in her novel as a narrative strategy which disrupts the linearity of a colonial historiography. My primary objective has been to consider how the littoral opens a discursive space for the protagonist's voice to speak in a fashion outside of the complexities of discourse that Spivak identifies. As such, a tidalectic reading of the novel considers the ocean as a trope for dis/connection and a metaphor for memory, trauma, and the past. I suggested that the novel makes use of a littoral discourse and that this discourse enables Sila speak outside of the archive's imperial discourse that would only ever consider her an enslaved black woman. A littoral discourse therefore allows Sila to reclaim an identity outside of the slave system, and for the author and reader to imagine the possibility of decolonisation. This act is itself a commentary on the impossibility of life for the enslaved, as the only recourse available to Sila is the destruction of the system itself.

K. Sello Duiker employs a littoral discourse to expose the impossibility of marginal life in South Africa, and to reveal the violent histories that created this reality. As space, the littoral comes to reveal the extremes Azure is forced to go to as a means of securing a livelihood. The apocalyptic moment that concludes the novel, also resonates with the Fanonian violence Sila imagines in *Unconfessed*. When compared, these two similar moments, in which characters from two completely different historical moments express a similar desire for liberation, suggest a continuum of oppressive ideologies in the country's history. Attending to the significance of the littoral within the worlds of these novels illustrates the transformative potential of littoral discourse, as it allows subaltern protagonists to evade the racialised, silencing logics of colonial modernity.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A Discussion

Littoral settings are present throughout the history of South African literature. During the course of this thesis, I engaged with the littoral in a variety of ways — as a contact zone, a space of leisure, a space for transition, an ecotone, and a site of revisionist history — to consider how the space engenders engagement with history, memory, being and belonging. I have aimed to show that the littoral is a setting from which authors imagine alternative and contesting histories to challenge and unmake racialised discourses.

As this thesis has demonstrated, authors use the diversity of the littoral to effect a variety of different narrative strategies aimed at critiquing the political contexts of their texts and challenging hegemonic histories. This draws attention to the limitations of the historical, linear mode where the official record of History has produced a skewed narrative. I have argued that Kamau Brathwaite's concept, tidalectics, and Edward Soja's spatial theory, Thirdspace, offer a critical response to the questions of racialised historical discourse and space, especially when spatial legislatures are informed by racialised politics. Tidalectics, together with Thirdspace, accommodates readings that supplement and contradict each other. In juxtaposition, they therefore produce analyses that are inclusive of those South African histories conventionally considered to be divergent, according to hegemonic master narratives. Tidalectic histories disrupt the foundational claims in discursive archives in that they disrupt synthesising Western historical modes by surfacing the alternative histories engendered by littoral settings.

This thesis's structure according to a linear, historical progression is consistently disrupted by readings of the littoral that not only look toward a future, or back to a past, and in some instances to an alternative present, but also by readings between chapters that emerge when embracing a recursive method. I have argued that a more suitable method for reading the littoral in South African literature is one that allows for linearity and recursiveness to work together, moulding a more inclusive model for thinking about history.

Chapter Two considered the littoral as an ambiguous space of encounters both with and within the environment. I argued that analysing the representations of these encounters

reveals early thinking about the people encountered on the shore and that it forms a precursor to racialised discourses espoused by later colonial ideologies in South Africa. Shipwreck narratives represent the littoral as a site of concurrent order and disorder, revealing a tension that speaks simultaneously of the triumph and disaster of expansionism. These narratives shore up some of the dissolution of an empire that Camões attempts to solder, and thereby to bolster an ailing national Portuguese pride. *The Lusiads,* as a narrative haunted by failure, sets the tone of the littoral as site of disaster caused by Adamastor. In this sense the note struck at the beginning of the thesis is one of disruption brought about by the littoral environment.

Josiah Blackmore writes that out of shipwrecks "come texts. Disaster sends them, waterlogged but intact, to the readers waiting onshore" (*Manifest* 27). Using this analogy, encounters in the littoral that describe shipwreck survivors' interactions with the local inhabitants, speak to a racialised discourse that washes up onshore and washes onto land. These encounters are examples of the early racial categorisation of people as they were documented, disseminated and eventually taken up in European colonising discourses. However, the tide is what pushes the texts in Blackmore's analogy to the littoral. Kamau Brathwaite's image of ocean water transporting the past onto the shores of the present in that cyclical forward and backward motion is pertinent to the image of the waterlogged text making its way to the shore, churned out by the turbulent waters of waves breaking. Reading the shipwreck tidalectically means to adopt a method that traces the cyclical relationship between text and history. A tidalectic method shows that as the histories produced by shipwreck narratives recur, they disrupt the land-locked colonial histories produced by hegemonic narratives. It is not without coincidence that shipwreck has a haunting presence in other chapters in this thesis.

The wrecking of a ship is narrated as starting in the ocean and moving towards land. In her novel *Unconfessed*, published some 500 years after expansionist literature, Yvette Christiansë presents her protagonist, Sila van den Kaap, as occupying a similar perspective for the duration of her narration. On Robben Island, where she is imprisoned, Sila looks towards the Cape and shares sailors' view of impending shipwreck. However, unlike the survivors, Sila won't make it to shore.

To Sila, because she cannot swim, the shore represents the edge; to navigate the island you must learn to navigate this edge. She tells Baro to walk

> first in a straight line to the water. You will walk with your back to the mountains of the mainland, then stay with the edge of this island and walk all around it […] You will walk with your face toward the ocean first and the mainland will be on your left cheek until you come around like the wind, pulled back toward the mainland. But stay at the edge of the land. Follow it as if you are following the tracks of an animal. (Christiansë, *Unconfessed* 52)

Sila's use of the littoral as a point against which she is able to navigate her position on the island is reminiscent of shipwreck narratives' inscription of littoral spaces as fixed navigational points that the survivors use to track their movement and to travel along the South African coast. Sila reflects that "*Perhaps, if we had been able to run from Van der Wat's farm...perhaps if we had found and followed the land's edge we too might have come back to the place from which I had been taken as a girl*" (53). This moment speaks to instances in shipwreck narratives where survivors used the littoral as the line to established trading stations and therefore expansionist territories, offering the possibility of respite in a metaphorical return to home. Of course, indigenous people have long since used the littoral, as evidenced by the histories of the ||Ammaqua Khoe (Water people).[107] When read as intertextual reference to shipwreck narratives, while Sila is also a foreigner like shipwreck survivors, this moment encourages a reckoning with the colonial archive's muting of autochthonous knowledge that does not benefit its project.

Chapter Three discussed Dorothea Fairbridge's *Piet of Italy*, where the plot is generated by a shipwreck. The shipwreck is a narrative device used to portray Piet/ro's amnesia and consequent dual identity as Cape Malay/European. The novel's strategy as colonial bildungsroman uses the shipwreck as an opportunity to represent Piet's rearing in the Islamic faith, constructing his Cape Malay categories within an Oriental discourse. The depiction of their relationship with the littoral environment, especially of Kalk Bay, is a significant strategy used in Fairbridge's representation of Malay people. Yet casting Piet as both Muslim and shipwreck survivor oddly conjures competing histories that sit at odds with each other and the representational strategy of the text itself. In attempting to present an 'authentic' representation of Muslim culture, Fairbridge includes short summaries of the history of Islam in South Africa. This rendering, however, goes against the grain of a colonial archive that

[107]See Patric Tariq Mellet's work, including his book *The Lie of 1652* for a decolonial history of South Africa.

tries to eradicate alternative genealogies and cultures in order to construct the subaltern subject. It gains further momentum when considered in the disruptive context of the shipwreck.

The wreck, broken materials pushed ashore, takes on a different meaning in Chapter Six, which changed the focus to environmental criticism. Here, the littoral is the site in which and from which humans' environmental impact can be witnessed. In *A Littoral Zone*, Livingstone often writes about the destruction he witnesses as he walks along the KwaZulu-Natal shore. Though he walks with a different purpose than Sila and shipwreck survivors, he is also met with sights of wrecking. One such example is of the dismembered turtle in "Bad Run at King's Rest". Maimed by a ship's propeller blade, the turtle has been expelled from its natural habitat and driven to the shore by the tide. If the propeller and the ship evoke histories of the slave trade and slaving ships and thus of capital-colonial enterprises, in the longue durée this shows a project is revealed in which the exploitation of racialised bodies and the environment cannot be separated. In this sense, ships and wrecking become a different force altogether, not only shaping the political history of the country, but also altering its environmental future.

Paying attention to the consistent presence of the littoral in South African literature matters because it not only presents a long history of social injustice in the country, but it also shows that representations of the beach and how it has been constructed and presented in our national imaginary are discursive and imprecise. This is because of a variety of reasons: early representations of the littoral that favour foreign perceptions above those of autochthonous people, the non-inclusion of beach histories in national archives, and the under-representation of black people who perform leisurely activities. This thesis has shown that the representation of the beach as an occupied space reserved for white privileged bodies is consistently challenged by authors' depiction of the littoral. The littoral functions as a setting through which authors not only present this challenge to spatial politics and show the workings of this practice, but also to enter into imaginings of alternative histories and realities. One of the ways in which this privilege is challenged is through a representation of the beach as simultaneously real and imagined.

Chapter Four focuses on the littoral as a space of leisure. Both Peter Abrahams and Nadine Gordimer employ the littoral to challenge the country's increasing spatial restrictions and racial politics. In response to apartheid segregation, the non-segregated space of the littoral

allows for certain social interactions to occur that would either be impossible or considerably strained in non-littoral segregated spaces. Gordimer's short story "The Catch" is an excellent example of how leisure spaces frame social interaction from a position of equality. When the same interaction occurs outside of the littoral space, it is constrained by racist politics that accompany social prescription and hierarchy. Therefore, while the beach space offers a sense of possibility in this narrative, it is not innocent of the prejudice that pervades apartheid social stratification. In my analysis of Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds* in Chapter Five I argued that the beach as leisure space, albeit here a segregated space, establishes an intimacy which overcomes the segregating spatial policies that keep certain people apart. However, this intimacy does not translate to non-littoral spaces and entraps Nkosi's protagonist within a rip tide of racist discourse when he re-encounters Slater outside of the littoral. Consequently, the intimacy that washes over from the beach to a non-littoral space criminalises him, resulting in his execution.

Within a bildungsroman structure, the beach as a leisure space functions as setting for characters' self-realisation or transition into drastically different moments in their lives. As I discuss in Chapter Four, in *Tell Freedom,* it is on one of Cape Town's beaches that Abrahams recognises the politically fraught moment for what it is, and that a life in South Africa under the growing popularity of Afrikaner nationalism and its politics would soon prove to be an impossibility. His recognition that as a black man, he is not, and never will be, free in South Africa, moves him to decide that he best depart for England. Conversely, Gordimer's protagonist in *The Lying Days*, Helen, also decides to depart, even though racist politics do not affect her in the same way as they do Abrahams. Both texts present the littoral as site of departure; a threshold characters must cross over into a different political reality.

The beach is also where Helen falls in love and it is the site where her sexual awakening occurs. However, the naïve love that Helen enjoys does not translate into Zoë Wicomb's character, Frieda Shenton, who also has a romantic outing to the beach with her partner Michael. The carefree indulgence of romance and sex that Gordimer's novel can offer for her young white protagonist, as I discussed in Chapter Four, is troubled by the segregationist politics discussed in Chapter Five, which show policing of even the most intimate of desires. When Wicomb's characters, who are in an interracial relationship, visit a secluded beach, Frieda is nevertheless forced to behave in certain regulated ways by hiding her hair's racial

marking. Wicomb uses the littoral space to expose the perniciousness of racist politics which impedes intimacy.

In *Thirteen Cents* by K Sello Duiker, Azure visits the same Muizenberg beach where Abrahams, decades earlier, experienced self-realisation. While watching the beachgoers frolic in the ocean, Azure sees a reflection of a still present racialised stratum in a post-transition South Africa, supposedly free from a segregationist reality. This moment mirrors Abrahams's realisation: despite the non-segregated material reality of the beach, the psychic reality is different. Both Azure and Abrahams come to terms with the fact that the leisurely beach both is and is not a space of respite: they are not free from the political inequality to which they will return once they leave. Reading these littoral scenes in conversation with each other shows how apartheid ideologies regarding beach spaces continue to structure contemporary attitudes towards spatial practice.

Tidalectic histories also surface in moments where characters find expression by drawing on the littoral environment's metaphoric qualities. Chapter Three discussed two novels by Olive Schreiner, *The Story of An African Farm* and *Undine*. I read the ur-littoral moment in *Story* as surfacing in a tidalectic history in which the environment is subject to a discourse that cannot be satisfactorily expressed by a conventional Western discourse. In a moment located in the dried-out beds of what were once ancient oceans, Waldo wishes for the stones to speak to him to relate a history that reaches far back into the past, before the colonial era that he and the other children find so stifling. A call for the environment to speak of inexpressible violence is a similar position Christiansë takes up in *Unconfessed*. Cursed to spend what we assume is the rest of her life on Robben Island,[108] Sila has to cut stones in the quarry. As metaphor for the trauma she suffers and continues to endure, she tells the reader

> *Stones in my throat. Stones in my stomach. I have been swallowing stones for years. I am sick of stones, but they are not done with me.* (75)

The stones in her throat symbolize not only violence, but also an inability to speak of it and the environment is called on to resonate meaning. Later she says

[108] Colonial records indicate the birth of a child was registered some time after her arrival on the island, but after that she vanishes from the records. Her fate is unknown.

> I pick up pebbles and throw them into the water when I get a chance. I say to each pebble, so was jy gemaak.[109] Go down. Go down to where you will never forget that you are stone. Stones are not made for walking on water. Stones must sink when they imagine that they are fish. Go down. Go down. (79)

In Chapter Seven I discussed the fish imagery as commensurate with Sila's position on the island, as a subject that dies when removed from its original habitat. In this passage, stones sink when they enter the ocean, much like the numerous slaves who died in oceanic crossings. A bathymetrical lens that reads the vertical vector in the passage, of stones that sink the ocean's depths, surfaces an alternative archive, much like the bathymetrical lens in *Story*. Lastly, in the closing scene to *Thirteen Cents*, Azure draws upon the shores of Cape Town to imagine an apocalyptic tidal wave which engulfs the entire city. As the water pushes up to the foothills of Table Mountain it restores the Cape to its pre-expansionist moment and the city is washed clean of the violent histories responsible for Azure's marginal life and suffering. This moment gestures back across the chapters of this thesis to Adamastor's awakening and the curse he enacts upon the Lusiads that forecasts the long history of social injustice as it culminates in Azure's reality. Azure and Adamastor sit across from each other, not only in this manuscript, but supposedly at opposite ends of a progression in the trajectory of South Africa's human rights.

Texts published during different periods in South African history speak to each other by echoing similar issues, surfacing not only in the persistent presence of the littoral in South African history and its literary archive, but also in alternative histories in the country, revealing how a littoral focus allows us to imagine the nation differently. A tidalectic approach to the littoral reads with and against an assumed linear model of representation and therefore progression. It speaks to the nature of the beach in South African literature itself because a linear progression in the use of the beach and how it is culturally imagined cannot be tracked. That is to say, the meanings ascribed to the beach do not change, the beach does not move from being considered as one space to another space, despite legislative attempts at constructing it so. A tidalectic approach benefits analyses of the littoral and its histories because these histories are constantly revisited and therefore never terminated as a fixed event in the past. This approach not only disrupts the national narrative that describes littoral

[109] In English this would translate as "this is how you were made" (my translation).

spaces as spaces of equality, but also makes it possible to craft or surface narratives that challenge received history and expose the biases and blind spots of apartheid historiography.

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